



**INVERLOCHY CASTLE**

*Hotel & Restaurant*

# Torlundy/Tomacharich Village Expansion

JUNE 2006

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## INTRODUCTION

### Background to the Report

EDAW has been retained since 2003 by Inverloch Castle Ltd (ICL) as landscape advisors to the Estate in relation to the development potential of its landholdings at Inverloch Castle, the internationally renowned 5-star hotel which lies on the outskirts of Fort William near the foot of Ben Nevis in the Great Glen.

Initial conceptual proposals were originally prepared and presented to The Highland Council (THC) in March 2004 for discussion and comment. These were then further refined and updated, and an indicative master plan for the village of Torlundy and the wider estate was presented to THC in February 2005. The 'Torlundy Village Expansion' report (which this report should be read in conjunction with and should be considered as a successor to) was then submitted to the Council in April 2005, in order to initiate formal discussions on the most appropriate means by which the proposals could be incorporated into the new Local Plan.

This report has subsequently been prepared as a response to the Lochaber Futures Paper, which was published in March 2006 by the Council as a consultative exercise to inform the emerging Local Plan. Discussions and meetings with the Council have taken place throughout the process to date, in order to guide the evolution of ICL's proposals.

ICL welcomes the Council's open and inclusive approach towards the Estate's proposals to date and looks forward to discussing the contents of this report.

### The Client Advisory Team

The report has been produced on behalf of ICL, and is a collaborative effort prepared jointly by the Estate's advisors, in association with the Client. The Client Advisory Team comprises:

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| • EDAW plc            | Master planning and landscape matters;  |
| • Brodies LLP         | Planning and legal matters;             |
| • URS Corporation Ltd | Engineering and transportation matters; |
| • Tribal HCH          | Economic matters.                       |

### Planning Context

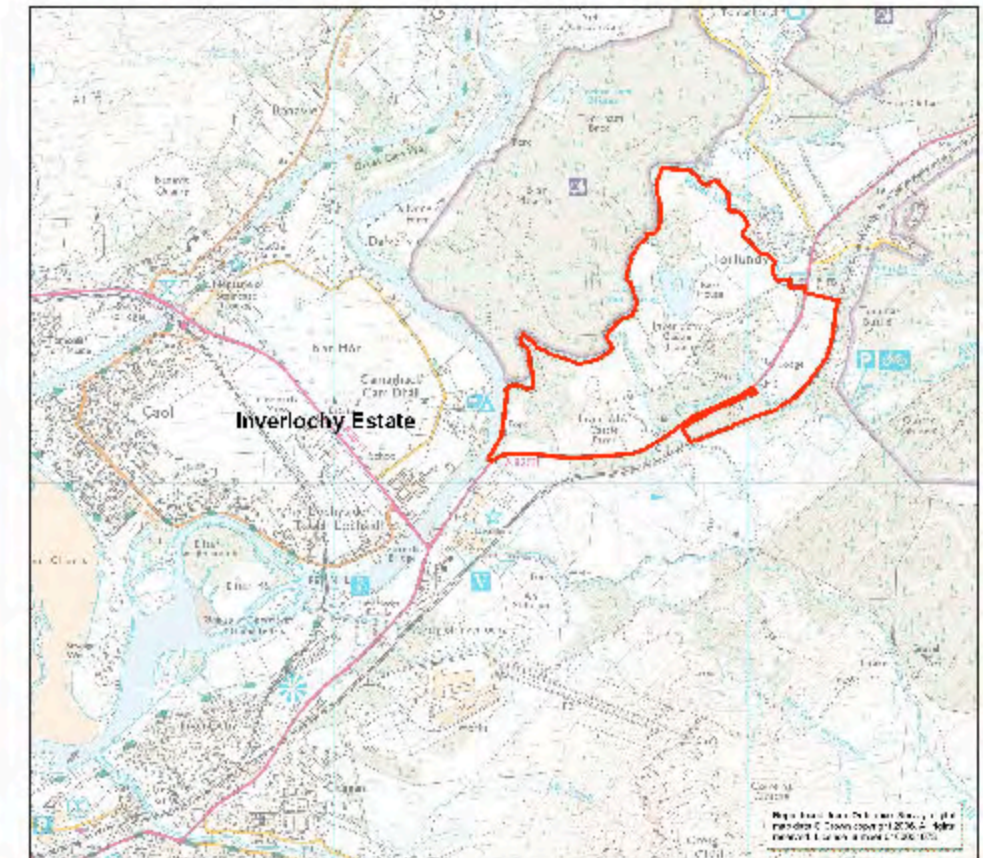
The existing adopted Lochaber Local Plan, which dates back to 1999, had identified an ambitious target rate of house building that essentially doubled that of the previous 20 years due to increased demand. However, although some small-scale and infill housing development has occurred in the last few years, the overall development rate has failed to increase to date. Many of the allocated sites have not been developed, primarily due to physical constraints making them economically disadvantageous, and pressure for housing in the Fort William area is now at a critical level.

The Council has commenced the process of preparing a replacement of the Lochaber Local Plan, which will 'update the statutory planning framework, provide a development and land use dimension to the Highland Community Plan, and contribute to the corporate vision for the Area'. In order to engage with all interested parties in considering the issues and options which will shape the Local Plan priorities for the period to 2015/16 and beyond, THC has published a consultation newspaper: Lochaber Futures. Responses to the Futures Paper are requested by Friday 9th June, and the Council expects to publish the draft replacement Lochaber Local Plan by November/December 2006, with adoption anticipated by the end of 2007.

The Futures Paper has acknowledged the significant constraints upon development in Fort William itself by putting forward four possible options for a new settlement of up to 500 homes. One of these four options is that of Torlundy/Tomacharich, which incorporates a significant part of Inverloch Castle Estate. The Client Advisory Team has therefore extended the initial assessment of Inverloch Estate included in the 'Torlundy Village Expansion' report to encompass the wider Torlundy area and compare this opportunity with the other three settlement options. As a formal response to the Futures Paper, the team has therefore prepared this report in support of the selection of Torlundy/Tomacharich as the preferred location for 500 homes.



Site Location



ICL Land Ownership

## THE FOUR NEW SETTLEMENT OPTIONS

### The Sites

The key settlement options, as identified in the Lochaber Futures Paper, are:

- Auchnahanate;
- Achindaal;
- Torlundy/Tomacharich; and
- Fassfern.

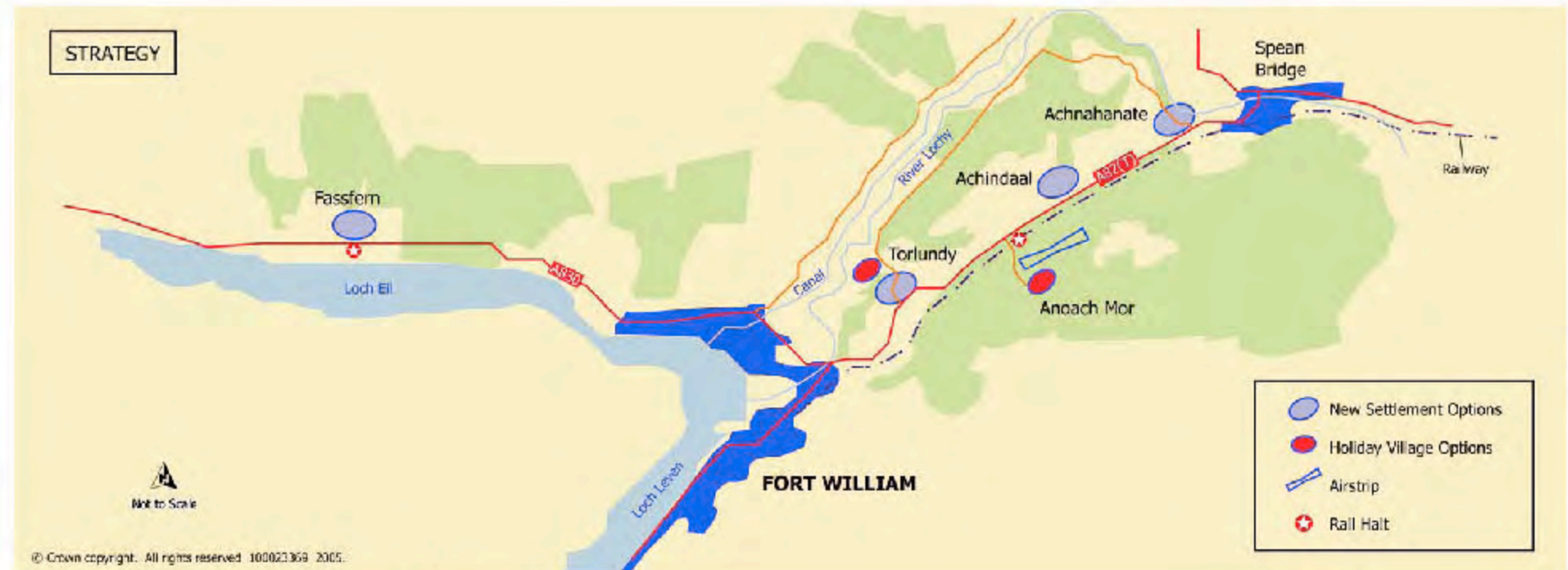
Three of the four new settlement options, as identified by the Council, are located in the A82 trunk road corridor, which runs near-parallel with the line of the Great Glen as far as the village of Spean Bridge to the north-east of Fort William. The Fassfern site is located to the west along the A830 trunk road on the shores of Loch Eil. In addition to the potential for 500 new homes with community facilities including a primary school, the Lochaber Futures Paper outlines other possible opportunities within the A82 corridor, including: two site options for a holiday village; a business park; expansion of the Nevis Range base station for leisure; an airstrip, rail halt and transport terminus; and public access and recreation facilities including a golf course.

The Futures Paper states that suitable locations for the new settlement would 'avoid flooding, higher ground (above 100m), other hazards and undue impacts on designated conservation sites and views ... Any new settlement would be phased over time with community facilities brought on-stream once a critical mass of residents has been reached. A Masterplan and secure planning agreements for infrastructure (including Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW)), transport and environmental management at developer cost, would be essential.'

### Baseline Information and Assessment

A baseline study, as carried out in the previous report, has been extended to the other three sites in order to compare them on an equal basis, and visits to all sites were carried out. It includes landscape and ecological designations, Listed Buildings, pedestrian and cycle access including Rights of Way, land above 100m, and areas of Ancient Woodland. Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs) have been considered; however, although the National Monument Record (NMR) had previously been looked at for Inverlochty, this has not been extended to the other sites in the time available. The baseline information has been shown for the overall study area for all four sites, and then summarised on an individual site-by-site basis, accompanied by photographs of the sites.

URS have also looked at the four identified sites with regard to potential constraints from ground conditions, access, drainage, services and flood risk. In the time available, the extent and detail to which this review has been undertaken has been limited to in-house records held by URS and readily available information from Scottish Water, SEPA and the like. The indicative flood maps held by SEPA use a generalised technique for plotting



A82 Strategic Development Corridor (reproduced from Lochaber Futures Paper)

areas at risk of flood in a 1 in 100 year storm event and are only a guide to possible impacts, as during the detailed planning process a 1 in 200 year storm event will be required to be assessed. As this technical information is outline in nature at this stage, it has been described rather than shown in plan form.

The locations of the new settlement options have only been shown indicatively in the Futures Paper. Therefore the oval shapes that demarcate their location on the subsequent EDAW-produced figures should also be considered indicative.

### Planning Issues

Current Scottish Planning Policy documentation (SPPs) and Planning Advice Notes (PANs) have been referred to in considering the viability of the four options. These have included SPP 15: Planning for Rural Development and SPP 3: Planning for Housing, and PANs 38: Housing Land, 72: Housing in the Countryside and 73: Rural Diversification.

Of particular relevance are the three key principles which underpin SPP 3 – the need for the planning system to seek to:

- Create quality residential environments;
- Guide development to the right places; and
- Deliver an adequate supply of housing land.

Creating a Quality Residential Development outlines a number of issues to be considered, including: design, layout and architecture; energy-efficiency from construction through to operation; form of the development should promote walking and cycling, link new and existing development, provide safe routes to schools and other

public facilities, and provide for access by public transport; the importance of landscape and open space, with existing natural features being retained and enhanced where possible; the identification of suitable residential densities; the need to provide a choice of housing types; and the encouragement of mixed communities in terms of a range of housing types and mixed-use developments.

Guiding Development to the Right Places recommends consideration of efficient use of land and buildings through re-use/redevelopment/conversion/infill in preference to greenfield development. Whether planning expansion of existing settlements or development of new ones, accessible locations 'which can be well integrated with existing and proposed public transport, walking and cycling networks' should be preferred. Safeguarding environmental resources – through minimising adverse effects from residential development upon natural heritage, including landscape character and biodiversity, national and international designations, archaeological sites, landscapes of historic importance, and avoidance of impact upon scheduled monuments – must be fully considered. Safety or amenity considerations may constrain development. Sites which would involve new or altered access from a trunk road require careful consideration, and sites 'likely to be at significant risk from flooding including those on the functional flood plain should not be developed for new housing'. Where brownfield/infill sites are inadequate to meet housing requirements, it will be necessary to release greenfield land next to built-up areas through extensions to existing towns and villages – sustainable transport options should be considered. Extensions need carefully planned – landscape setting and local architectural style should be respected, and the scale of new development should be appropriate. New settlements may be considered where: 'there are substantial ... constraints to the further growth of existing settlements, or it forms part of a strategy for promoting rural development and renewal; it could assist in

reducing development pressure on the greenbelt or areas of attractive countryside; it can be readily serviced by public transport; it will not have a significant adverse effect on any natural or built heritage interest safeguarded by a national or international designation; and it will not result in other significant environmental disbenefits'. New housing in rural areas should, 'where possible ... be met within or adjacent to existing settlements', although in some rural areas 'new housing outwith existing settlements may have a part to play in economic regeneration and environmental renewal'. 'Where there is significant demand for second homes, specific development plan provision could contribute to economic and social opportunities ...'. Development should 'support the rural economy and local services, promote rural regeneration, embody the principles of sustainable development, and enhance the rural environment'.





Delivering Housing Land states that development plans should 'take an informed long-term view on the requirement for new housing'. The Structure Plan should set out a strategy for the location of new housing over a period of at least 12 years and preferably up to 20 years (and) the Local Plan should convert this into effective site-specific allocations ... to meet requirements ... for at least 5 years'.

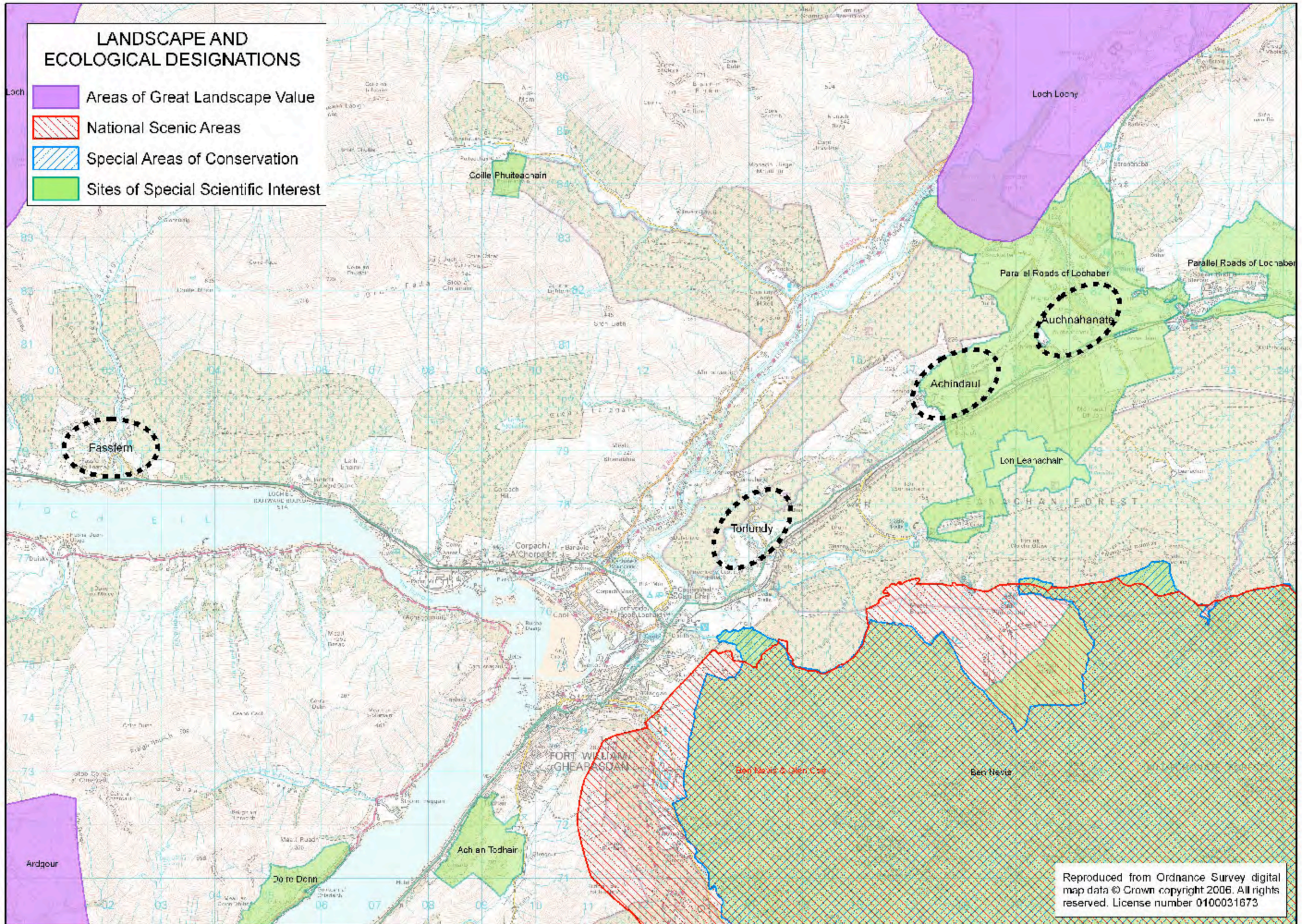
PAN 38 stresses that the effectiveness of individual sites, in being available for the construction of housing within the plan period, must be demonstrated, and must be free from the following types of constraint:

- ownership: the owner is expected to release the land or develop it. If owned by the local authority, it should only be included as part of a programme of land sales;
- physical: the site is free from constraints related to slope, aspect, flood risk, ground stability or vehicular access which would preclude development (unless there is commitment to/ funds available for remedial work required);
- contamination: the site is uncontaminated (unless there is commitment to/ funds available for remedial work required);
- deficit funding: any public funding required to make residential development economically viable has been committed;
- marketability: the site can be developed to provide marketable housing;
- infrastructure: the site is either free from infrastructure constraints, or any required infrastructure can be provided by the developer or other party;
- land use: housing is the sole preferred use, or if one of a range of possible uses then other factors point to it becoming a realistic option.

