

Culduie



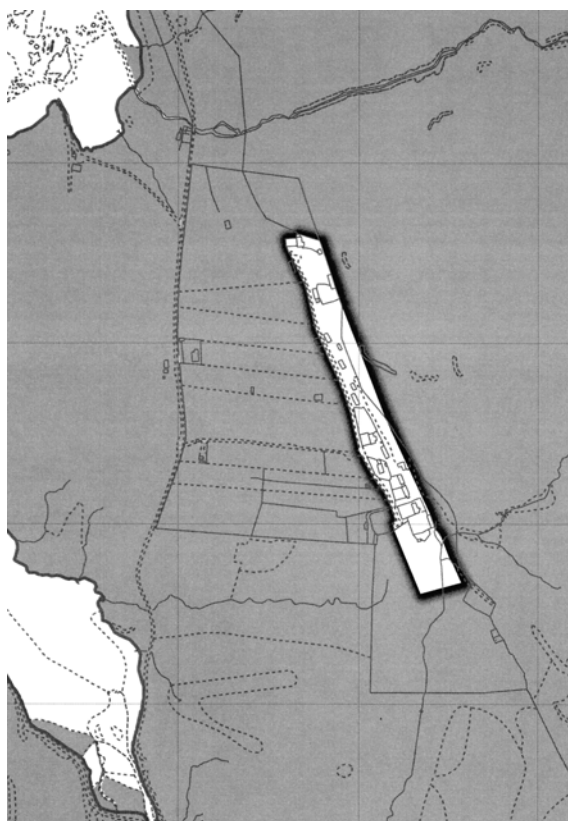
Chapter No:

28

19 - Mr George Graham
55 - Applecross Community Council

BACKGROUND

1. Culduie is essentially a linear settlement. It lies at the foot of the hills, set well back from, and lying on the east side of the main road to Toscaig, at the foot of the Applecross Peninsula.



Extract from the deposit draft plan's Proposals Map Inset showing the Settlement Development Area

The land lying between the houses and the main road has been split into strips of grazing land which vary in width – some being as narrow as 15m – and in length between 100m at the north end and 300m at the south end.

2. The Proposals Map Inset for Culduie is as shown (left). It includes additional agricultural land at the south end of the Settlement Development Area boundary. Amongst its Development Factors is,

- “• Retain separation to Camusterrach to the north.”

Nevertheless, it is to the north of the defined settlement that two new developments have been constructed.

3. General Guidance in the Landscape Capacity Study is that development should aim to maintain the tightly focused structure of the existing settlement and its strong relationship with the local land form which contributed to the wider landscape character. It was considered that there was an opportunity at the south end to extend and infill the linear pattern of development, while maintaining the strong and characteristic association with the break in slope. This was a preferred site for up to two detached houses.

However, the study confirmed that no development should take place on the pasture land to the front of the Settlement Development Area in order to reinforce the association between the built development and the break in slope.

