

# The Bayfield Site

## Purpose

**1.1** This Brief highlights the commercial and environmental opportunity presented by 5.3 hectares of land at Bayfield, Portree. It provides planning and servicing guidance in sufficient detail to help inform private development proposals and public funding bids. Interest from potential funding agencies, both public and private, is invited.

## Context & Setting

**2.1** Portree has a population of around 2,200 but is the main administrative and service centre for the whole of Skye and Lochalsh, which is one of the fastest growing areas of Scotland supporting 12,000 residents and 5,000 jobs. An improving road network has made it accessible to most of Skye within a half hour drive time.



Portree is now a key node on the nation's trunk road network. Bayfield is set at the heart of this centre and is surrounded by a high quality environment. The natural qualities include a southerly aspect, an outlook onto the Cuillin mountains, together with the more gentle benefits of a sheltered bay and attractive riverside setting.

**2.2** Combine these with the commercial advantages of the principal point of arrival, departure and parking for visitors - representing a perfect place to capture tourist expenditure - and the opportunity is clear. A high footfall and its position as the last significantly sized site close to the commercial core of the settlement all add to the potential of the location.

## Existing and Surrounding Uses

**3.1** Bayfield currently accommodates a fragmented pattern of car parking, foreshore and ad-hoc built development. The centre of Portree lies to the immediate north-east and surrounding uses are mixed; although principally residential and commercial. Loch Portree and the Leasgeary River border to the south.



*Above : Setting  
Left : Location Plan*

## Ownership

**4.1** Although the Brief site is in multiple ownership, some private land assembly has already taken place. Potential developers can obtain details of the nature of property interests from the Planning contact below. All landowners are agreeable to the redevelopment of the area save the electricity sub-station site although even this plant may be capable of relocation. Those tenancies that exist, within the Brief boundary, are of a short time period.

## Physical

**5.1** Figure 1 shows the approximate ground levels across the Brief site. There is a general but irregular level difference of around 7-9 metres between Bridge Road / The Green and lower Bayfield adjacent to the river and loch.



The aspect is southerly. Ground conditions may be a problem over part of the site where the depth before reaching bedrock will require piling.

**5.2** Existing vegetation is limited to the margins of the Brief site - the only significant trees being along the upper banks of the Leasgeary River, along parts of Bridge Road and east of Upper Bayfield Road. Whin and gorse provide additional cover over parts of the grassed fringes of the various car parking areas. The Resource Centre access and car park have benefited from additional tree and shrub in recent years and the provision of a small formal garden.

**5.3** Skye has an unusually mild climate for its northerly latitude and the location will therefore support a wide range of new planting. Rainfall averages between 130 and 150 cm per year but there is a low frequency of overnight frosts and lying snow. Average annual daily temperatures range from a minimum of around 2 °C in January to a maximum of almost 16 °C in August. Bayfield is sheltered from the Island's prevailing south to south-westerly winds and those from the second most prevalent easterly direction.



