

Upper Toscaig



Chapter No:

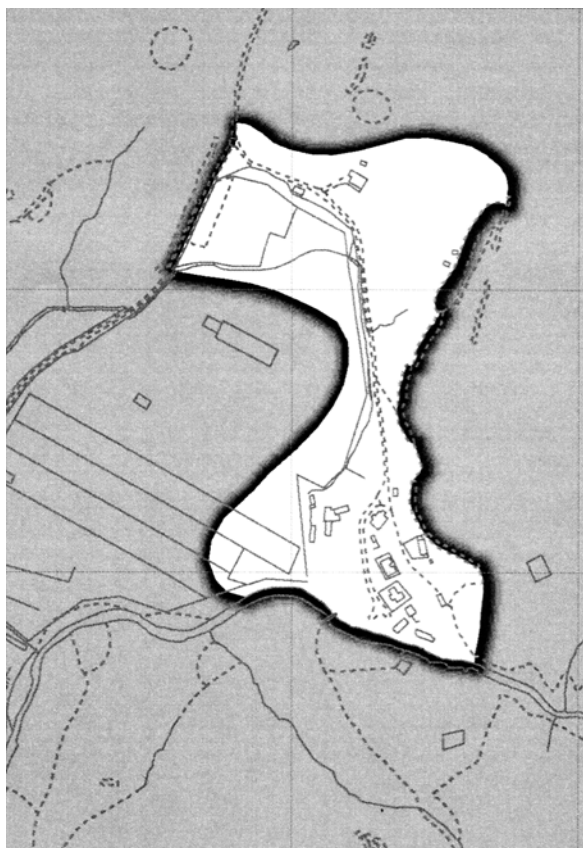
52

- 33 - Mr Derek MacLennan [Written Submissions]
- 38 - Toscaig Common Grazings Committee [Written Submissions]
- 55 - Applecross Community Council [Written Submissions]
- 65 - Scottish Natural Heritage [Written Submissions]

BACKGROUND

1. Upper Toscaig lies to the north of Toscaig (see chapter 48 above) and comprises a group of traditional properties at the head of a short cul-de-sac leading east, and down the slope from the unclassified road at the south end of the Applecross Peninsula. A further two houses, one recently erected, lie closer to the road junction. In the Wester Ross Local Plan Upper Toscaig Inset Map, the settlement is shown to lie within an area of low sensitivity. One of the development factors specified in the Proposals Map Upper Toscaig Inset (extract shown below) states that,

- “• Development should be on the lower ground to reflect the land form.”



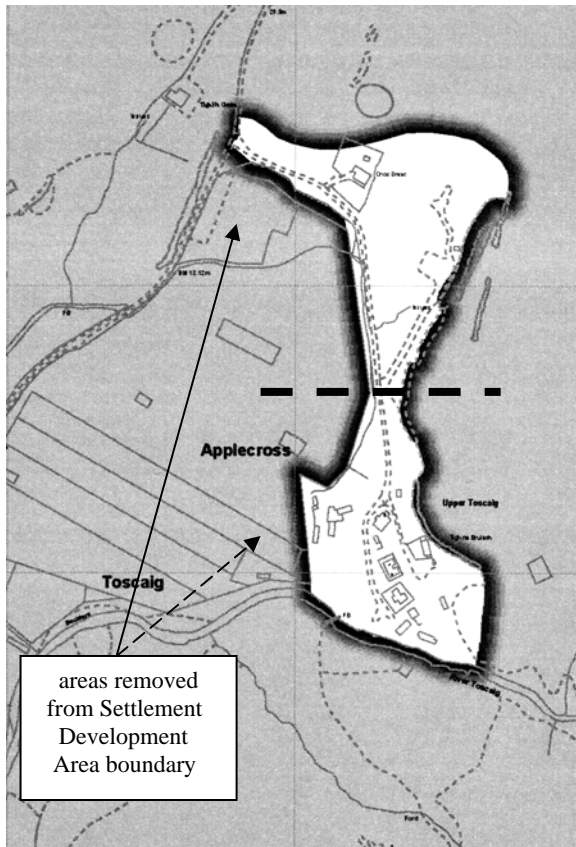
Extract from deposit draft Upper Toscaig Inset Map

SUMMARY OF THE OBJECTIONS

2. The objectors sought the removal from the identified Settlement Development Area of the croft land to the west of the public road. While certain of them (including Scottish Natural Heritage) wished to see development restricted to the lower slopes and sited well below the new house, others objected to the specification (see paragraph 1 above) that development should be on the lower ground, on the basis that the prime and the most favoured sites, were on the higher ground. There was also a request for greater flexibility in the choice of sites, as each was different.

SUMMARY OF THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE

3. Drawn to reflect the existing pattern of development on the ground, the Settlement Development Area boundary had included croft land on the western edge of the settlement below the road.



Council's proposed amendment to inset map

It had been the intention to avoid development on the upper slopes, where it would be more prominent. It was also recognised that there was well-used arable croft land to the west of the road.

4. However, in addition to the development potential of land lying to the east of the road, there was further potential for the redevelopment of derelict croft buildings (the conversion of one being granted planning permission in 2002). It was therefore proposed to remove the development factor requiring development to be on the lower ground to reflect the land form, and it would be left to Policy 1 (now policy 1A) to protect the elements of siting and design.

5. This approach would allow for greater flexibility when choosing sites for building while recognising that the impact of any proposal, particularly on the higher ground, would be fully considered. Areas of arable land to the west of the road would also be excluded from the Settlement Development Area on the basis of the existing crofting use, so that the amended inset map for the settlement would appear as shown (above left).

CONCLUSIONS

6. I can understand that the crofters would prefer to keep development away from the limited areas of arable land which have been reclaimed from the rough ground around the settlement. The council's amendments to the boundary of the Settlement Development Area resolve that objection.

7. However, while Scottish Natural Heritage does not oppose the settlement boundary as shown, which includes the two houses close to the main road, it recommends that development be restricted to the lower slopes. Clearly, this is to prevent any new development from appearing prominent in the landscape, as confirmed by the council in its submissions. Accordingly, it seems to me that the removal of the lower slopes to the west of the road would fly in the face of such a policy.

8. Remaining land around the traditional part of the settlement is more restricted, although there remains scope for a number of infill houses. On the other hand, the council notes the further potential for the redevelopment of derelict croft buildings (with the conversion of one being granted planning permission in 2002). I find this preferable to prominent new building on the upper slopes and it seems to me that with both infill and renovation potential, there is sufficient scope for development in this settlement without the need to extend the boundary to include the two houses closer to the road junction. These have been erected in the open countryside, and I see no need to justify them by attempting to include them within a settlement which is significantly separate.

RECOMMENDATION

9. Accordingly, I recommend that
- (i) the upper half of the Settlement Development Area as shown at paragraph 5 above be deleted from its narrowest point northwards (ie at the broken line shown in the illustration at paragraph 5 above); and
 - (ii) the development factor (shown in paragraph 1 above) also be removed from the inset map.