

Fearnmore



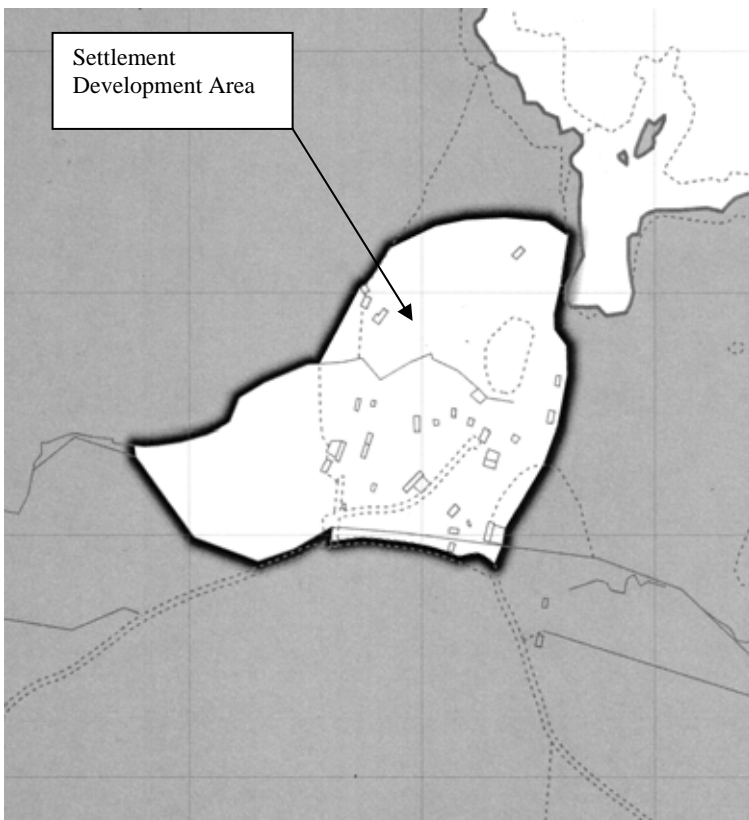
Chapter No:

30

65 - Scottish Natural Heritage [Written Submissions]
Modification Objector # 8 - Mr Owen Kilbride [Written Submissions]

BACKGROUND

1. Fearnmore lies on a steep slope adjacent to the most northern point of the coastal road around the Applecross Peninsula. It is identified on the Proposals Map Inset as lying within an area of low sensitivity (see extract below). Amongst the Development Factors noted on the inset map is one which confirms that,



Extract from Proposals Map Inset for Fearnmore

“• Redevelopment of derelict croft buildings will be supported.”

SUMMARY OF THE OBJECTION

2. The **objector** pointed out that the Fearnmore Settlement Development Area had been extended to take account of a previous suggestion that further development to the north could be accommodated. The Settlement Development Area had also been extended to the west, and it was agreed that development could also be accommodated in that area. In addition, with a similar land form even further to the west, more development could be sited in that area on the same basis, although buildings would need to be carefully located to maintain the existing character. Accordingly, the objector considered that development should be located on the lower lying areas, with houses visually related to, and on the leeward side of the rocky outcrops which characterised the area and that a note should be included on the inset map to that effect.

SUMMARY OF THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE

3. The **council** accepted that development within the Settlement Development Area should be located on the lower lying areas and related to the rocky outcrops. Accordingly, it proposed a modification to add an additional Development Factor to state (additional text shown underlined),

“• Development should be located on lower lying areas and seek to relate visually to rocky outcrops.”

FURTHER SUBMISSIONS

4. While supporting the proposal that any development should be sympathetic to the features of the landscape, there was an **objection to the proposed modification** on the grounds that such a Development Factor would be contrary to the aims of the plan and would not respect the settlement pattern on the ground. It was considered that Scottish Natural Heritage was over-stepping its remit in attempting to preserve a post-clearance landscape and would do so at the expense of a thriving community. The boundary of the Settlement Development Area appeared to have little relevance to the suitability of the land to build on and there had been no reference to land availability. The Settlement Development Area should be flexible enough to ensure that local people find a place to live. Instead therefore, the Development Factor should be redrafted to read as follows (objector's amendment shown in *italics*):

“• *Development should seek to relate visually to rocky outcrops.*”

5. The **council** responded by referring to the Landscape Capacity Study which stated that the compact nature of the settlements along this stretch of the coast should be maintained; while at Fearnmore itself,

“there are additional opportunities to site housing sheltered by localised rock outcrops near to the shore.”

It was therefore assumed that proposals coming forward, particularly in the area to the west where there was currently no development, would be located carefully in order to maintain the character of the existing settlement. In particular this would entail ensuring that development was located on the relatively lower lying ground between (rather than on top of) the rocky outcrops. These outcrops characterised the area, and locating development among them would ensure that it was contained by the outcrops and that they would form a backcloth to it.

6. In discussion with Scottish Natural Heritage the council had agreed that assessment of any development proposals within the Settlement Development Area under Policy 1: Settlement Development Areas (now Policy 1A) would ensure that the existing settlement pattern could be maintained. It was therefore considered that the recommendation by the original objector could be adequately dealt with through the Settlement Development Area Policy; that the Development Factor was no longer required; and that it should therefore be deleted.

CONCLUSIONS

7. I have noted that the Landscape Capacity Study, which deals with Fearnbeg and Fearnmore together, has the additional information that,

“Both settlements have buildings which are derelict.”;

Settlements dominated by renovated croft buildings with narrow gables and traditionally pitched roofs; there are very little new buildings (*sic*), or development of modern proportions.”;

and that,

“At Fearnmore, there are additional opportunities to site housing sheltered by localised rock outcrops near to the shore.”

8. Accordingly, I agree with the objector that the existing settlement pattern on the ground should be followed where possible, and it seems to me that the most appropriate means of doing so would be first, by the renovation of existing derelict crofts; and second by an element of new building, although from the above observations, where this occurs, care will require to be taken to retain, and not to conflict with, the characteristics of the existing croft houses.

9. In these terms, it may be that the boundary of the Settlement Development Area has been drawn too widely around the existing settlement. By retaining it closer to the existing community, it would encourage the renovation of existing buildings. Be that as it may, this is not the issue in these objections; instead, it is whether or not the council’s proposed modification should be applied to the plan.

10. It seems to me that there is nothing in the council’s response to the objection to its modification which conflicts with its initial reaction to apply the additional development factor to the inset map. It would be wrong in my opinion therefore to assume, as the council does, that the proposals would be located carefully to maintain the existing character of the settlement, as it would also appear from the submission of the objector to the modification that he would intend to site any new building outwith the low lying area (the deleted words of the Development Factor), and therefore outwith the area supported by the Landscape Capacity Study. Accordingly, I consider that there is every reason to retain the proposed modification, as this will leave the alternatives of either developing in the advocated area, or of renovating one of the existing derelict houses, either of which options would be to the benefit of the settlement.

RECOMMENDATION

11. I therefore recommend that the modification proposed by the council and set out in paragraph 3 above, be incorporated into the Wester Ross Local Plan prior to its adoption.