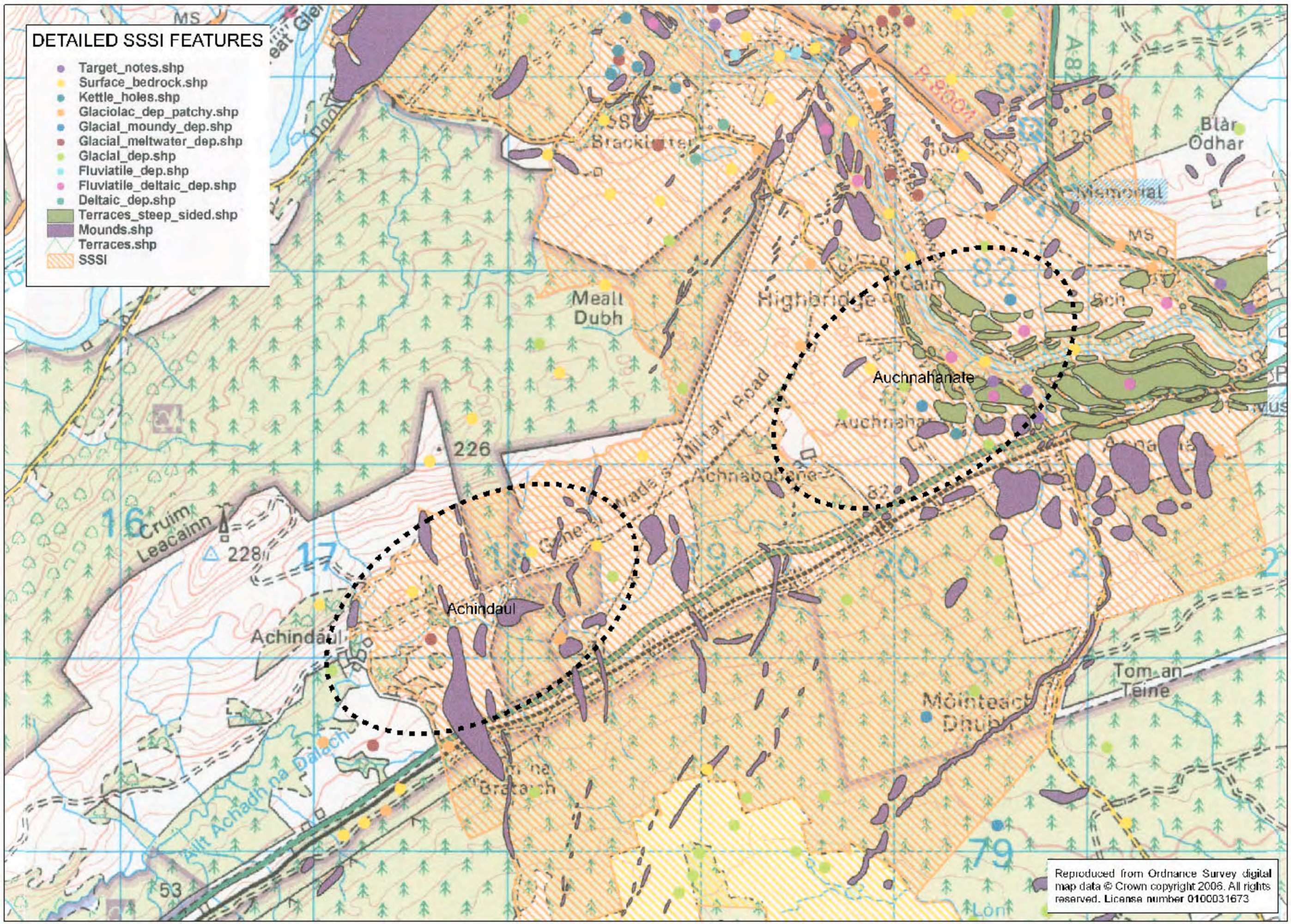
It also states that 'planning authorities should be able to demonstrate that their housing land allocations are feasible and realistic, offer a coherent strategy to meet short and longer-term needs in an environmentally acceptable manner, and are capable of being implemented'.

# LANDSCAPE AND ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS

-  Areas of Great Landscape Value
-  National Scenic Areas
-  Special Areas of Conservation
-  Sites of Special Scientific Interest

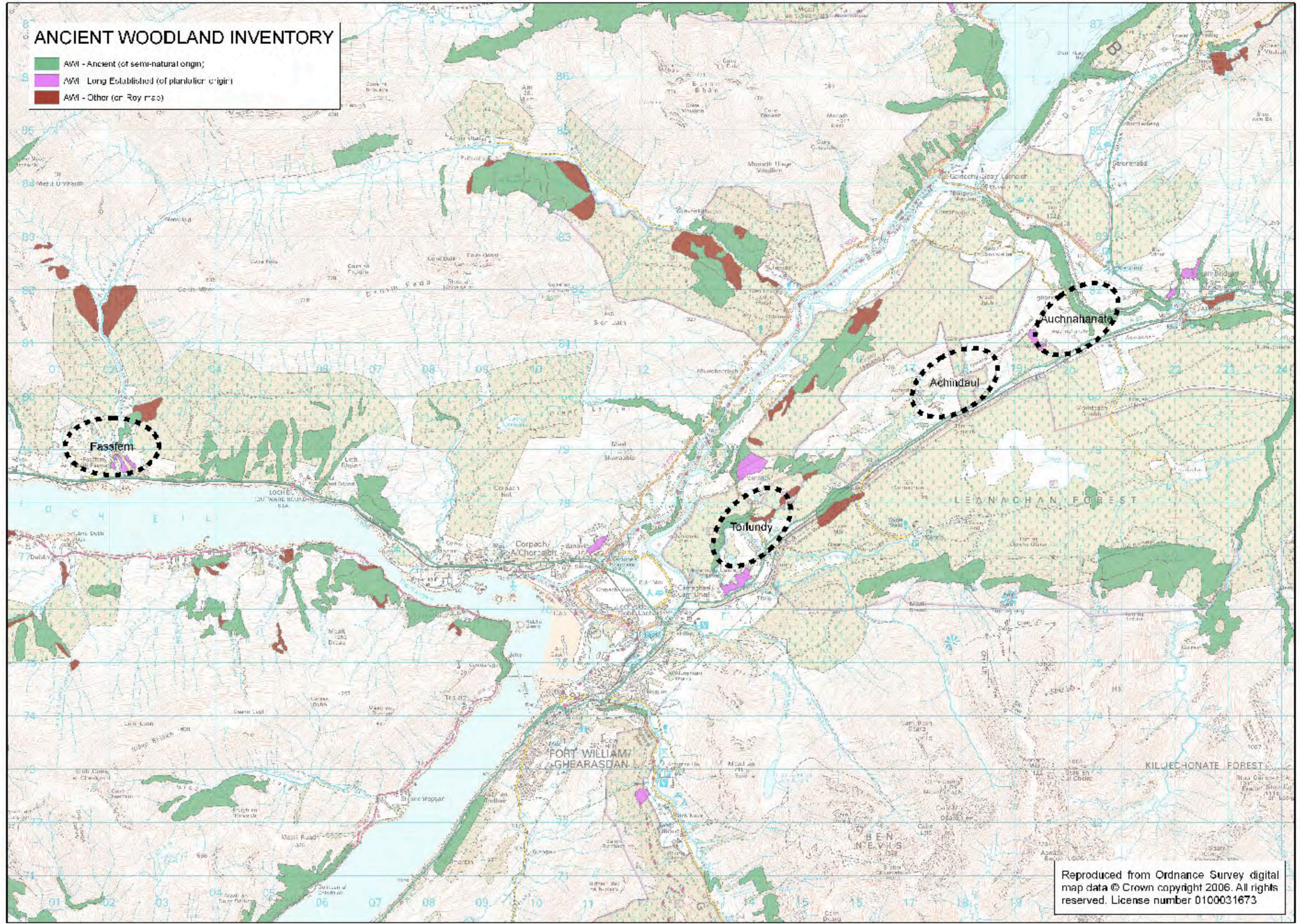


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# ANCIENT WOODLAND INVENTORY

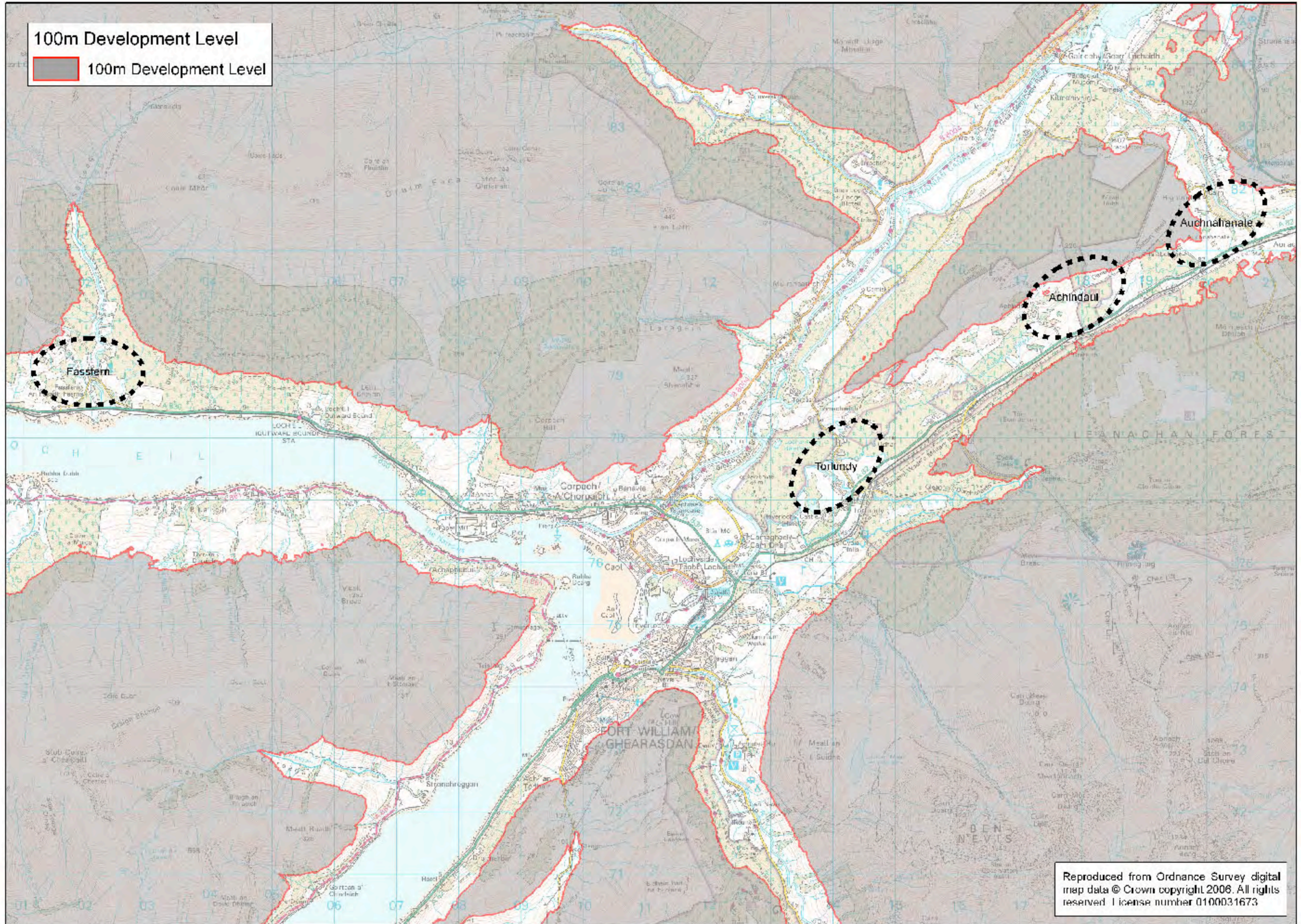
- AWI - Ancient (of semi-natural origin)
- AWI - Long Established (of plantation origin)
- AWI - Other (or Roy Map)