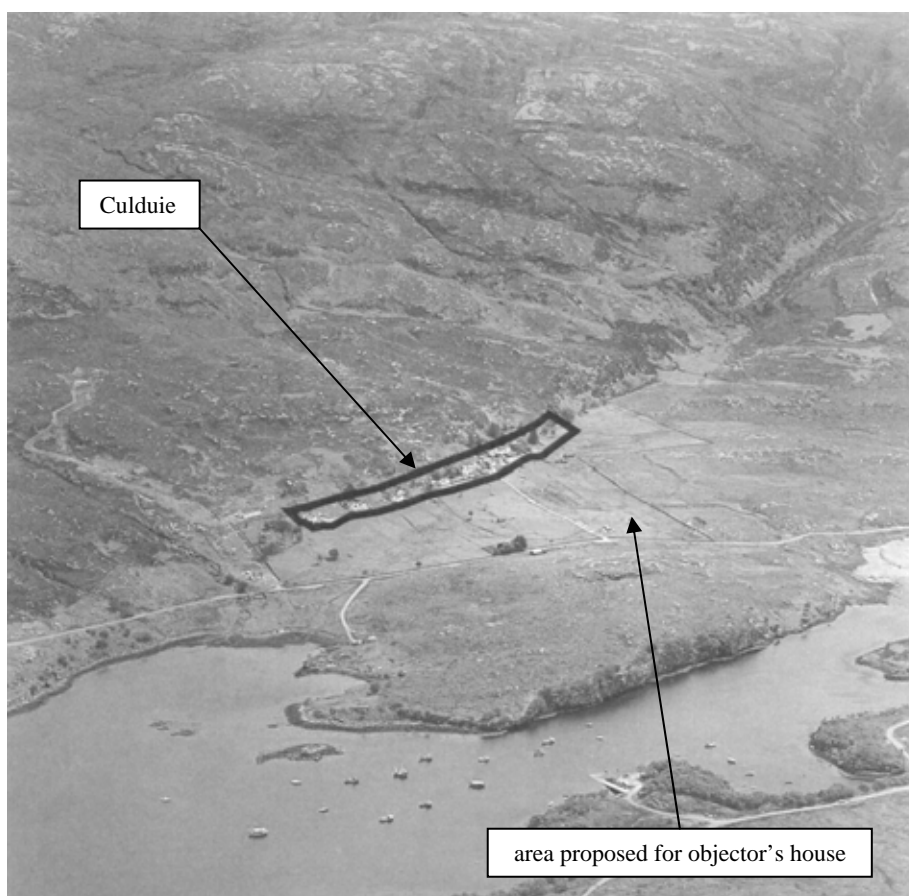
SUMMARY OF THE OBJECTIONS

4. The **first objector** pointed out the limited space allocated for development within the Culduie Settlement Development Area. The area identified was neither adequate in size, nor the most suitable for development. The plan stated that any further development required to reflect the exceptional linear pattern of the current settlement, but this failed to recognise that the pattern had already been broken by a newly built house and a water treatment works to the north of the settlement; and by a single dwelling house which already existed by the road to the west of the crofting strips. These houses should now be recognised by redrawing the Settlement Development Area boundary around them.

5. The strip of land involved in the Settlement Development Area as shown in the plan had no more room in which to build, as any land that there might be was already owned by the current householders or was associated with specific crofts and could not be apportioned. This applied to the additional area at the south end of the Settlement Development Area, and it should therefore be deleted from it. Infill development had already taken place on the only suitable site with the development of a substantial new house.

6. For a crofter who wished to live in the township where his family's croft was, land had to be able to be apportioned in order to build a home. The only land which could be apportioned was common grazing land and that lay outwith the Settlement Development Area. Without a house, planning for the development of the croft became difficult and the sustainability of the family in Applecross more doubtful. Land prices had risen so high that buying a house was extremely difficult for local people. As a result, the objector had identified land to the south-west of the settlement (shown on the photograph below) and had opened negotiations with the council with a view to apportioning part of the land for the construction of a house and byre. The land owners would not oppose such a move which depended upon achieving a planning permission. However, in such a location, the objector considered that the house would not detract from the linear pattern of the village, and the Settlement Development Area should be enlarged to accommodate it.

7. The **Applecross Community Council** supported the removal of the additional area of croft land shown at the south end of the Settlement Development Area (see paragraph 5 above).



Copy of aerial photograph submitted by the council.

SUMMARY OF THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE

8. The council considered that the aerial photograph it had submitted of Culduie illustrated the high quality of the setting of Culduie and its strong linear settlement pattern. The photograph is reproduced (see previous page).

9. The option proposed by the objector of incorporating part of the common grazings to the west of the Settlement Development Area had been considered by the council but rejected on the grounds that to include a wider area could damage the settlement pattern which made Culduie so attractive. In addition, this omission from the inset map was supported by the Landscape Capacity Study. Accordingly, the council proposed a modification to the plan to add a Development Factor to the Proposals Map Inset for Culduie to state,

“• Development should respect the exceptional linear pattern of this settlement and its strong relationship with the land form.”

10. In regard to the objections in relation to the arable land at the south end of the settlement, the council conceded that the land involved was important arable croft land and therefore proposed a further modification to remove this area from the Settlement Development Area.

CONCLUSIONS

11. I agree with the council that the aerial photograph illustrates the strong linear form of the settlement, as well as the agricultural land which lies between it and the public road. It also demonstrates the potential for infill development should there be a pressing need for further housing in the immediate area. Renovation of derelict properties would provide another alternative.

12. Further opportunities exist within the settlements of Camusterrach and Camusteel to the north, in Ard Dhubh to the west and only a little further afield to the south in Toscaig. The availability of land allocations in these settlements will not suit the objector whose family lives in Culduie, although I regard the opportunities afforded by infilling within the existing Settlement Development Area to be the most appropriate for his needs.

13. The alternative which he suggests, of building on the rolling agricultural land which provides such an attractive setting for the village would be wholly inappropriate in my opinion and I support the council's position in resisting any proposals for such development. Development at the north end of the village, which has been highlighted by the objector, although less prominent, is also undesirable, as is ably demonstrated by the recent developments in that location. I consider that there are certain settlements which have particularly strong constraints, so that they require to have applied to them limitations of development, and I find Culduie to be an example of one. Accordingly, I support the council's opposition to extending the Settlement Development Area to the west of its existing boundary, and its proposal to add an additional development factor to the inset map, emphasising the requirement to respect the linear pattern of the settlement as set out in paragraph 9 above.

14. On the other hand, I do not follow the council's reasons for deleting the additional ground at the south end of the settlement, which would accommodate a further two houses. It seems to me that this land would follow to the letter the guidelines for extending the linear pattern of development in the village. Although agricultural land, an area with the potential for just two houses

is not likely to render the land unviable, and it would provide families in the village, such as those of the objector, the potential for remaining in the village. In addition, the Landscape Capacity Study advocates the use of this land for such a purpose.

RECOMMENDATION

15. Accordingly, I recommend that
- (i) the following be added as a Development Factor to the Proposals Map Inset for Culduie:

“• Development should respect the exceptional linear pattern of this settlement and its strong relationship with the land form.”;
 - (ii) the land between the Settlement Development Area and the public road be identified as an Area of Avoidance in terms of the policy set out in Chapter 21 of this report; and
 - (iii) the council’s proposed amendment to the boundary of the Settlement Development Area at the south end of the village be deleted and that there be no alteration to the boundary as currently shown in the deposit draft of the Wester Ross Local Plan.