*Above: Bayfield  
Left: River Leasgeary*

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## ANALYSIS

Figure 1



## Infrastructure

### Electricity

**6.1** Scottish Hydro-Electric advise that there is adequate capacity to serve most proposed land uses in the area.

### Drainage

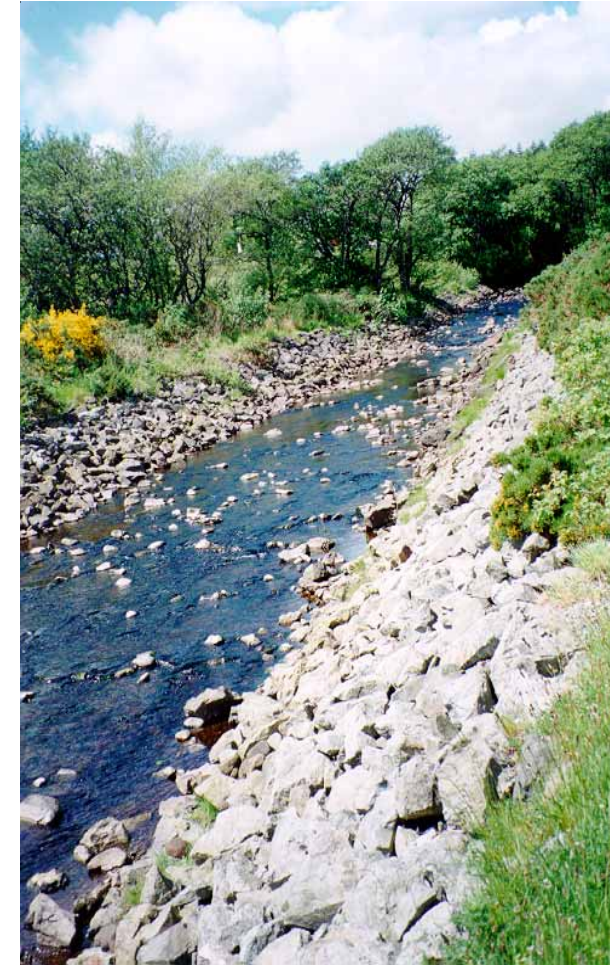
**6.2** There is an existing network of public sewers that cross the site. These link to the macerator plant on the banks of the Leasgeary. Two long outfalls for storm and foul water extend from the plant out into the loch. The North of Scotland Water Authority [NOSWA] are presently considering the need to upgrade the village's system to provide primary treatment by 2005. Existing capacity is limited but such an upgrade would create a surplus sufficient for significant additional development. As yet, no decision has been made as to the location of any primary treatment facility but developers should leave open the option of this development on the site of the existing macerator. Developers should also have regard to the location of NOSWA infrastructure to allow future maintenance. There may be need to divert or strengthen sewers. Some surface water drainage problems have occurred in this area and any scheme will need to address this issue.

### Access

**6.3** The Bayfield area is presently served by two accesses. Lisigarry Road links from Bridge Road and Upper Bayfield Road from the Green. Developers will be required to widen the junction with Bridge Road to improve visibility and allow left and right turning traffic dedicated lanes. There may also, dependent upon the scale of development envisaged, be a need to install traffic lights at this junction. A Traffic Impact Assessment would be required of any significant development scheme. Expansion of Portree Harbour is dependent upon a new road being constructed from the south-eastern corner of the Brief site. Developers should reserve the alignment for such an access link as shown on Figure 2.

### Parking

**6.4** Bayfield is the principal parking area for the central part of the village. It caters for commuter, shopper, tourist, coach and HGV demands. Any additional development should not lead to a net loss of general needs public parking. This general needs provision should ideally equate to 130 bays and 32 spaces for HGV's and coaches combined. There may be an opportunity to relocate the HGV requirement elsewhere in the village. A dropping off point where buses and coaches can deposit passengers and then turn should be provided at the east end of the existing car parking area.



*Left: River Leasgeary*

## Policy

**7.1** The Skye and Lochalsh Local Plan adopted in March 1999 sets out the Council's development framework for Bayfield [see contacts for further information below]. It highlights the area as a major opportunity for a comprehensive redevelopment scheme and encourages the following features:

- a landscaped waterfront amenity area;
- improved parking arrangements;
- improved vehicular access from Bridge Road and the establishment of a new road link to Portree harbour;
- new buildings for retail, office, tourist-related and residential development;
- new footpath links and the integration of these with the existing path network;
- better functional links with the village centre.

specific development opportunities are highlighted in the Local Plan.

## Suggested Uses

### Land Reclamation

**8.1** Reclamation of the foreshore will be an essential mechanism to create sufficient land to accommodate both additional development and the access infrastructure to service it. Developers will be required to construct a rock armour revetment along the southern perimeter of the Brief site and to lodge inert fill behind this coastal defence. The design should be to 4 metres above Ordnance Datum and ideally have a slope of between 1:2.5 and 1:3 so as to ensure stability and encourage the establishment of self seeding native species.

**8.2** Developers should also consider the provision of a temporary slipway and boat park close to the site of the existing derelict slip. Eventually these facilities would be transferred to the new harbour and the landward ground converted to public open space.

### Riverside Open Space & Footpath Network

**8.3** The north-western corner of the Brief site lends itself to the establishment of a riverside park. Providing such a public open space would create an attractive asset for visitors and locals alike. It would also form an important link in the chain of green space along the River Leasgeary corridor. A more formalised footpath through the area would connect to existing paths north of Bridge Road and to the tourist gateway at Bayfield car park.