Torlundy/Tomacharich Village Expansion

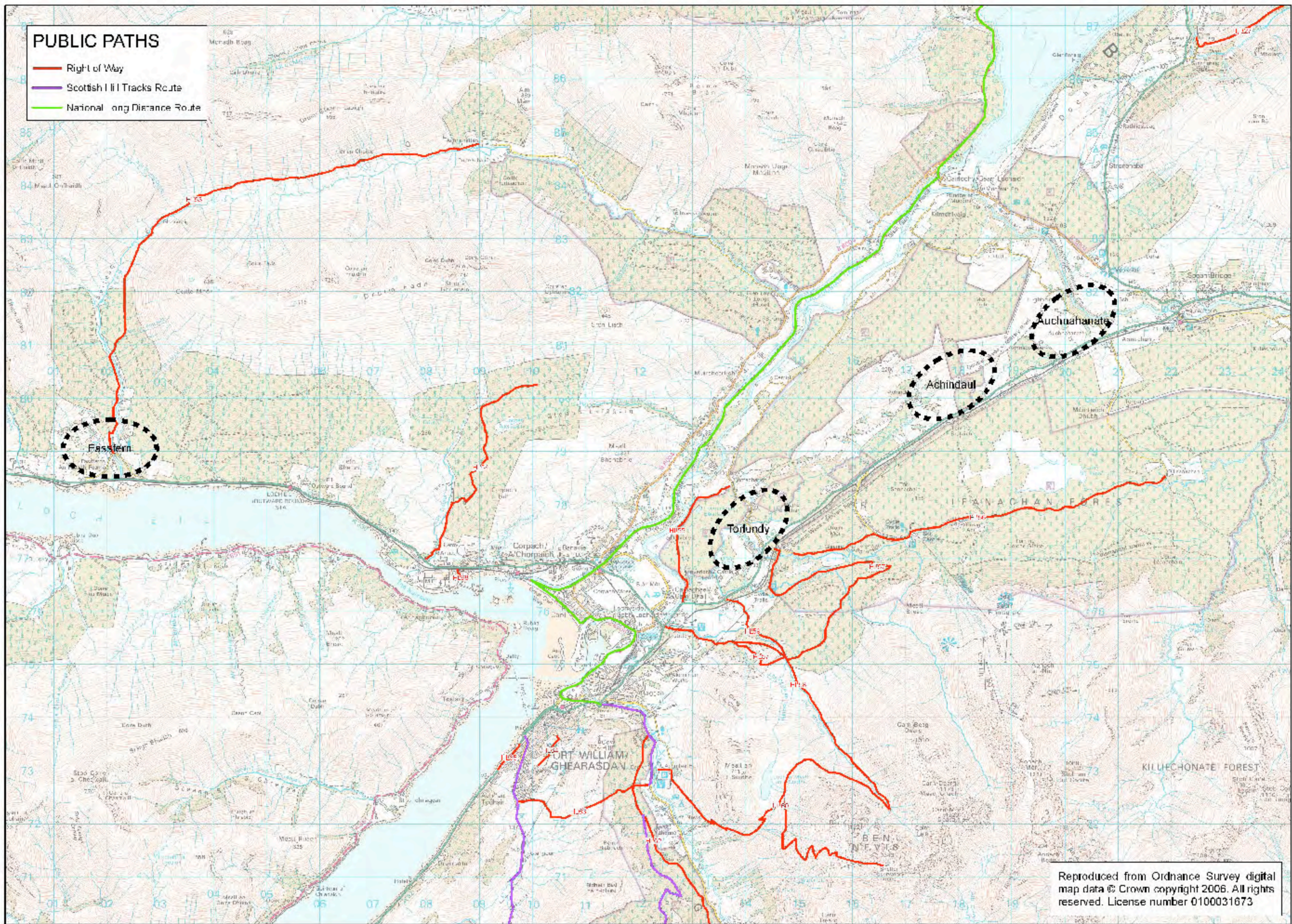
The Four New Settlement Options





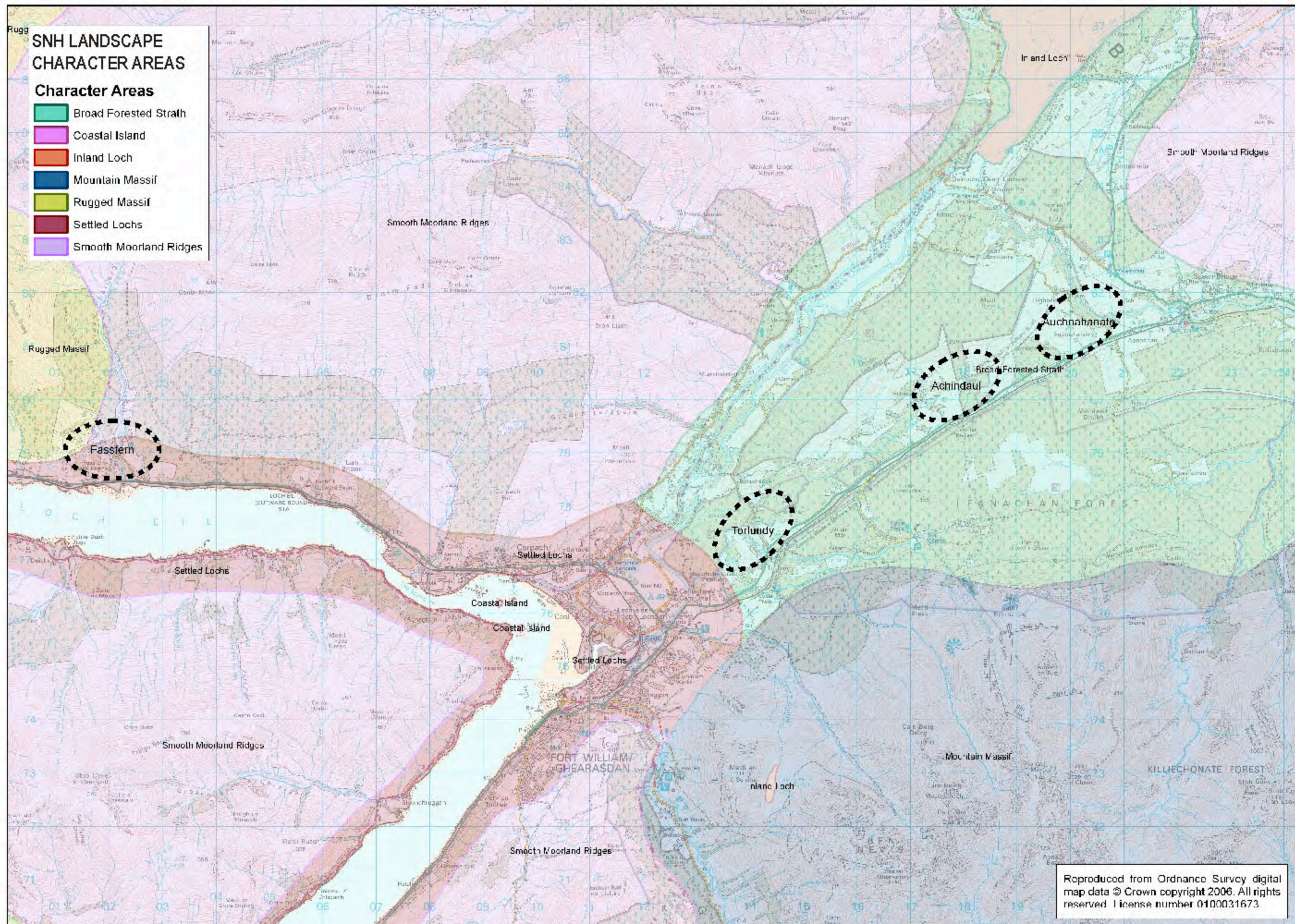
# Torlundy/Tomacharich Village Expansion

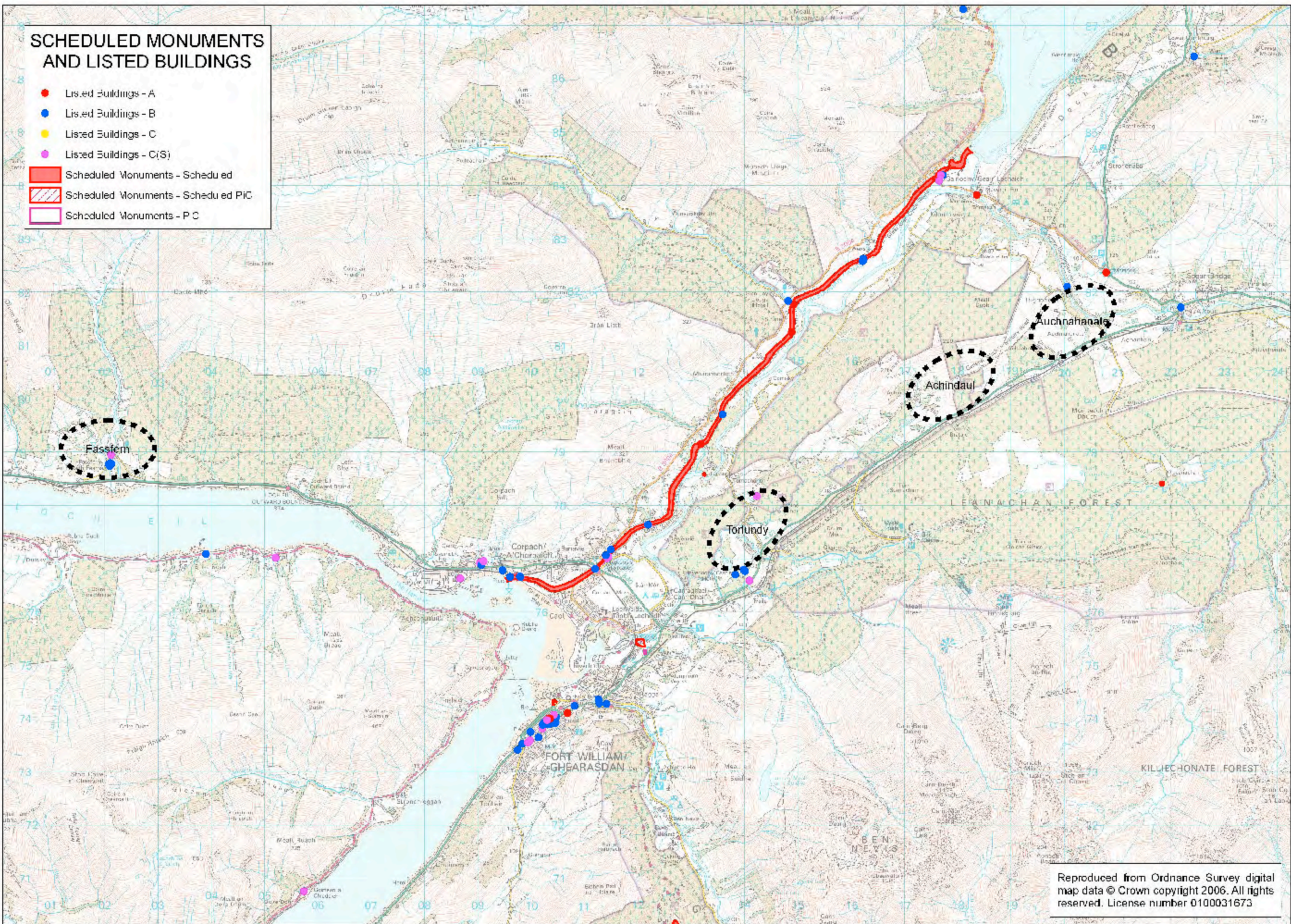
# The Four New Settlement Options



# Torlundy/Tomacharich Village Expansion

# The Four New Settlement Options





## Comparative Assessment

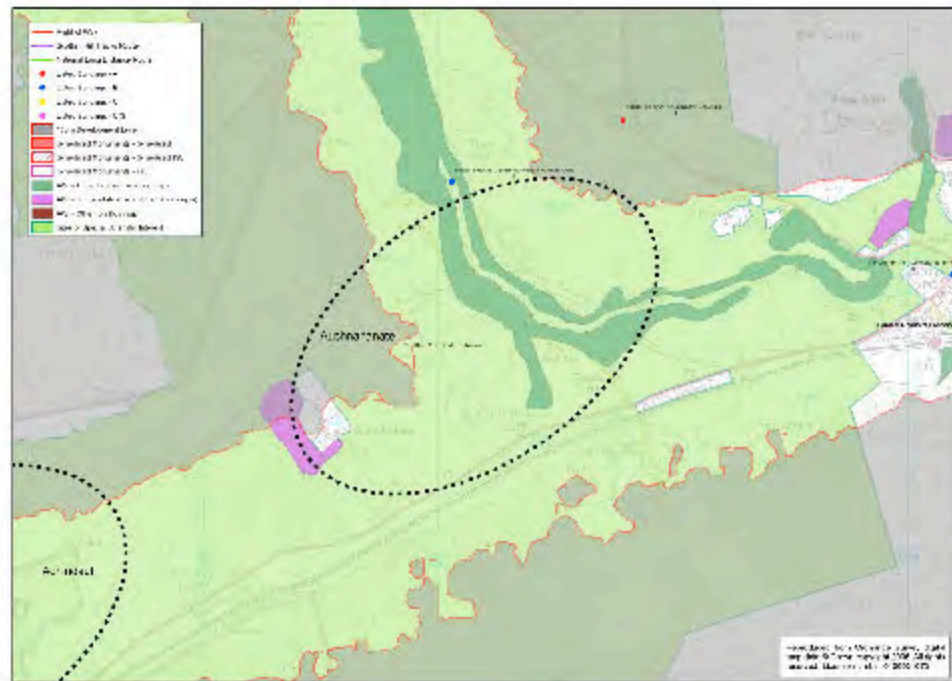
### Auchnahanate Landscape Appraisal

#### *Site Context and Character*

The Auchnahanate site lies the furthest of the three A82 corridor options from Fort William, being located approximately 12-13km from the town centre. The village of Spean Bridge is less than 2km to the east. Auchnahanate falls within the 'Broad Forested Strath' character area of the Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) Landscape Character Assessment. Sensitivity to landscape change is considered low due to the robustness of the landscape.



View from Commando Memorial over Site



Site Analysis

#### *Topography and Drainage*

The River Spean runs through the eastern part of the site, with the ground to the north-west rising up from the river valley to an area of land that is over 100m. To the east of the river, steeper ground which forms the toe of a more mountainous land-mass slopes down to the bank. Land closer to the western bank of the river is locally hummocky, with a broader area of more level ground forming the remainder of the western part of the site adjacent to the A82. Some man-made ponds are located within this lower ground. The entire site is within the Parallel Roads of Lochaber Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which is, according to SNH, a 'site of outstanding importance for geomorphology' which is 'unique in Britain and is internationally recognised as a classic locality for

Pleistocene ice-dammed lake shorelines (the Parallel Roads) and a remarkable assemblage of landforms and sediments recording geomorphological processes'.

#### *Land Cover and Vegetation*

Much of the site is densely wooded, with swathes of predominantly deciduous 'Ancient (of semi-natural origin)' woodland that forms part of the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) on either side of the river. Elsewhere there are numerous pockets and copses of more open, often scrubby, birch and rowan woodland, with another area of mixed 'Long-established (of plantation origin)' AWI woodland forming a backdrop to the dwellings at Achnabobane. Areas of open ground are unimproved, frequently rushy grassland, and are used for sheep-grazing.

#### *Built Elements*

The A82 trunk road runs along the southern edge of the site, parallel to the railway line. A minor road turns off the A82 to run north-westwards alongside the river valley, eventually forming a loop that connects with Torlundy/Tomacharich. A cluster of several houses lines the road close to where it connects with the track of the Military Road. A short section of newly-built road, which has been constructed to access a group of new houses currently forming a planning application, loops off the access road at this point. Further west, a private driveway leads to the group of dwellings at Achnabobane. Within the site the Spean Bridge – General Wade's High Bridge, is B-listed. Immediately to the north-east of the site, on the A82 to Fort Augustus, is the Spean Bridge Commando Memorial which is Category A-listed.

#### *Views*

Along the river and immediately to the west towards Auchnahanate, views outwards are well-contained by woodland. The more open ground at Achnabobane, and the higher land at Highbridge, allow clear views to and from the A82, and longer-distance views of the surrounding hills and mountains including Ben Nevis. To the east of the site, the Commando Memorial is a world-famous and frequently visited viewpoint which affords a stunning panoramic view down the Great Glen towards Fort William, and provides a clear and close-up overview of the Auchnahanate site in the foreground. The Memorial sign requests visitors to 'respect the sanctity of this place and of its awesome setting'.

### Auchnahanate Technical Appraisal

#### *Ground Conditions*

Published geological information (Inverness 140) indicates that the superficial deposits within the area of the site comprise morainic drift, while an area to the south indicates alluvium of a temporary moraine dammed lake. The thickness of the superficial deposits is not recorded. The underlying bedrock within the area of the site is recorded to comprise the Eilde Flags, banded psammitic gneisses with pelitic laminae.

#### *Access*

It is assumed that access to Auchnahanate would be taken from the A82. This section of the A82 is reasonably well-aligned for the design speed. As such, ghost island junctions can be expected to take a similar form to that proposed for Inverlochy and that already in place at the access to Aonach Mor ski centre as a comparison. Provision of visibility splays will be a key requirement and depending on location for access, re-alignment of the A82 cannot be discounted. Furthermore, the widened nature of the new accesses may necessitate land-take from adjacent properties, whereas the improvements required at Inverlochy have been demonstrated to be able to be undertaken within land in control of the Estate. In the case of Auchnahanate, there is an existing crossroad junction on the A82 which may be used. Crossroad junctions are not preferred arrangements, and any increased usage or prominence to the junction would require upgrading to modern trunk-road standard. In this respect, it is anticipated that this take the form of a staggered arrangement.

#### *Drainage*

No public drainage is recorded in the broad settlement option area. Auchnahanate lies approximately 3km east of Achindaul. While closer to the public network in Spean Bridge, development would remain at a significant distance from the public system. Therefore it is expected that development of any significance would require a wastewater treatment plant to be established, with treated effluent discharged to the nearest watercourse. It has not been possible to obtain comment from Scottish Water in respect of whether they would be willing to support the maintenance of such provision. The River Spean bounds the east of the settlement option site. While there will be discharge conditions placed by SEPA for wastewater treatment, these can be expected to be less onerous than any imposed for Achindaul. However, establishing a physical discharge to the River Spean will encounter significant challenges in overcoming the 20-30m level difference between a settlement area and the gorged river. Discharges to smaller watercourses within the higher areas may in turn lead to stringent discharge conditions being placed by SEPA for wastewater treatment.

#### *Services*

At the present time, only records for water supply have been obtained for Auchnahanate. No assessment has been made in respect of capacity within the public water supply system to provide for new settlement. Supplies are shown to be present in the Auchnahanate area.

#### *Flood Risk*

The Auchnahanate area was not shown to be at risk of flood from rivers during a 1 in 100 year storm event. The settlement areas lies some level above the level of the River Spean which lies to the east of the site, and can reasonably be assumed not to be at risk from flooding from the river.

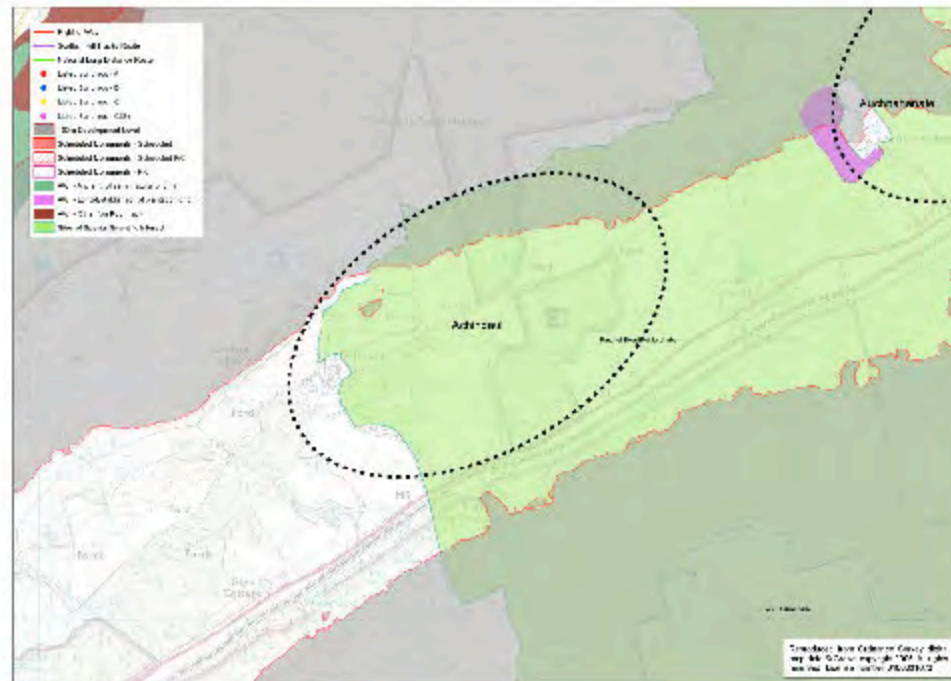
## Achindaul Landscape Appraisal

### Site Context and Character

Achindaul is located about 9.5km from Fort William to the south-west, with Spean Bridge lying 4km to the north-east. It falls within the 'Broad Forested Strath' character area of the SNH Landscape Character Assessment. Sensitivity to landscape change is considered low due to the robustness of the landscape.



View into site from A82 Layby



### Site Analysis

#### Topography and Drainage

The site is backed by a long ridge of hills which extends south-westwards to Tomacharich. Minor and mainly visually insignificant watercourses etch the hillsides and traverse the lower, fairly level ground that constitutes the main part of the site. The northern edge of the site, where the ground rises into the hills, is greater than 100m in height. The majority of the site, westwards to the driveway to Achindaul, lies within the Parallel Roads of Lochaber SSSI which is of international importance for geomorphology, as described previously.

#### Land Cover and Vegetation

Open improved grassland, grazed by cattle, forms the main land-cover within the site. Two large blocks of coniferous plantation form regular elements in the northern and eastern parts of the site. Strips of young deciduous woodland edge the plantations, with more mature groups of broadleaves surrounding and enclosing the farmhouse.

