

Ard Dhubh



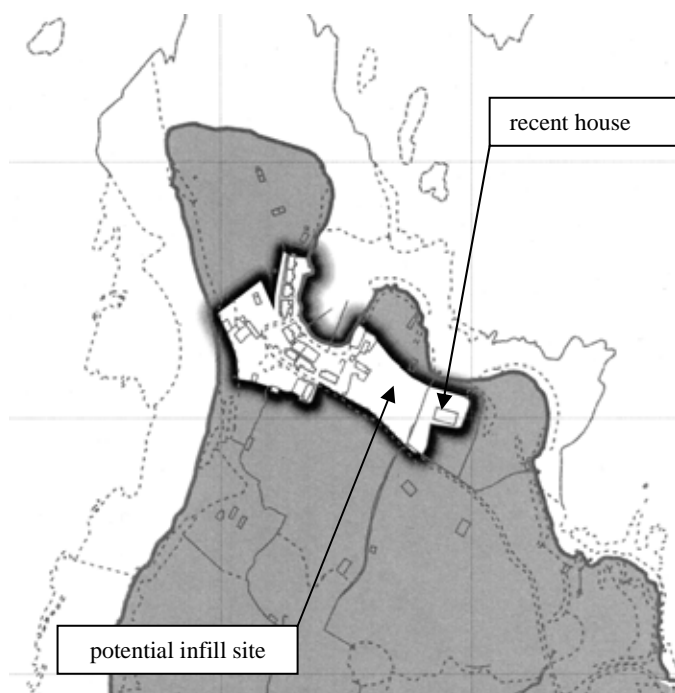
Chapter No:

24

- 15 - Mr Roger Evans [Written Submissions]
54 - Mr W M Youngson [Written Submissions]

BACKGROUND

1. Ard Dhubh is a small community situated at the head of the northern promontory of a peninsula located to the south of Applecross. The Proposals Map Inset for the settlement (shown below left) defines the area as being of low sensitivity. The Settlement Development Area extends eastwards to include a new house which has been built in a location separated from the remainder of the village by open ground which slopes down to the shore. On the west side, there are open areas of undeveloped ground around the otherwise tightly grouped traditional properties.



Local plan Proposals Inset Map for Ard Dhubh

The Settlement Development Area extends eastwards to include a new house which has been built in a location separated from the remainder of the village by open ground which slopes down to the shore. On the west side, there are open areas of undeveloped ground around the otherwise tightly grouped traditional properties.

2. Development Factors identified in the deposit draft local plan include the following:

- Views across the bay from the road should be protected; and
- Redevelopment of derelictcroft buildings will be supported.”

3. The Landscape Capacity Study considers that there is little scope for new development and that any proposed, should aim to maintain the tightly focused structure of the existing settlement and its strong relationship with local land form, which contributes to the wider landscape character.

SUMMARY OF THE OBJECTIONS

4. The **first objector** concluded that no land had been designated for new development in the settlement, as the only designated area was part of a croft and part common grazings. He considered that the concept of redevelopment of the derelict croft buildings would not sit happily with what was a very old township. Accordingly, unless specific proposals were made for future

building, the growth of the settlement would be stopped, thereby denying younger people who had been born in the village an opportunity to live there.

5. The **second objector** agreed that development within the village would be almost impossible because the houses formed a tightly-knit group and, even if it were possible to squeeze in a further house, such a move would ruin the appearance of the village.

6. The **council** responded that, while the opportunities for development within the Settlement Development Area might be limited, some scope remained for the redevelopment of derelict buildings, as indicated on the Inset Map (see paragraph 2 above). However, the council did not accept that any development would ruin the village and proposals within the Settlement Development Area would be assessed against Policy 1 (now 1A); nor that there was a lack of opportunity for development elsewhere on the peninsula, as the plan had a policy framework for assessing development which recognised the relevant natural and cultural resources.

7. The Applecross Peninsula lay within a fragile area and in such areas, the plan accepted that development proposals outwith the Settlement Development Areas would be supported where development would support communities experiencing difficulty in maintaining population and services, although it would have to meet the requirements of Policy 2.1 first (ie areas of low sensitivity – see full text of deposit draft plan policy in Appendix 1; or, as revised in Appendix 2).

CONCLUSIONS

8. Traditional houses predominate in this compact village, although a recently constructed addition of an entirely different character lies near the approach road. The council has drawn the boundary of the Settlement Development Area to include both, despite the visual separation between the two. It seems to me that it had a choice in so doing, either to define the settlement as it has done; or to draw the boundary tightly around the original grouping. Had this latter course been chosen, the strategy for future development would have been one of infill (between the existing properties), or of restoration (of derelict buildings) and I find that this would have been an entirely creditable strategy – indeed, it would have been more likely to have retained the close-knit character of the existing village. In the circumstances, it would have been the course which I would have favoured.

9. Nevertheless, I find the alternative course chosen by the council allows greater scope for growth, and I consider it to be one which is probably more sympathetic to an area identified as fragile, whereby the additional open land between the traditional areas of the village and the new dwelling house will make provision for newer forms of design and construction.

10. In these terms therefore, I do not agree with the objectors that (a) more room for growth is required; or (b) that infill development would spoil the character of the village. In the case of (a), historic growth rates within this settlement are clearly minimal and I consider the additional ground included in the Settlement Development Area together with the scope for infill and restoration of the traditional dwelling houses should be more than adequate provision. As regards (b), I agree that it would be very easy to spoil the character of this charming village with even one inappropriate conversion. In this regard, I see a duty with the council to make certain that this does not happen, by ensuring a rigorous assessment of such development proposals when they come to planning application stage.

RECOMMENDATION

11. Accordingly, I recommend no change to the Settlement Development Area shown in the Proposals Inset Map for Ard Dhubh in the deposit draft of the Wester Ross Local Plan in order to accommodate these objections.