*Above : Upper Bayfield Road  
Development Site*

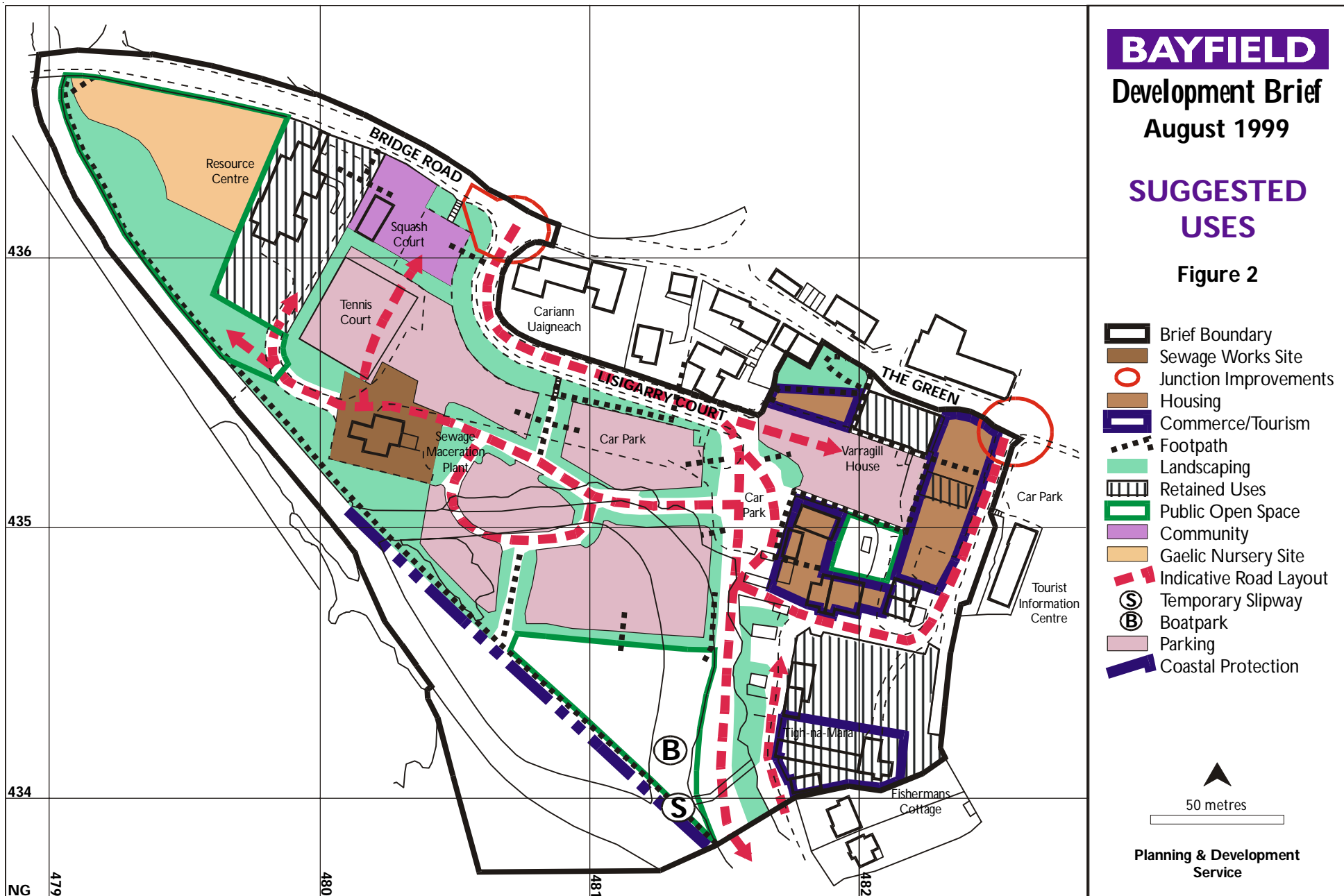
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### SUGGESTED USES

Figure 2



Potential exists at the southern edge of the reclaimed area for an additional area of public open space, which could include interpretation of a village-wide network of paths. An extant planning consent exists for a gaelic nursery at the Bridge Road end of the Brief site. Should the funding for this proposal not be forthcoming then this land could be incorporated within the riverside park. Pedestrian linkages to the village centre should also be extended and improved. These should be segregated from vehicular access wherever possible and allow at least one ramped [suitable for the disabled] access to the Green. A uniform design of signposting should reinforce this connection with the core of the settlement. Suggested linkages are shown on Figure 2.