### Built Elements

The A82 trunk road bounds the southern extent of the site, with the railway line running alongside it. From the trunk road, a track runs to Achindaul farmhouse and associated farm buildings, which are clustered at the base of the hill. A further farm track bisects the access track and runs east-west, fording the streams at several points and meeting the Military Road to the east.

### Views

Longer-distance views to the north and south are constrained by the adjoining hill-masses, with views instead being channelled along the north-east to south-west line of the valley. West of the coniferous plantation, the open fields allow wide uninterrupted views from the A82 across the site towards the wooded lower slopes of the hills.

## Achindaul Technical Appraisal

### Ground Conditions

Published geological information (Inverness 140) indicates that the superficial deposits within the area of the site comprise morainic drift, while an area in the east indicates first terrace freshwater alluvium. The thickness of the superficial deposits is not recorded. The underlying bedrock within the area of the site is recorded to comprise the Eilde Flags, banded psammitic gneisses with pelitic laminae.

### Access

As with Auchnahanate, it is assumed that access to both areas would be taken from the A82, and this section is reasonably well-aligned for the design speed. Ghost island junctions would be of a similar form to that proposed for Inverlochty and that already in place at the access to Aonoch Mor ski centre. Provision of visibility splays will be a key requirement and depending on location for access, re-alignment of the A82 cannot be discounted. Land-take may also be an issue for new accesses.

### Drainage

No public drainage is recorded in the broad settlement option area. The nearest sewage works are located at Darroch, some 1.5 km east of Spean Bridge and over 5km from the site. This would in all likelihood be considered prohibitive for connection. It is expected that development of any significance would require a wastewater treatment plant to be established, with treated effluent discharged to the nearest watercourse. Comment from Scottish Water, in respect of whether they would be willing to support the maintenance of such provision, has not been received in the time available. Watercourses in the area would not appear to be significant, and this may in turn lead to stringent discharge conditions being placed by SEPA for wastewater treatment.

### Services

At the present time, only records for water supply have been obtained. No assessment has been made in respect of capacity within the public water supply system to provide for new settlement. There is no public water supply network in the Achindaul area according to Scottish Water's records.

### Flood Risk

The Achindaul area was not shown to be at risk of flood from rivers during a 1 in 100 year event.

## Torlundy/Tomacharich Landscape Appraisal

### Site Context and Character

Torlundy/Tomacharich is the closest of the four sites to Fort William and is located approximately 4.5-5km from the town centre. It falls within the 'Broad Forested Strath' character area of the SNH Landscape Character Assessment. Sensitivity to landscape change is considered low due to the robustness of the landscape.



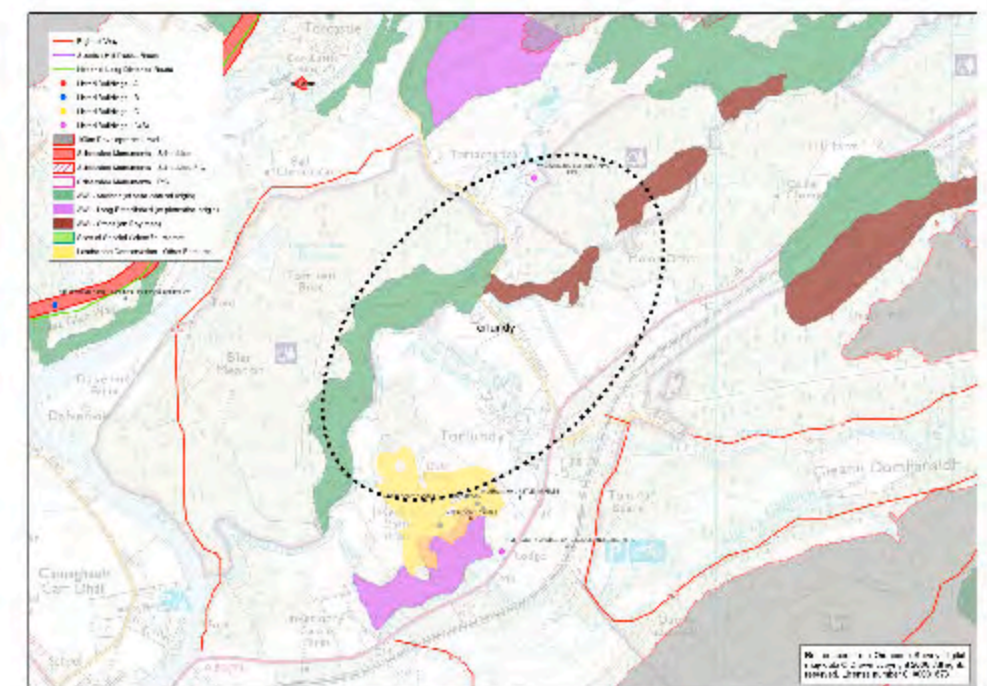
View from Torlundy into East of Site



View of 'Village Green' towards Ben Nevis



View from Inverlochty Castle driveway looking West



### Site Analysis

### *Topography and Drainage*

The River Lundy, a tributary of the River Lochy, meanders through the northern part of the site, fed by the Allt na Caillich stream to the west. East of Torlundy, the Allt Achadh na Dalach enters the river. A small lochan lies to the north of Inverlochy Castle. The gently undulating site lies entirely below the 100m contour line and is, aside from a few localised areas such as a small outcrop of higher ground next to Inverlochy Castle Farm, the most level of all four sites. Towards Tomacharich the land starts to rise as it merges with the ridge of hills that backs Achindaul.

### *Land Cover and Vegetation*

The site is well-wooded, with the mixed woodland that edges the northern banks of the River Lundy and Allt Achadh na Dalach stream being categorised in the AWI as Ancient (of semi-natural origin) and Other (on Roy map). Other AWI (Long-established) woodland backs Inverlochy Castle, and more scattered or scrubby trees fringe the lochan and the river as it runs through Torlundy. Immediately to the north of the castle, the grassland stretching down to the river forms a parkland-type setting to the building. Within the Torlundy/Happy Valley area, the central fields used by the riding school have a 'village green' character. The large area of open ground east of Torlundy is rough grassland with rushy patches.

### *Built Elements*

The site is the only one of the four options that has an existing small village at its core, served by two minor roads leading from the A82. The few traditional dwellings at the heart of the village have been extended by two simple groupings of white dwellings that, although more recent, are in keeping with the local vernacular style. At Tomacharich within the site, the almshouses are C(S)-listed. On the edge of the site Inverlochy Castle, Stable and Walled Gardens are all B-listed, and the Gate Lodge and Piers C(S)-listed. Although not included within the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes, the Lochaber Local Plan 1999 indicates the parkland and lochan that fronts the Castle as 'Landscape Conservation: Other Features' with regard to its relevance to the setting and ambience of the Castle. Although there are no public paths within the site, a Right of Way runs along the river between Tomacharich and Camaghael, north of Fort William, and Torlundy sits within an area with a wide-ranging network of Rights of Way and the Great Glen Way, a National Long-distance Route. The Caledonian Canal SAM runs close to the north of the site but is physically and visually separate. Another SAM, Tor Castle, lies on the northern bank of the River Lochy.

### *Views*

Views into the landscape surrounding the Castle from the A82 are limited by mature woodland, with views from the Castle itself focussing directly north-westwards. Only slight oblique glimpses of the rooflines of Happy Valley can be obtained from in front of the Castle. The central 'village green' in Torlundy offers spectacular views towards Ben Nevis, although the houses themselves have less direct views outwards. The open field east of Torlundy can be partly viewed from the A82. Development north of Tomacharich close to the river may have impacts upon the setting of Tor Castle.

### Torlundy/Tomacharich Technical Appraisal

#### *Ground Conditions*

Published geological information indicates the superficial deposits beneath the site to comprise alluvium on the western boundary and northern portion, along the River Lundy and within the area of the small tributary burn. This is underlain by glacial sand and gravel on the northern portion. The site is underlain by morainic drift, typically comprising silty or sandy till commonly interbedded with varying proportions of gravel, sand and silt. Small areas of basin and hill peat are shown in the eastern corner of the site and on the southern boundary. Additionally, bedrock is shown at or near the surface on the southern boundary of the site. No made-ground deposits are noted within the site area. The thickness of the superficial deposits is currently unknown. The geological plan shows a glacial drainage channel within the southern portion of the site, in a north-western direction. The underlying bedrock at the site comprises dominantly quartz-schist with subordinate bands of quartz mica schist. Geological plans indicate morainic till to be present at surface across the majority of the site.

#### *Access*

Principles for access were discussed with the Scottish Executive (SE) in the preparation of the Torlundy Village Expansion report of April 2005. SE supported the provision of ghost island junctions to provide safe access/egress from the A82. A ghost island junction is provided for access to Aonach Mor ski centre a little to the north of Torlundy/Tomacharich. This would suggest that adopting similar junction arrangements is not only appropriate but also represents consistency of approach on the networks, which is a desire under trunk road guidelines for design. The Torlundy Village Expansion report also observed that for the southern extent of the settlement search area relating to Inverlochy, improvements required were demonstrated to be able to be undertaken within land in control of the Estate.

#### *Drainage*

Any of the settlement options would be required to adopt the requirements of both SEPA and Scottish Water in respect of appropriate Sustainable Urban Drainage systems within development proposals. At this point in time, no real comparison can be made of capability within settlement areas to provide adequate treatment of surface run off, suitably attenuated and able to provide amenity. However, the Torlundy Village Expansion report has already shown that 'the masterplan has space to embrace (SUDS) techniques such as wetland ponds or detention ponds which can provide both adequate treatment of surface run-off and amenity value', and SUDS elements would be considered in the extended Torlundy/Tomacharich Masterplan. In respect of wastewater drainage, as is common with rural areas existing provision for minor settlements is restricted to septic tanks, and this is the case with each of the three alternative settlement areas. In contrast, the Torlundy/Tomacharich area is already served by a wastewater treatment plant which serves around 300 housing units. While this treatment plant is currently at capacity, it should be considered advantageous to have the existing infrastructure and land, which can be expanded through current technology to serve further development.

#### *Services*

Water mains, power supply and telecommunications plant already exist in the Torlundy/Tomacharich area to provide the basis for future supply. It is not known whether capacity exists within these supplies for whatever level of expansion is envisaged. The proximity of Torlundy/Tomacharich to Fort William is, however, considered to be advantageous in respect of the extent of upgrading works that may be required.

#### *Flood Risk*

Based on the broad assumptions outlined above, an estimated level of 21.0m AOD was established as the level which would be appropriate in planning terms in respect of flood risk – i.e. a 1 in 200 year storm event plus allowance for climate change and freeboard. The 21m contour would affect an area within the Torlundy/Tomacharich area to the north beyond that identified in the Torlundy Village Expansion report of April 2005, within part of the 'village green' and along the river to the north-east. It is considered that these areas would be best-suited to forming part of the SUDS/open space network that would be required as part of any new settlement, without adversely affecting the available land for development.

### Fassfern Landscape Appraisal

#### *Site Context and Character*

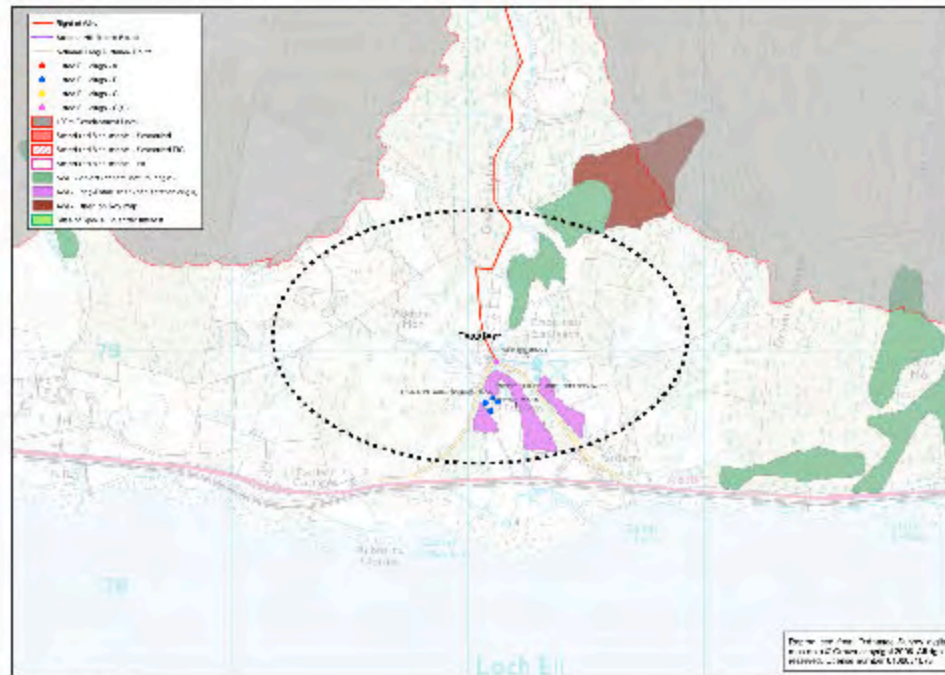
Fassfern is located approximately 12-13km north-west of Fort William town centre, on the northern shore of Loch Eil. It is located predominantly in the 'Settled Lochs' character area of the SNH Landscape Character Assessment, with some of the upper ground lying in the 'Smooth Moorland Ridges' character area. Sensitivity to landscape change and large-scale development such as settlements is high.



View of Lower Ground close to A830



View North along Right of Way



Site Analysis

#### *Topography and Drainage*

Backed by a tight landmass of hills and mountains, the site straddles the An t-Suilleag river which runs through a steep valley into the loch, and faces directly southwards onto the water. It lies entirely below the 100m contour line. A fairly level and low-lying triangular area opens out from the mouth of the river next to the A830, with the land rising first gently and then more dramatically northwards into the hills.

#### *Land Cover and Vegetation*

The site is the most wooded of the four, including some areas of AWI Ancient (of semi-natural origin) and Long-established (of plantation origin) woodland along the valley. The majority of the rest of the woodland is coniferous plantation, interspersed with some areas of rough grazing/moorland.

#### *Built Elements*

Fassfern House, Walled Garden and East Steading Range (all B) and Fassfern Bridge (C(S)) form a cluster of Listed Buildings and structures, with a few more modern houses/chalets dotted along the access road which loops into the site from the A830. At the high point of the road, a well-used Right of Way leads up the valley along Gleann Suileag from a small picnic/recreation area.

#### *Views*

The well-wooded nature of the site greatly restricts views to and from the dwellings and access road. Views into the site from the A830 are also limited by woodland and the quickly rising landform, although clearer views into the site could be obtained from across Loch Eil on the A861.

### Fassfern Technical Appraisal

#### *Ground Conditions*

No URS in-house information is held for the site area; however the geological plan (Inverness 139) for the area to the immediate east of the site area indicates that the superficial deposits to comprise post-glacial higher raised beach deposits and morainic drift. The thickness of the superficial deposits is not recorded. The underlying bedrock within the area of the site is recorded to comprise the Eilde Flags, banded psammitic (quartzo-feldspathic) granulite.

#### *Access*

The A830(T) adjacent to Fassfern by-passes the settlement. Access is provided by a through road which connects to the A830 both east and west. Junction provision on the A830 for future settlement will required to be reviewed with SE. The level of development will determine the actual junction form, but it can be reasonably assumed that ghost-island turning lanes will be required as a minimum improvement.

#### *Drainage*

A limited public drainage network is recorded in the broad settlement option area, sufficient to serve the existing settlement via what is recorded as Fassfern septic tank. An outfall to Loch Eil is indicated from the septic tank (possibly incorrectly identified as a rising main). This may be an emergency overflow from the septic tank. Subsequently, it is expected that development of any significance would require a wastewater treatment plant to be established, with treated effluent discharged a suitable identified watercourse. Any such discharge would be subject to conditions placed by SEPA for wastewater treatment. Should a discharge to Loch Eil be permitted, the outfall would require to be taken beyond the MLWS level of the loch, which may involve significant work.

#### *Services*

At the present time, only records for water supply have been obtained. No assessment has been made in respect of capacity within the public water supply system to provide for new settlement. Supplies are present in the Fassfern area, which is served by a 125mm diameter supply pipe which continues east and west along the route of the A830.

#### *Flood Risk*

The low-lying area between the existing Fassfern settlement and the A830 has been identified at risk during a 1 in 100 year event. Subsequently, a similar area can be expected to be taken into account in planning terms when planning any future settlement against the provisions of SPP7.

The following table summarises the known opportunities for, and constraints upon, development of each site:



SITE LOCATION	Strengths/Opportunities	Weaknesses/Constraints
<b>Auchnahate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SNH LCA denotes low sensitivity to change</li> <li>• Served by A82 trunk road</li> <li>• Mature woodland provides containment/screening</li> <li>• No flooding risk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located in geomorphologically unique and internationally important SSSI, upon which development would have significant adverse impacts – conflict with SPP3</li> <li>• Large areas of AWI woodland limit development</li> <li>• Large area above 100m contour limits development</li> <li>• Cost of bridging river prohibitive to development of eastern side</li> <li>• Significant adverse impacts upon panoramic view from A-listed Commando Memorial</li> <li>• Distance from Fort William joint least sustainable of 4 options</li> <li>• Possible coalescence issue with Spear Bridge</li> <li>• New settlement rather than expansion of existing village contradicts preference in SPP3</li> <li>• Although fairly substantial area of relatively level ground at Achmahokane, and smaller areas closer to river, not sufficient for 500 homes</li> <li>• New WWTW required</li> </ul>
<b>Achindaul</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SNH LCA denotes low sensitivity to change</li> <li>• Served by A82 trunk road</li> <li>• Large area of relatively level ground – could accommodate 500 homes</li> <li>• No flooding risk</li> <li>• Less woodland than other 3 sites – none AWI</li> <li>• Distance from Fort William second most sustainable of 4 options</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located in geomorphologically unique and internationally important SSSI, upon which development would have significant adverse impacts – conflict with SPP3</li> <li>• Area of land above 100m contour line limits development</li> <li>• New settlement rather than expansion of existing village contradicts preference in SPP3</li> <li>• New WWTW required</li> </ul>
<b>Torlundy/Tomacharich</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SNH LCA denotes low sensitivity to change</li> <li>• Served by A82 trunk road</li> <li>• Large area of relatively level ground – could accommodate 500 homes without impact upon areas with flooding risk</li> <li>• Potential to utilise land at flooding risk for SUDS/open space network</li> <li>• Only option to expand existing village instead of new settlement and therefore support SPP3</li> <li>• Some existing community, recreational and business facilities</li> <li>• Distance from Fort William most sustainable of 4 options</li> <li>• Mature woodland provides containment/screening</li> <li>• Land all below 100m contour line</li> <li>• Only site with existing WWTW that could be extended</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possible flooding constraints on lower ground next to River Lundy</li> <li>• Large areas of AWI woodland limit development</li> <li>• Adverse impacts upon views from/setting of Listed Buildings just outwith site must be avoided</li> <li>• Adverse impacts upon views from/landscape setting of Inverloch Castle Hotel must be avoided</li> </ul>

SITE LOCATION	Strengths/Opportunities	Weaknesses/Constraints
<b>Fassfern</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Served by A830 trunk road</li> <li>• Mature woodland provides containment/screening</li> <li>• Land all below 100m contour line</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SNH LCA denotes high sensitivity to change</li> <li>• Distance from Fort William joint least sustainable of 4 options, and furthest from regional facilities in Inverness</li> <li>• Possible flooding constraints on lower ground next to A830 – restricted space for avoidance/compensation</li> <li>• New settlement rather than expansion of existing village contradicts preference in SPP3</li> <li>• Large areas of AWI woodland limit development</li> <li>• Adverse impacts upon views from/setting of Listed Buildings within site must be avoided</li> <li>• Only small areas of fairly level ground outwith possible flooding area</li> <li>• New WWTW required</li> </ul>

## Summary of Development Potential

### *Auchnahate*

Although development is not entirely ruled out in this site, it should be limited to no more than a few small-scale clusters of housing in order to preserve the integrity of the SSSI (which could not occur with the development of 500 houses), avoid adverse impact upon views from A-listed memorial, retain the existing landscape and settlement character, and limit damage to AWI woodland. A new settlement here would contradict SPP3 on two counts (entirely new rather than extended settlement; adverse impact upon SSSI of international importance).

### *Achindaul*

The landform of this site would technically allow a larger scale of development; however, the integrity of the SSSI could not be preserved with the development of 500 houses. In addition the open character and views across the valley would be irreversibly altered. It is considered that small-scale development around the existing farmstead could be accommodated without significant adverse impacts. A new settlement here would also contradict SPP3 on two counts (entirely new rather than extended settlement; adverse impact upon SSSI of international importance).

### *Torlundy/Tomacharich*

There is sufficient open relatively level ground within the site to avoid damage to AWI woodland, position development outwith lower areas with flooding issues, and avoid adverse visual impacts upon Listed Buildings, including in particular Inverloch Castle and its setting. An extended settlement here would also be the only option to conform with the guidance contained in SPP3 regarding 'Guiding Development to the Right Places', where policy states that extension of an existing village is preferable to an entirely new settlement. It is also the most sustainable in terms of proximity to Fort William yet without danger of coalescence. As shown in the above comparison table, the site is the only one where the opportunities outweigh constraints.

### *Fassfern*

Due to the constraints of AWI woodland, potentially adverse impacts upon views from/setting of Listed Buildings, and limited areas of fairly level ground, this site could only accommodate small-scale clusters of housing. There are also potential flooding issues that are likely to significantly restrict developable land, and topographical constraints would restrict compensation elsewhere. A new settlement here would contradict SPP3 on one count (entirely new rather than extended settlement).

## OTHER DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

Although this report concentrates on the development potential of Inverloch Castle Estate and the Torlundy/Tomacharich settlement option in comparison to the other three new settlement sites, the other proposals suggested were looked at for viability.

### **Holiday Villages**

Both the Aonach Mor and Tomacharich locations shown in the Futures Paper have potential as holiday developments. The former is better marketed towards active recreation suited to its location, with the latter site being a well-contained riverside location that links with existing small-scale chalet development at Torlundy, and is more suited to family holidays, perhaps with an eco-friendly bent appropriate to its wooded location. In addition, there is potential for high-quality second/holiday homes to be accommodated close to Inverloch as part of the Torlundy/Tomacharich settlement.

### **Other Proposals**

The existing business/industrial facilities at Torlundy could potentially be extended/revitalised to support the local economy; however, other locations are likely to be preferable for a new business park development, depending on the required scale of such a development. The expansion of the Nevis Range base station and the proposed transport improvements in the vicinity of Inverloch, including, an airstrip, rail halt and transport terminus, would be a welcome boost to tourist and local use, particularly associated with new public recreational and access proposals.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE PREFERRED OPTION

### Previous Master Plan Proposals

The Refined Master Plan of 2005 shown within the previously submitted Torlundy Village Expansion Report had itself evolved from a Conceptual Master Plan of March 2004. The master plan was determined through analysis and evaluation, in which a number of development options were tested and refined, and the various constraints and opportunities overlaid to identify those parts of the site which were most constrained. Consequently, development was sited to avoid any constrained areas while also taking advantage of the most appropriate locations in landscape and visual terms.

The extension of the remit of this report beyond ICL's landholdings to consider the broader Torlundy/Tomaharich area, as shown in the Lochaber Futures Paper as one of four new settlement options, has therefore necessitated a further refinement of this previous exercise to encompass land to the north-east of Inverlochy. At this stage, baseline information and assessment remain outline in nature, and therefore an Indicative Village Expansion layout has been prepared which suggests how the extended settlement could be developed. ICL wishes to work closely with the Council, other consultees and the local community in bringing forward a more detailed masterplan for the Torlundy/Tomaharich village expansion and associated speciality retail outlet.

As the Refined Master Plan was prepared in greater detail than this new Indicative Village Expansion layout, reference should be made to the previous Torlundy Village Expansion Report of April 2005 for a full description of the proposals. These proposals remain included in their entirety within the new indicative layout, and have been expanded upon as follows:

### Land for Housing

The areas of new housing shown on the previous Master Plan (numbered on the Indicative Village Expansion layout as 1, 2, 3 and 4) would form the western side of the village expansion. Although not considered in detail, initial proposals would suggest that Area 1 (already with planning permission for housing) would be an appropriate location for staff housing for Inverlochy Castle. Area 2, with its proximity to Fort William, could accommodate some affordable housing at a higher density, and Areas 3 and 4 closest to Inverlochy Castle would seem appropriate for low-density, high-quality houses with some element of second/ holiday homes. It is proposed to retain the central 'village green' for landscape character, open space and flooding reasons, with the eastern expansion of the village (Area 5) being suited to medium-density housing.

EDAW had carried out a check on the housing capacity of the previous Master Plan, which indicated capacity for around 200 houses; a similar check on the Indicative Village Expansion layout would suggest further capacity of up to another 300 units, thereby meeting Council requirements for 500 new homes.

### Commercial Development

The proposals include the development of a high-quality speciality arts and crafts, retail and restaurant outlet at Inverlochy Farm, adjoining the A82. It will display local arts and crafts and host temporary exhibitions by local artists. It will also exhibit and sell products and produce indigenous to the West Coast of Scotland and Lochaber district. This facility (with similarities to House of Menzies (Aberfeldy) and Loch Fyne Oyster Bar) will create employment opportunities and generate tourism in an important tourist corridor. It could also have educational benefit, such as the inclusion of a digital film studio and interpretative exhibitions of the physical and social life of Lochaber, perhaps in association with local museum facilities. ICL also considers that this would be an excellent location for the headquarters of the Mountain Rescue Service which, as it depends solely on public donations, would benefit from the site's visibility and opportunities for interaction with the public. The site could provide space for all associated infrastructure, including parking and a helicopter landing pad.

ICL is fully committed to this high-quality specialist outlet, and has commissioned an appraisal by Tribal HCH which demonstrates the economic benefits of such a proposal to the Fort William area. It will provide a much-needed boost to the local economy and will not, as confirmed by Tribal HCH, compete with the differing retail elements within Fort William itself. Rather, it will be complementary to the town centre and attract and hold visitors within the Fort William area with significant economic and tourist benefits overall.

### Public Benefits

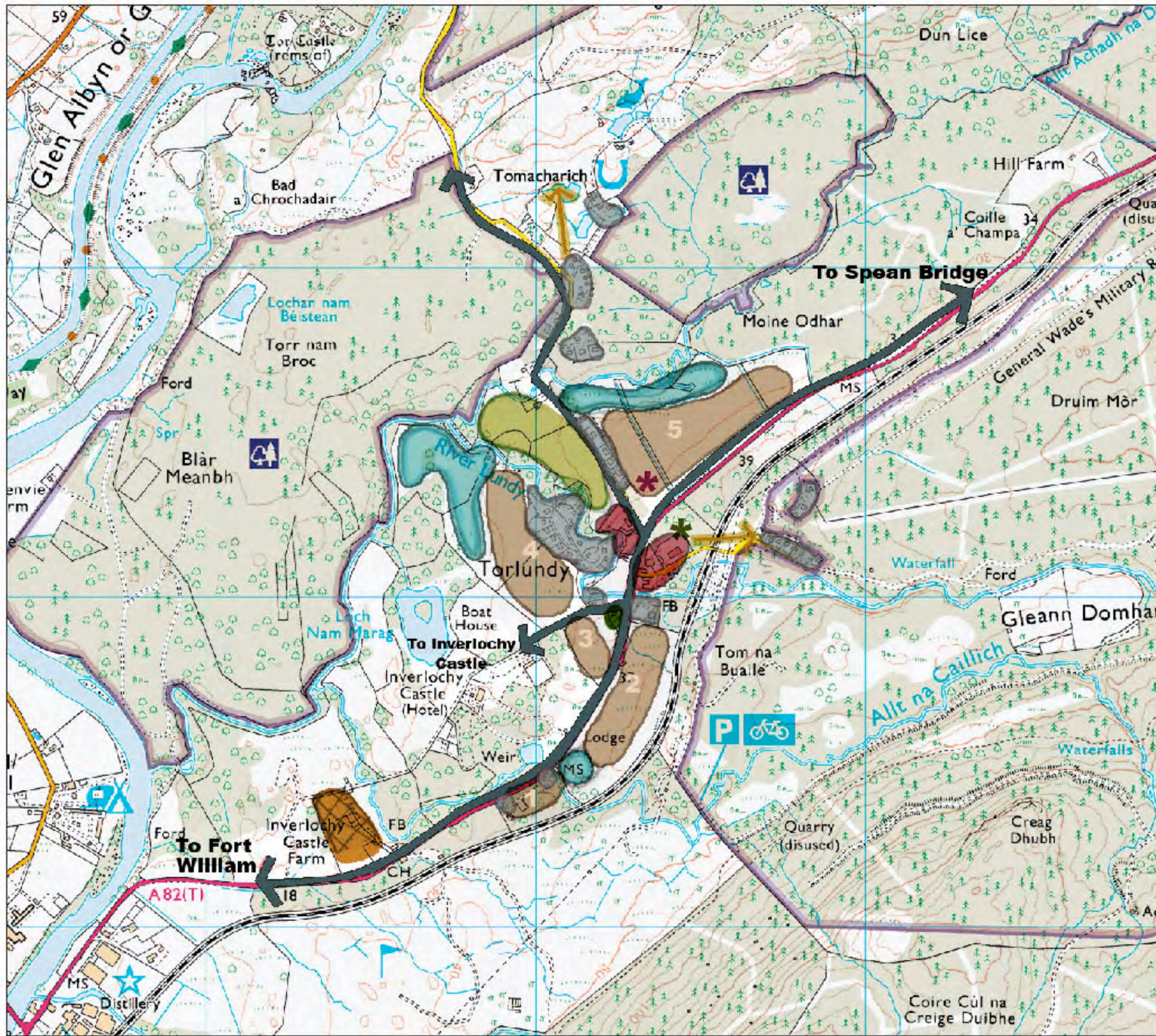
The new community would incorporate play facilities, land for a footpath/cycleway to link with the edge of Fort William, provide for retention of a central green and link with a new linear park connecting the settlement to the river and encompassing new SUDS facilities. Extensive new structure planting would extend existing mature planting, assist with containment and provide nature conservation opportunities. Area 5 would also be most appropriate for the location of a safe and well-accessed primary school at the heart of the settlement. There is also potential for expansion/revitalisation of the existing business/industrial area of Torlundy, and further land available in the longer term for future expansion if necessary.













Conceptual Master Plan: March 2004



Refined Master Plan: March 2005



Key

-  Existing houses and holiday homes
-  Proposed residential development for 500 houses
-  Existing business/industry
-  Potential area for business facilities
-  Potential location for new primary school
-  Existing community facility (pub/restaurant)
-  Existing central open space/village green
-  Potential SUDS/open space
-  Proposed arts/crafts/retail centre
-  Potential future areas for residential expansion

Indicative Village Expansion

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The comparative assessment undertaken in this report of the four new settlement options proposed within the Lochaber Futures Paper demonstrates that the Torlundy/Tomacharich option is clearly the preferred and most suitable site for a settlement of up to 500 new homes which:

- is environmentally acceptable and located in a Landscape Character Area that is robust enough to accommodate change;
- has enough land to avoid adverse impacts upon AWI woodland and Listed Buildings, including the setting of Inverloch Castle;
- is well-served by the A82 trunk road;
- is effective within Local Plan timescales and can deliver much needed housing requirements;
- provides a large-enough area of relatively level ground, which could accommodate 500 homes without impact upon areas with flooding risk;
- provides potential to utilise land at flooding risk for SUDS/open space/path network;
- builds upon existing small-scale community, recreational and business facilities;
- is the closest to Fort William and the most sustainable of the four options;
- has enough mature woodland to provide immediate containment/screening;
- is all below the 100m contour line;
- has an existing WWTW that could be extended; and
- is the only option to expand the existing village instead of being an entirely new settlement and therefore support SPP3.

In addition to delivering urgently-needed housing to the area, the proposals for a new Arts and Crafts and Retail Centre will involve the creation of just under 100 long-term jobs, with this boost further increased through the growth in local sourcing of tourism products. The jobs created will be varied and include retail, catering, office-based jobs, highly technical digital film production jobs and visitor centre staff, and indirectly, arts, crafts and food production employment. This range includes significant scope for increasing average wages, as well as building a range of skills into the local labour force.

The proposed housing development which forms part of the Torlundy Village proposals will also create substantial social and economic benefits for the Fort William area. It will represent the biggest single contribution to the achievement of the required level of housing provision and will positively assist the Council's aims in relation to provision of affordable housing. None of the other potential locations for housing development in the area could achieve a comparable impact over the foreseeable future.

The Torlundy/Tomacharich village expansion project and retail showcase offer an outstanding development opportunity, supported by ICL's commitment to innovation and excellence, which will have major social and economic benefits for the Fort William area. ICL wholeheartedly supports the approach being taken by the Council towards the identification of future housing provision in Lochaber, and is keen to play an active role in the practical realisation of the Council's objectives.



High-quality Rural Housing



# INVERLOCHY CASTLE

*Hotel & Restaurant*



**INVERLOCHY CASTLE**

*Hotel & Restaurant*

# Torlundy/Tomacharich Village Expansion

JUNE 2006

EDAW

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## INTRODUCTION

### Background to the Report

EDAW has been retained since 2003 by Inverloch Castle Ltd (ICL) as landscape advisors to the Estate in relation to the development potential of its landholdings at Inverloch Castle, the internationally renowned 5-star hotel which lies on the outskirts of Fort William near the foot of Ben Nevis in the Great Glen.

Initial conceptual proposals were originally prepared and presented to The Highland Council (THC) in March 2004 for discussion and comment. These were then further refined and updated, and an indicative master plan for the village of Torlundy and the wider estate was presented to THC in February 2005. The 'Torlundy Village Expansion' report (which this report should be read in conjunction with and should be considered as a successor to) was then submitted to the Council in April 2005, in order to initiate formal discussions on the most appropriate means by which the proposals could be incorporated into the new Local Plan.

This report has subsequently been prepared as a response to the Lochaber Futures Paper, which was published in March 2006 by the Council as a consultative exercise to inform the emerging Local Plan. Discussions and meetings with the Council have taken place throughout the process to date, in order to guide the evolution of ICL's proposals.

ICL welcomes the Council's open and inclusive approach towards the Estate's proposals to date and looks forward to discussing the contents of this report.