## Relocated Uses

**8.4** Potential exists to relocate several uses to assemble a large single development site at the heart of Bayfield. The Skye and Lochalsh Mental Health Association facility at the "Cabin" has only a short period to run on its lease and is prepared to relocate to similar sized but purpose built accommodation. The site of the existing squash court would be ideal for the Association in terms of the functional links with the Social Work Resource Centre. Portree Tennis and Squash Club are also eager to move to an improved facility. They are currently investigating the option of building onto an existing complex such as the Community Centre or Shinty Club House. This Brief supports the relocation of both uses. The restaurant at Bayfield is the other use capable of relocation. It too is on a short lease but as a going concern requires alternative

premises should redevelopment take place. A unit of similar size with integral staff accommodation is the requirement of the tenant. Storage for the restaurant exists in the base of the Employment Service building on the west side of Upper Bayfield Road. The Brief does not envisage the redevelopment of this site given the tenant's long lease and presence of residential flats above.

## Commercial Development

**8.5** The Skye and Lochalsh Local Plan supports a mix of commercial land uses at Bayfield. Smaller retail units, offices, tourist related and entertainment facilities, and restaurants. Developers are encouraged to propose a mix of development on the sites indicated in Figure 2. These would produce an "L" shaped terrace of buildings creating and enclosing a second "square" of development. The local enterprise company have highlighted the high demand for additional office accommodation in central Portree. Previously, a supermarket has been approved in principle at Bayfield. However the land available, even with reclamation, is insufficient to support anything more than a 10,000ft<sup>2</sup> store in terms of parking, access and traffic circulation. Current indications are that the market requires a larger outlet and operators are concentrating their investment intentions elsewhere in the village. Should this search prove fruitless then the Brief may be amended to reconsider a supermarket at Bayfield.



*Above : Tennis and Squash Club  
- potential to relocate*

## Residential Development

**8.6** A lack of suitable housing land in the village has suppressed an already high demand for residential units in Portree. Potential exists to incorporate flatted residential units within the upper floors of the main development sites. Lochalsh and Skye Housing Association have indicated the need for such accommodation and their preparedness to consider funding.

## Retained Uses

**8.7** Certain existing uses should not be redeveloped or would be difficult to relocate. The salmon netting station including its drying green is Listed in architectural terms and should be protected. There is potential to convert buildings to provide holiday accommodation and/or a heritage centre so long as the setting of the site is not compromised. Parking for any such conversion may be available as part of the development of a temporary boat park.

**8.8** Similarly the electricity substation on Upper Bayfield Road may be difficult to relocate and developers should address this issue perhaps by developing over the plant. As stated above the Employment Service building should be retained but integrated within the layout of the new buildings as far as possible. MacLeod Hotels Ltd. wish to retain their patrons car park on the corner of Upper Bayfield Road and the Green but are prepared to consider an excambion arrangement for other adjacent, Green level parking. As such an important corner site in visual and commercial terms, developers are encouraged to

broker a potential solution to this issue. The Social Work Resource Centre on Bridge Road and Varragill House on the Green are also fixed elements.

## Design, Layout and Landscaping

**9.1** The Brief site provides a tremendous opportunity to link the historic core of Portree with its high quality Conservation Area with its most attractive outlook towards the Cuillins. This link can be achieved in functional terms by improved vehicle and pedestrian access but also requires a visual connection. The gap site south-east of the former post office provides the source of such a link. Development of this site should be kept to one and a half storey and positioned on the lower part of the site. In this way, those parking at Bayfield can be drawn through the second square created at the lower level up and through the gap site to Somerled Square and the heart of the village.



*Above : Gap Site at the Green*



**9.2** More generally, the design of any new buildings should properly reflect the traditional character of the locality in terms of form, use of materials and finishes and be of a quality commensurate with the location. External roof cladding should be in natural slate or a suitable slate-like alternative and should include variation in pitch avoiding large expanses of flat roof. Buildings on the Upper Bayfield Road frontage should not exceed 3 storeys in height. A fully detailed landscaping scheme will be required of developers. This should provide for generous boundary tree and shrub planting in particular in the treatment of the waterfront area and for landscaping within the car parks.

## Sources of Advice and Funding

**10.1** ENTRUST landfill tax grants may be available to support environmental improvement projects at this location. The presence in Portree of one of the few active landfill sites in the Highlands allows local groups a good chance of receiving funding. Agencies in the Highlands are also investigating the possibility of securing Objective 1 "phase-out" funding in support of this project and related schemes to redevelop Portree Harbour and provide much needed additional employment land to the north of the village. Agencies such as NOSWA and Lochalsh and Skye Housing Association are likely to direct investment to this area in the future. The local community are supportive of measures to enhance Bayfield and the broad content of this Brief is endorsed by the provisions of the statutory local plan. A successful redevelopment package

of Bayfield will require a joint public/private initiative. Expressions of interest are invited.

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