### The Client Advisory Team

The report has been produced on behalf of ICL, and is a collaborative effort prepared jointly by the Estate's advisors, in association with the Client. The Client Advisory Team comprises:

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| • EDAW plc            | Master planning and landscape matters;  |
| • Brodies LLP         | Planning and legal matters;             |
| • URS Corporation Ltd | Engineering and transportation matters; |
| • Tribal HCH          | Economic matters.                       |

### Planning Context

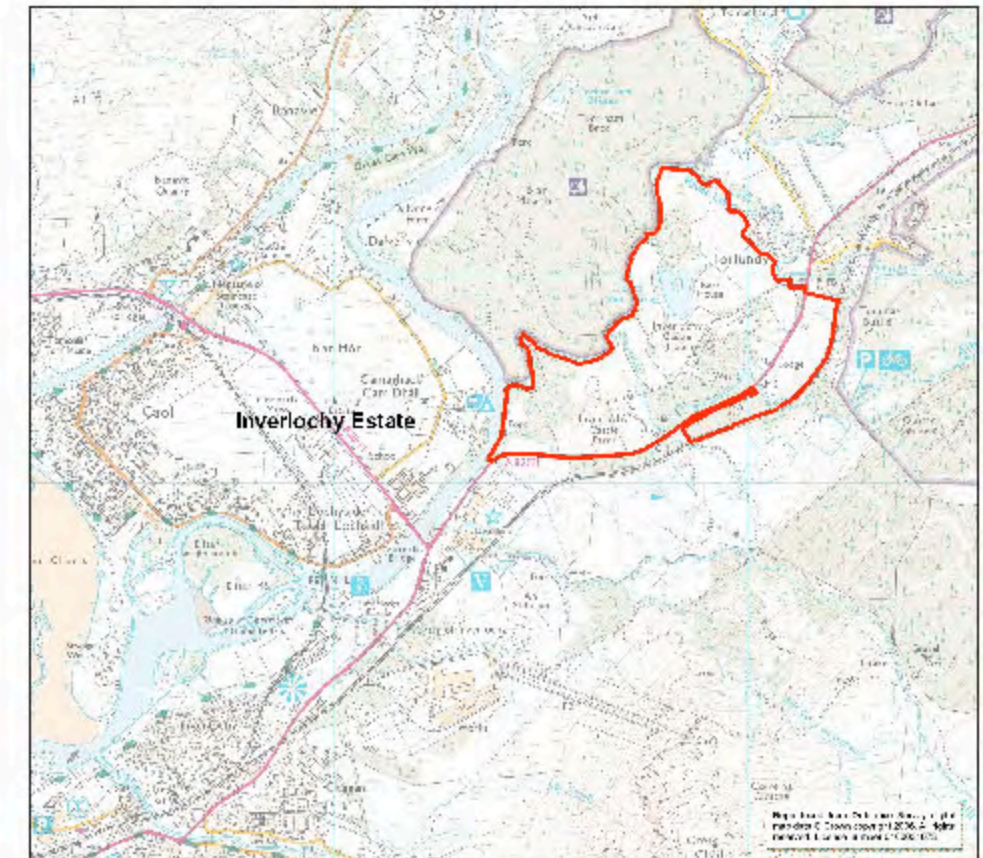
The existing adopted Lochaber Local Plan, which dates back to 1999, had identified an ambitious target rate of house building that essentially doubled that of the previous 20 years due to increased demand. However, although some small-scale and infill housing development has occurred in the last few years, the overall development rate has failed to increase to date. Many of the allocated sites have not been developed, primarily due to physical constraints making them economically disadvantageous, and pressure for housing in the Fort William area is now at a critical level.

The Council has commenced the process of preparing a replacement of the Lochaber Local Plan, which will 'update the statutory planning framework, provide a development and land use dimension to the Highland Community Plan, and contribute to the corporate vision for the Area'. In order to engage with all interested parties in considering the issues and options which will shape the Local Plan priorities for the period to 2015/16 and beyond, THC has published a consultation newspaper: Lochaber Futures. Responses to the Futures Paper are requested by Friday 9th June, and the Council expects to publish the draft replacement Lochaber Local Plan by November/December 2006, with adoption anticipated by the end of 2007.

The Futures Paper has acknowledged the significant constraints upon development in Fort William itself by putting forward four possible options for a new settlement of up to 500 homes. One of these four options is that of Torlundy/Tomacharich, which incorporates a significant part of Inverloch Castle Estate. The Client Advisory Team has therefore extended the initial assessment of Inverloch Estate included in the 'Torlundy Village Expansion' report to encompass the wider Torlundy area and compare this opportunity with the other three settlement options. As a formal response to the Futures Paper, the team has therefore prepared this report in support of the selection of Torlundy/Tomacharich as the preferred location for 500 homes.



Site Location



ICL Land Ownership

## THE FOUR NEW SETTLEMENT OPTIONS

### The Sites

The key settlement options, as identified in the Lochaber Futures Paper, are:

- Auchnahanate;
- Achindaal;
- Torlundy/Tomacharich; and
- Fassfern.

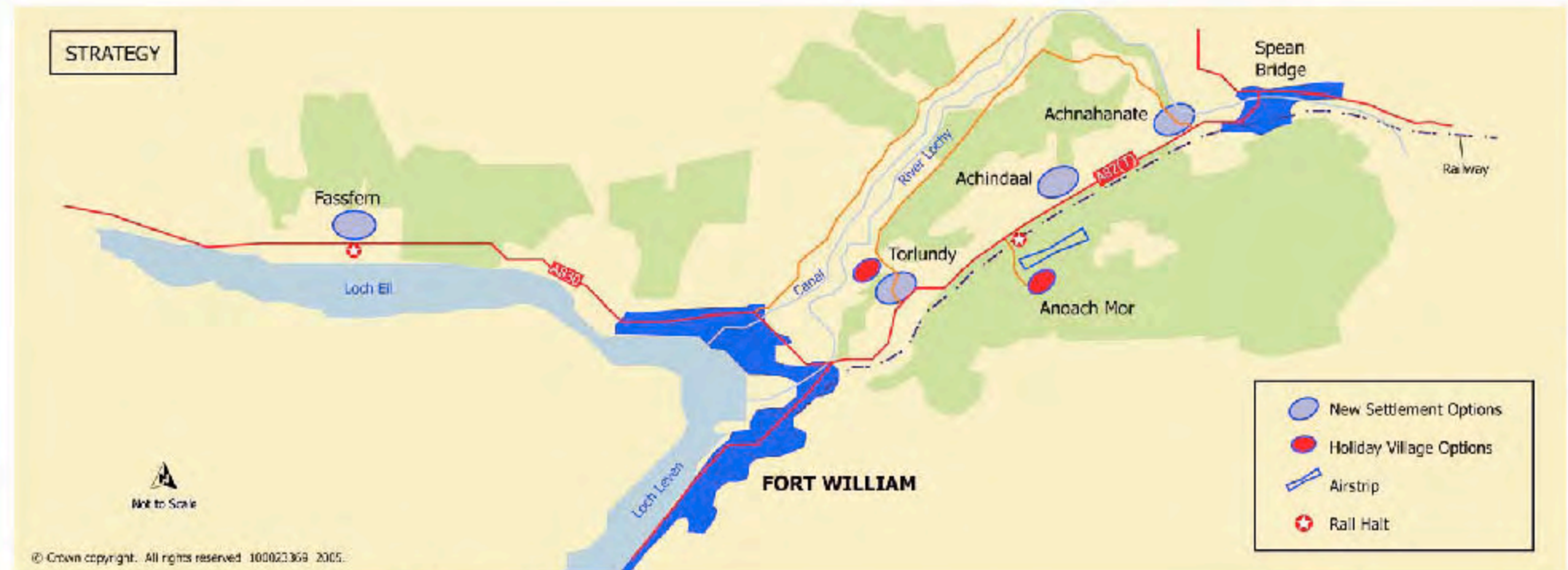
Three of the four new settlement options, as identified by the Council, are located in the A82 trunk road corridor, which runs near-parallel with the line of the Great Glen as far as the village of Spean Bridge to the north-east of Fort William. The Fassfern site is located to the west along the A830 trunk road on the shores of Loch Eil. In addition to the potential for 500 new homes with community facilities including a primary school, the Lochaber Futures Paper outlines other possible opportunities within the A82 corridor, including: two site options for a holiday village; a business park; expansion of the Nevis Range base station for leisure; an airstrip, rail halt and transport terminus; and public access and recreation facilities including a golf course.

The Futures Paper states that suitable locations for the new settlement would 'avoid flooding, higher ground (above 100m), other hazards and undue impacts on designated conservation sites and views ... Any new settlement would be phased over time with community facilities brought on-stream once a critical mass of residents has been reached. A Masterplan and secure planning agreements for infrastructure (including Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW)), transport and environmental management at developer cost, would be essential.'

### Baseline Information and Assessment

A baseline study, as carried out in the previous report, has been extended to the other three sites in order to compare them on an equal basis, and visits to all sites were carried out. It includes landscape and ecological designations, Listed Buildings, pedestrian and cycle access including Rights of Way, land above 100m, and areas of Ancient Woodland. Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs) have been considered; however, although the National Monument Record (NMR) had previously been looked at for Inverlochy, this has not been extended to the other sites in the time available. The baseline information has been shown for the overall study area for all four sites, and then summarised on an individual site-by-site basis, accompanied by photographs of the sites.

URS have also looked at the four identified sites with regard to potential constraints from ground conditions, access, drainage, services and flood risk. In the time available, the extent and detail to which this review has been undertaken has been limited to in-house records held by URS and readily available information from Scottish Water, SEPA and the like. The indicative flood maps held by SEPA use a generalised technique for plotting



A82 Strategic Development Corridor (reproduced from Lochaber Futures Paper)

areas at risk of flood in a 1 in 100 year storm event and are only a guide to possible impacts, as during the detailed planning process a 1 in 200 year storm event will be required to be assessed. As this technical information is outline in nature at this stage, it has been described rather than shown in plan form.

The locations of the new settlement options have only been shown indicatively in the Futures Paper. Therefore the oval shapes that demarcate their location on the subsequent EDAW-produced figures should also be considered indicative.

### Planning Issues

Current Scottish Planning Policy documentation (SPPs) and Planning Advice Notes (PANs) have been referred to in considering the viability of the four options. These have included SPP 15: Planning for Rural Development and SPP 3: Planning for Housing, and PANs 38: Housing Land, 72: Housing in the Countryside and 73: Rural Diversification.

Of particular relevance are the three key principles which underpin SPP 3 – the need for the planning system to seek to:

- Create quality residential environments;
- Guide development to the right places; and
- Deliver an adequate supply of housing land.

Creating a Quality Residential Development outlines a number of issues to be considered, including: design, layout and architecture; energy-efficiency from construction through to operation; form of the development should promote walking and cycling, link new and existing development, provide safe routes to schools and other

public facilities, and provide for access by public transport; the importance of landscape and open space, with existing natural features being retained and enhanced where possible; the identification of suitable residential densities; the need to provide a choice of housing types; and the encouragement of mixed communities in terms of a range of housing types and mixed-use developments.

Guiding Development to the Right Places recommends consideration of efficient use of land and buildings through re-use/redevelopment/conversion/infill in preference to greenfield development. Whether planning expansion of existing settlements or development of new ones, accessible locations 'which can be well integrated with existing and proposed public transport, walking and cycling networks' should be preferred. Safeguarding environmental resources – through minimising adverse effects from residential development upon natural heritage, including landscape character and biodiversity, national and international designations, archaeological sites, landscapes of historic importance, and avoidance of impact upon scheduled monuments – must be fully considered. Safety or amenity considerations may constrain development. Sites which would involve new or altered access from a trunk road require careful consideration, and sites 'likely to be at significant risk from flooding including those on the functional flood plain should not be developed for new housing'. Where brownfield/infill sites are inadequate to meet housing requirements, it will be necessary to release greenfield land next to built-up areas through extensions to existing towns and villages – sustainable transport options should be considered. Extensions need carefully planned – landscape setting and local architectural style should be respected, and the scale of new development should be appropriate. New settlements may be considered where: 'there are substantial ... constraints to the further growth of existing settlements, or it forms part of a strategy for promoting rural development and renewal; it could assist in

reducing development pressure on the greenbelt or areas of attractive countryside; it can be readily serviced by public transport; it will not have a significant adverse effect on any natural or built heritage interest safeguarded by a national or international designation; and it will not result in other significant environmental disbenefits'. New housing in rural areas should, 'where possible ... be met within or adjacent to existing settlements', although in some rural areas 'new housing outwith existing settlements may have a part to play in economic regeneration and environmental renewal'. 'Where there is significant demand for second homes, specific development plan provision could contribute to economic and social opportunities ...'. Development should 'support the rural economy and local services, promote rural regeneration, embody the principles of sustainable development, and enhance the rural environment'.





Delivering Housing Land states that development plans should 'take an informed long-term view on the requirement for new housing'. The Structure Plan should set out a strategy for the location of new housing over a period of at least 12 years and preferably up to 20 years (and) the Local Plan should convert this into effective site-specific allocations ... to meet requirements ... for at least 5 years'.

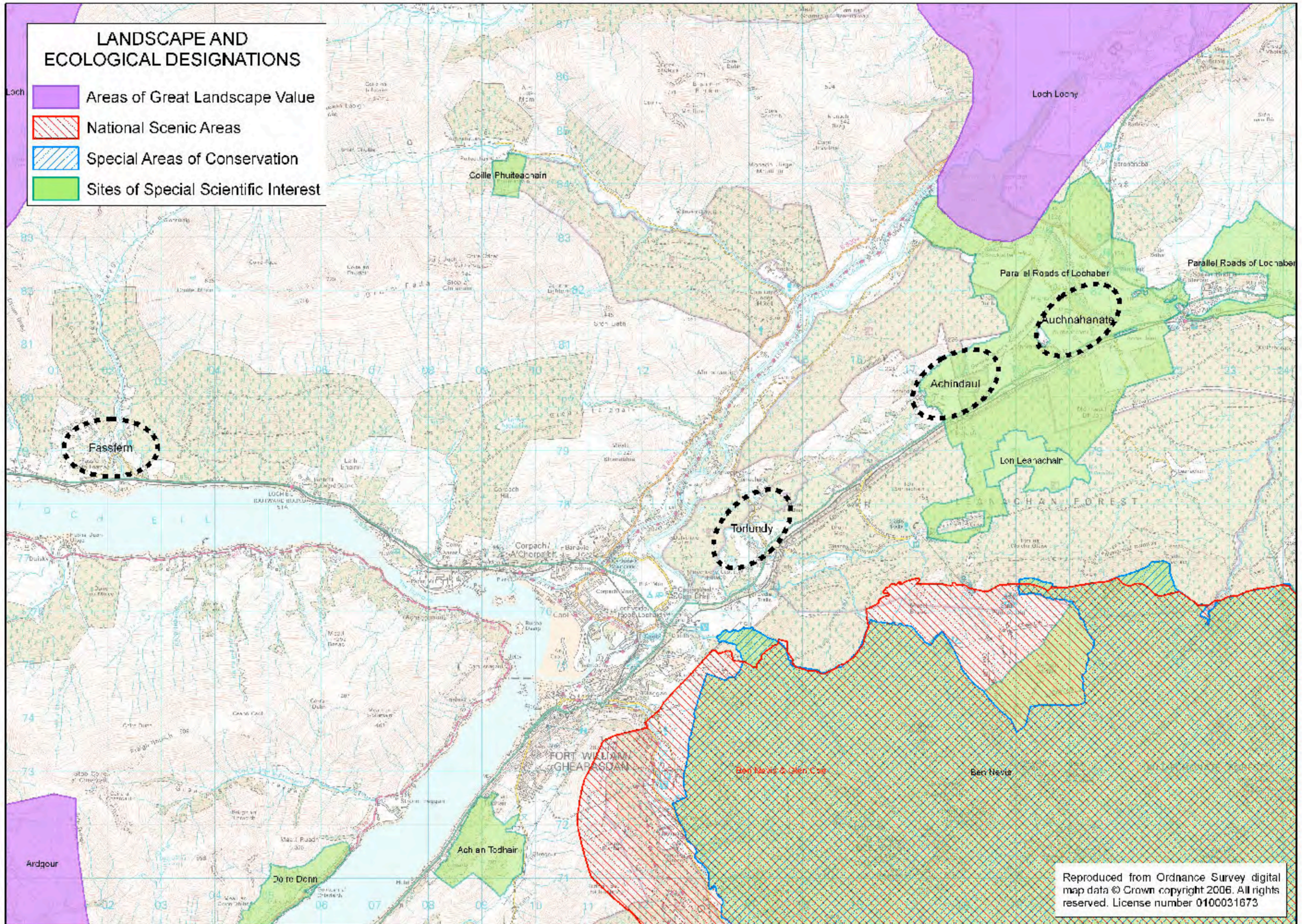
PAN 38 stresses that the effectiveness of individual sites, in being available for the construction of housing within the plan period, must be demonstrated, and must be free from the following types of constraint:

- ownership: the owner is expected to release the land or develop it. If owned by the local authority, it should only be included as part of a programme of land sales;
- physical: the site is free from constraints related to slope, aspect, flood risk, ground stability or vehicular access which would preclude development (unless there is commitment to/ funds available for remedial work required);
- contamination: the site is uncontaminated (unless there is commitment to/ funds available for remedial work required);
- deficit funding: any public funding required to make residential development economically viable has been committed;
- marketability: the site can be developed to provide marketable housing;
- infrastructure: the site is either free from infrastructure constraints, or any required infrastructure can be provided by the developer or other party;
- land use: housing is the sole preferred use, or if one of a range of possible uses then other factors point to it becoming a realistic option.

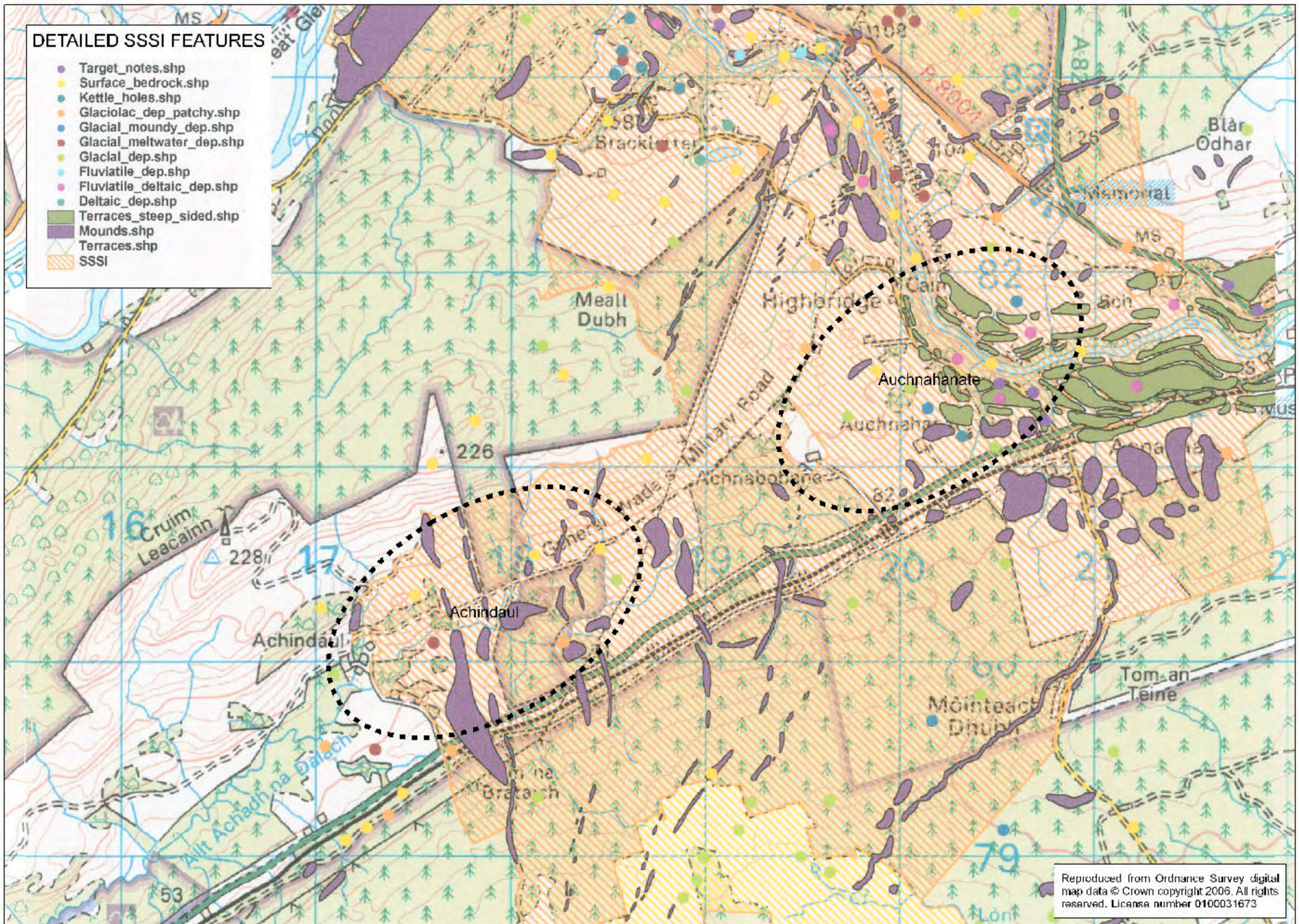
It also states that 'planning authorities should be able to demonstrate that their housing land allocations are feasible and realistic, offer a coherent strategy to meet short and longer-term needs in an environmentally acceptable manner, and are capable of being implemented'.

# LANDSCAPE AND ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS

-  Areas of Great Landscape Value
-  National Scenic Areas
-  Special Areas of Conservation
-  Sites of Special Scientific Interest



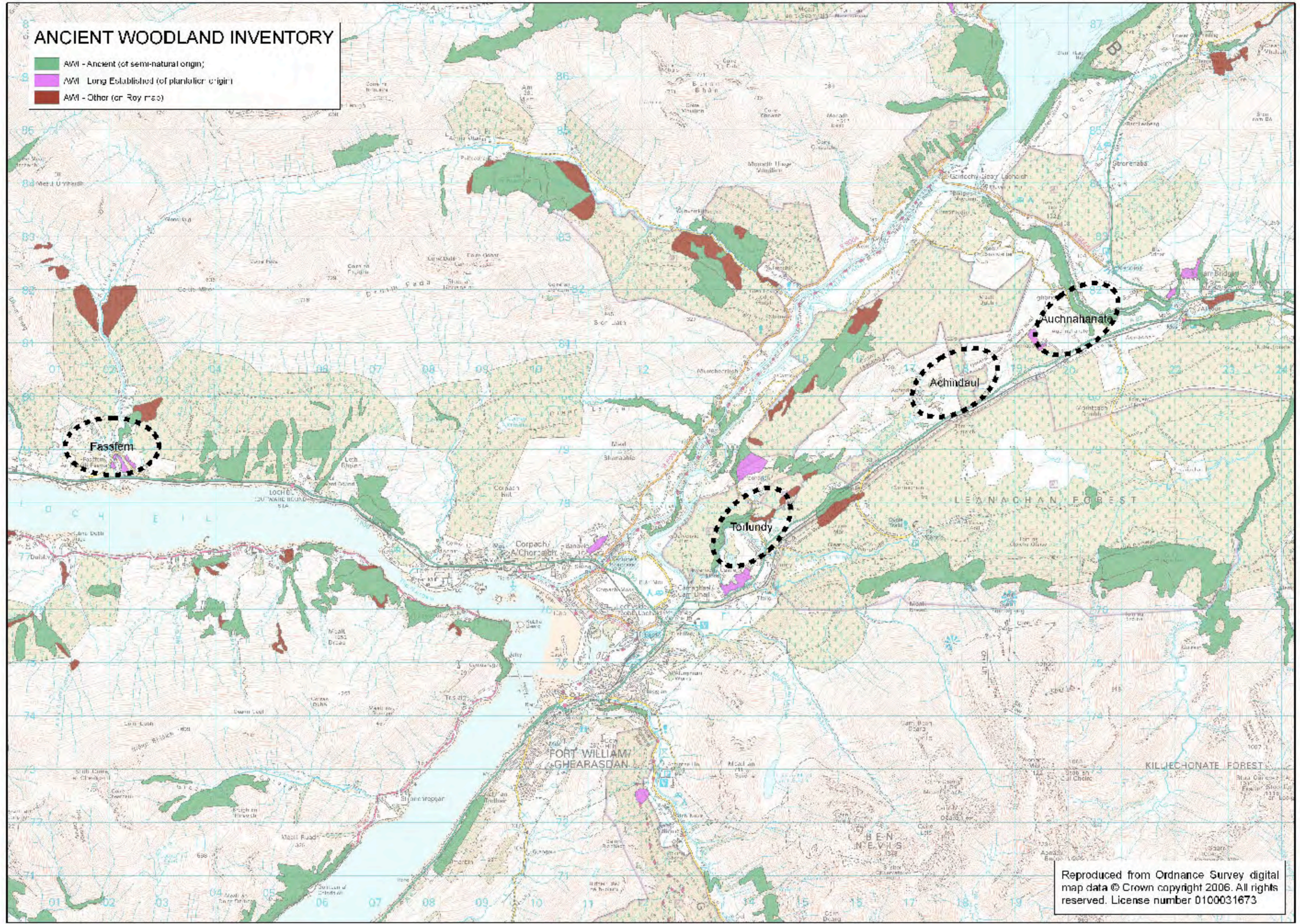
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# ANCIENT WOODLAND INVENTORY

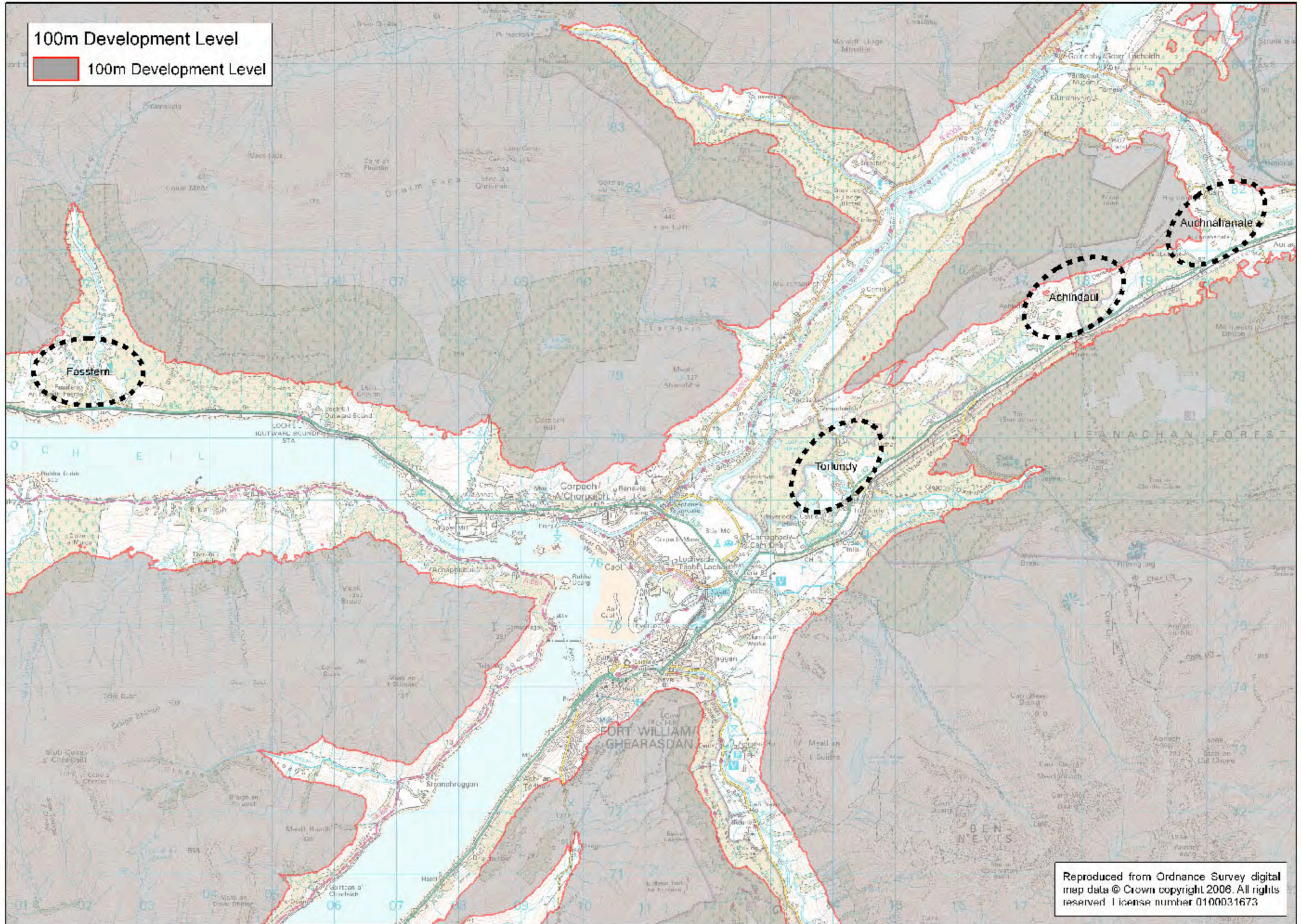
- AWI - Ancient (of semi-natural origin)
- AWI - Long Established (of plantation origin)
- AWI - Other (or Roy Map)



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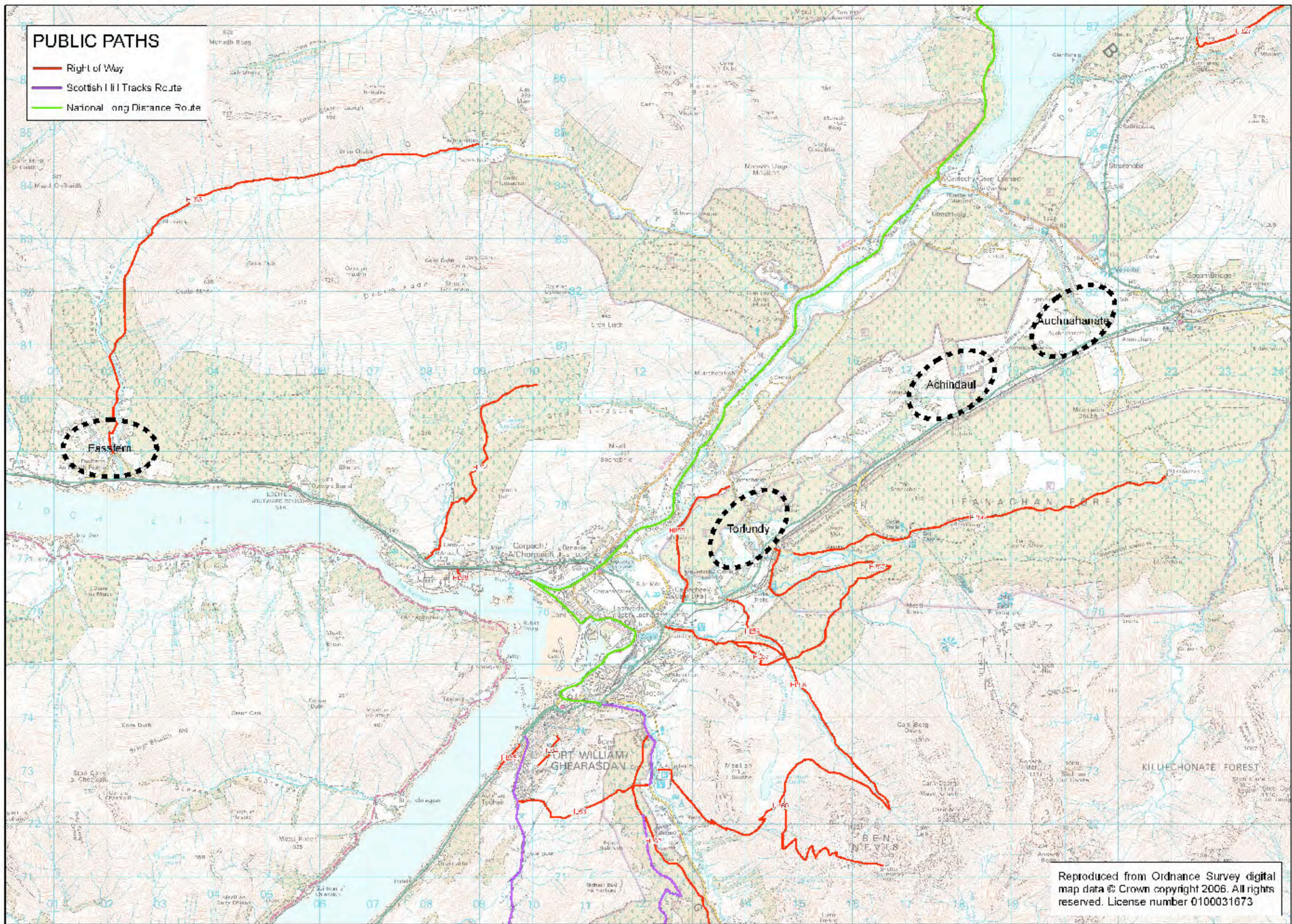
Torlundy/Tomacharich Village Expansion

The Four New Settlement Options



# Torlundy/Tomacharich Village Expansion

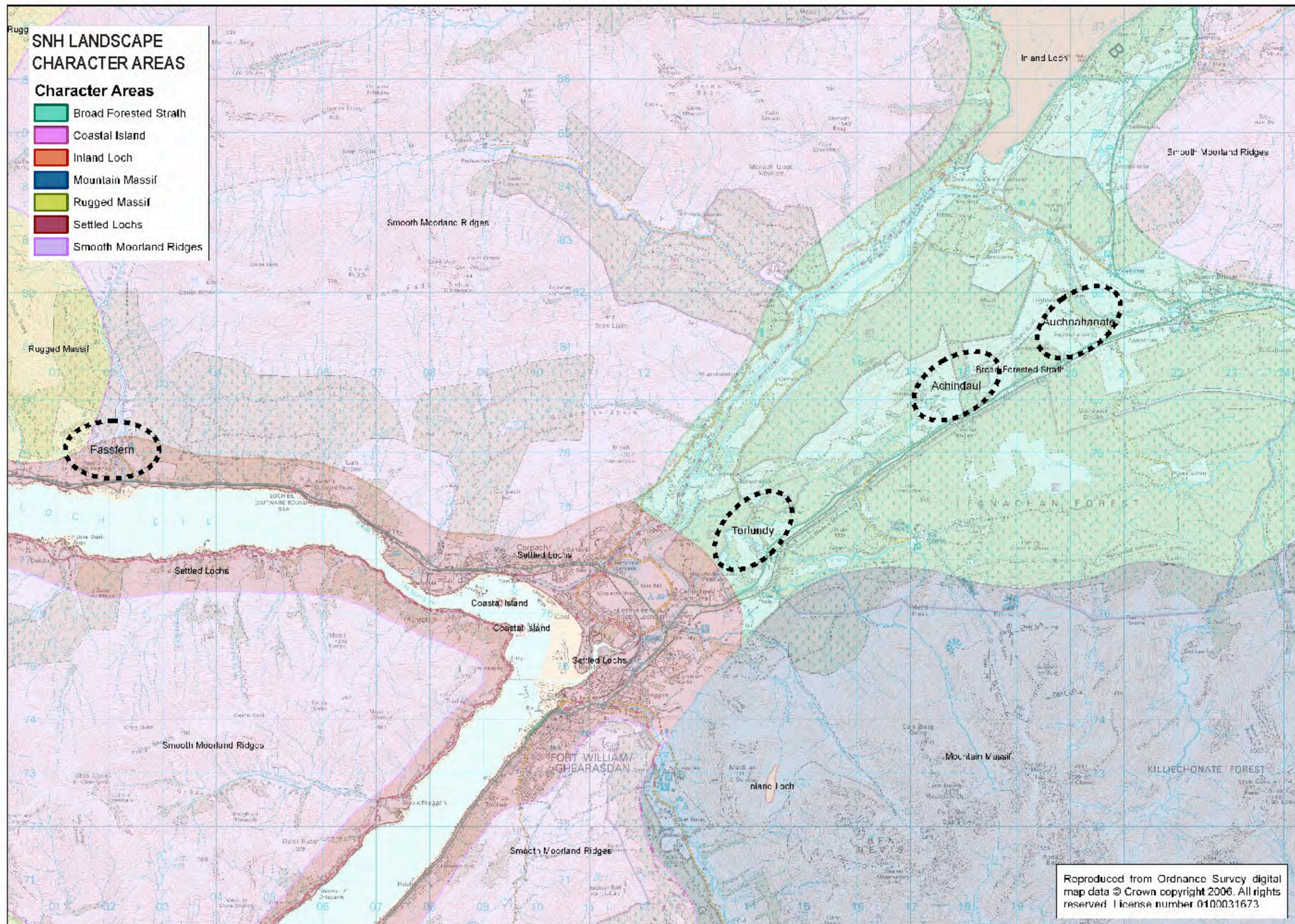
# The Four New Settlement Options



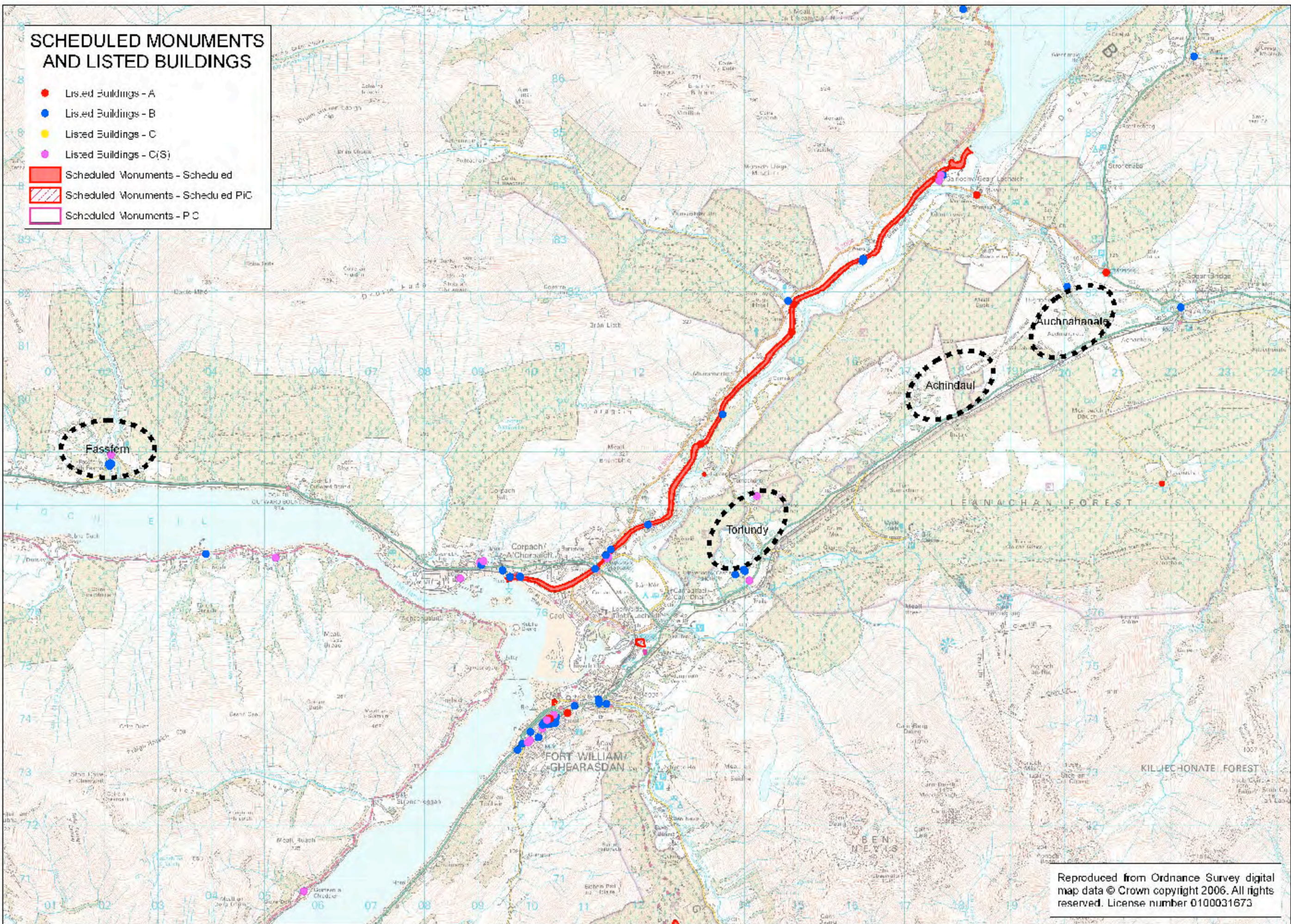
# Torlundy/Tomacharich Village Expansion

# The Four New Settlement Options





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## Comparative Assessment

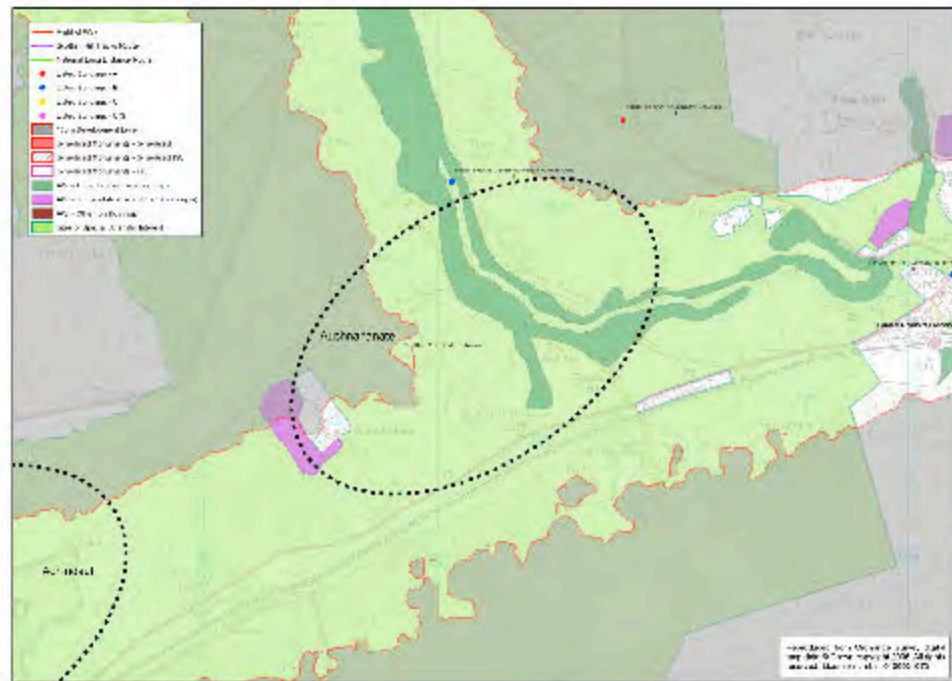
### Auchnahanate Landscape Appraisal

#### *Site Context and Character*

The Auchnahanate site lies the furthest of the three A82 corridor options from Fort William, being located approximately 12-13km from the town centre. The village of Spean Bridge is less than 2km to the east. Auchnahanate falls within the 'Broad Forested Strath' character area of the Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) Landscape Character Assessment. Sensitivity to landscape change is considered low due to the robustness of the landscape.



View from Commando Memorial over Site



Site Analysis

#### *Topography and Drainage*

The River Spean runs through the eastern part of the site, with the ground to the north-west rising up from the river valley to an area of land that is over 100m. To the east of the river, steeper ground which forms the toe of a more mountainous land-mass slopes down to the bank. Land closer to the western bank of the river is locally hummocky, with a broader area of more level ground forming the remainder of the western part of the site adjacent to the A82. Some man-made ponds are located within this lower ground. The entire site is within the Parallel Roads of Lochaber Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which is, according to SNH, a 'site of outstanding importance for geomorphology' which is 'unique in Britain and is internationally recognised as a classic locality for

Pleistocene ice-dammed lake shorelines (the Parallel Roads) and a remarkable assemblage of landforms and sediments recording geomorphological processes'.

#### *Land Cover and Vegetation*

Much of the site is densely wooded, with swathes of predominantly deciduous 'Ancient (of semi-natural origin)' woodland that forms part of the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) on either side of the river. Elsewhere there are numerous pockets and copses of more open, often scrubby, birch and rowan woodland, with another area of mixed 'Long-established (of plantation origin)' AWI woodland forming a backdrop to the dwellings at Achnabobane. Areas of open ground are unimproved, frequently rushy grassland, and are used for sheep-grazing.

#### *Built Elements*

The A82 trunk road runs along the southern edge of the site, parallel to the railway line. A minor road turns off the A82 to run north-westwards alongside the river valley, eventually forming a loop that connects with Torlundy/Tomacharich. A cluster of several houses lines the road close to where it connects with the track of the Military Road. A short section of newly-built road, which has been constructed to access a group of new houses currently forming a planning application, loops off the access road at this point. Further west, a private driveway leads to the group of dwellings at Achnabobane. Within the site the Spean Bridge – General Wade's High Bridge, is B-listed. Immediately to the north-east of the site, on the A82 to Fort Augustus, is the Spean Bridge Commando Memorial which is Category A-listed.

#### *Views*

Along the river and immediately to the west towards Auchnahanate, views outwards are well-contained by woodland. The more open ground at Achnabobane, and the higher land at Highbridge, allow clear views to and from the A82, and longer-distance views of the surrounding hills and mountains including Ben Nevis. To the east of the site, the Commando Memorial is a world-famous and frequently visited viewpoint which affords a stunning panoramic view down the Great Glen towards Fort William, and provides a clear and close-up overview of the Auchnahanate site in the foreground. The Memorial sign requests visitors to 'respect the sanctity of this place and of its awesome setting'.

### Auchnahanate Technical Appraisal

#### *Ground Conditions*

Published geological information (Inverness 140) indicates that the superficial deposits within the area of the site comprise morainic drift, while an area to the south indicates alluvium of a temporary moraine dammed lake. The thickness of the superficial deposits is not recorded. The underlying bedrock within the area of the site is recorded to comprise the Eilde Flags, banded psammitic gneisses with pelitic laminae.

#### *Access*

It is assumed that access to Auchnahanate would be taken from the A82. This section of the A82 is reasonably well-aligned for the design speed. As such, ghost island junctions can be expected to take a similar form to that proposed for Inverlochy and that already in place at the access to Aonach Mor ski centre as a comparison. Provision of visibility splays will be a key requirement and depending on location for access, re-alignment of the A82 cannot be discounted. Furthermore, the widened nature of the new accesses may necessitate land-take from adjacent properties, whereas the improvements required at Inverlochy have been demonstrated to be able to be undertaken within land in control of the Estate. In the case of Auchnahanate, there is an existing crossroad junction on the A82 which may be used. Crossroad junctions are not preferred arrangements, and any increased usage or prominence to the junction would require upgrading to modern trunk-road standard. In this respect, it is anticipated that this take the form of a staggered arrangement.

#### *Drainage*

No public drainage is recorded in the broad settlement option area. Auchnahanate lies approximately 3km east of Achindaul. While closer to the public network in Spean Bridge, development would remain at a significant distance from the public system. Therefore it is expected that development of any significance would require a wastewater treatment plant to be established, with treated effluent discharged to the nearest watercourse. It has not been possible to obtain comment from Scottish Water in respect of whether they would be willing to support the maintenance of such provision. The River Spean bounds the east of the settlement option site. While there will be discharge conditions placed by SEPA for wastewater treatment, these can be expected to be less onerous than any imposed for Achindaul. However, establishing a physical discharge to the River Spean will encounter significant challenges in overcoming the 20-30m level difference between a settlement area and the gorged river. Discharges to smaller watercourses within the higher areas may in turn lead to stringent discharge conditions being placed by SEPA for wastewater treatment.

#### *Services*

At the present time, only records for water supply have been obtained for Auchnahanate. No assessment has been made in respect of capacity within the public water supply system to provide for new settlement. Supplies are shown to be present in the Auchnahanate area.

#### *Flood Risk*

The Auchnahanate area was not shown to be at risk of flood from rivers during a 1 in 100 year storm event. The settlement areas lies some level above the level of the River Spean which lies to the east of the site, and can reasonably be assumed not to be at risk from flooding from the river.

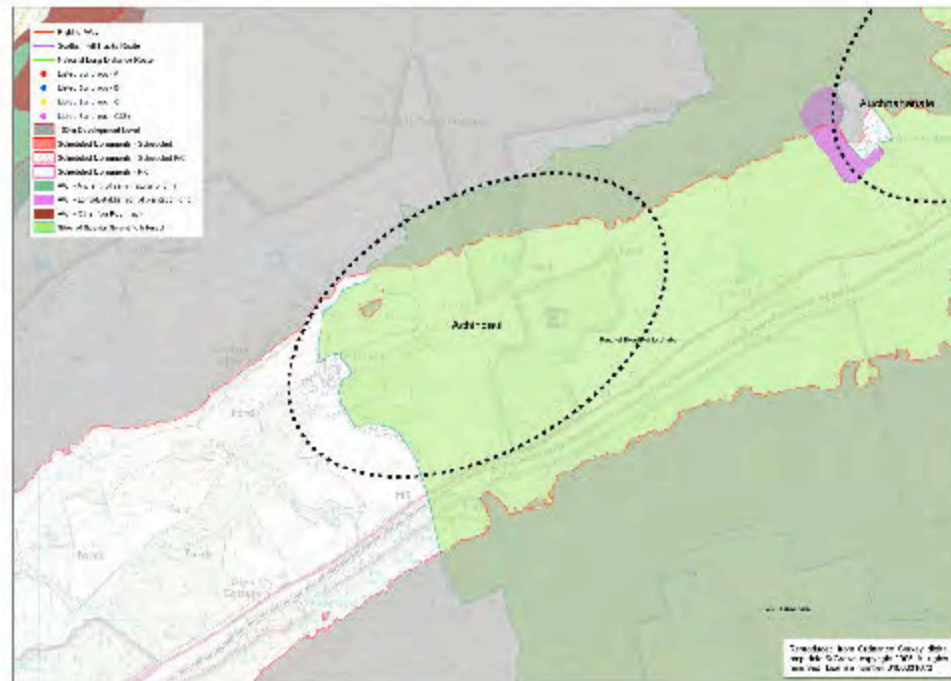
## Achindaul Landscape Appraisal

### Site Context and Character

Achindaul is located about 9.5km from Fort William to the south-west, with Spean Bridge lying 4km to the north-east. It falls within the 'Broad Forested Strath' character area of the SNH Landscape Character Assessment. Sensitivity to landscape change is considered low due to the robustness of the landscape.



View into site from A82 Layby



### Site Analysis

#### Topography and Drainage

The site is backed by a long ridge of hills which extends south-westwards to Tomacharich. Minor and mainly visually insignificant watercourses etch the hillsides and traverse the lower, fairly level ground that constitutes the main part of the site. The northern edge of the site, where the ground rises into the hills, is greater than 100m in height. The majority of the site, westwards to the driveway to Achindaul, lies within the Parallel Roads of Lochaber SSSI which is of international importance for geomorphology, as described previously.

#### Land Cover and Vegetation

Open improved grassland, grazed by cattle, forms the main land-cover within the site. Two large blocks of coniferous plantation form regular elements in the northern and eastern parts of the site. Strips of young deciduous woodland edge the plantations, with more mature groups of broadleaves surrounding and enclosing the farmhouse.

### Built Elements

The A82 trunk road bounds the southern extent of the site, with the railway line running alongside it. From the trunk road, a track runs to Achindaul farmhouse and associated farm buildings, which are clustered at the base of the hill. A further farm track bisects the access track and runs east-west, fording the streams at several points and meeting the Military Road to the east.

### Views

Longer-distance views to the north and south are constrained by the adjoining hill-masses, with views instead being channelled along the north-east to south-west line of the valley. West of the coniferous plantation, the open fields allow wide uninterrupted views from the A82 across the site towards the wooded lower slopes of the hills.

## Achindaul Technical Appraisal

### Ground Conditions

Published geological information (Inverness 140) indicates that the superficial deposits within the area of the site comprise morainic drift, while an area in the east indicates first terrace freshwater alluvium. The thickness of the superficial deposits is not recorded. The underlying bedrock within the area of the site is recorded to comprise the Eilde Flags, banded psammitic gneisses with pelitic laminae.

### Access

As with Auchnahanate, it is assumed that access to both areas would be taken from the A82, and this section is reasonably well-aligned for the design speed. Ghost island junctions would be of a similar form to that proposed for Inverlochty and that already in place at the access to Aonoch Mor ski centre. Provision of visibility splays will be a key requirement and depending on location for access, re-alignment of the A82 cannot be discounted. Land-take may also be an issue for new accesses.

### Drainage

No public drainage is recorded in the broad settlement option area. The nearest sewage works are located at Darroch, some 1.5 km east of Spean Bridge and over 5km from the site. This would in all likelihood be considered prohibitive for connection. It is expected that development of any significance would require a wastewater treatment plant to be established, with treated effluent discharged to the nearest watercourse. Comment from Scottish Water, in respect of whether they would be willing to support the maintenance of such provision, has not been received in the time available. Watercourses in the area would not appear to be significant, and this may in turn lead to stringent discharge conditions being placed by SEPA for wastewater treatment.

### Services

At the present time, only records for water supply have been obtained. No assessment has been made in respect of capacity within the public water supply system to provide for new settlement. There is no public water supply network in the Achindaul area according to Scottish Water's records.

### Flood Risk

The Achindaul area was not shown to be at risk of flood from rivers during a 1 in 100 year event.

## Torlundy/Tomacharich Landscape Appraisal

### Site Context and Character

Torlundy/Tomacharich is the closest of the four sites to Fort William and is located approximately 4.5-5km from the town centre. It falls within the 'Broad Forested Strath' character area of the SNH Landscape Character Assessment. Sensitivity to landscape change is considered low due to the robustness of the landscape.



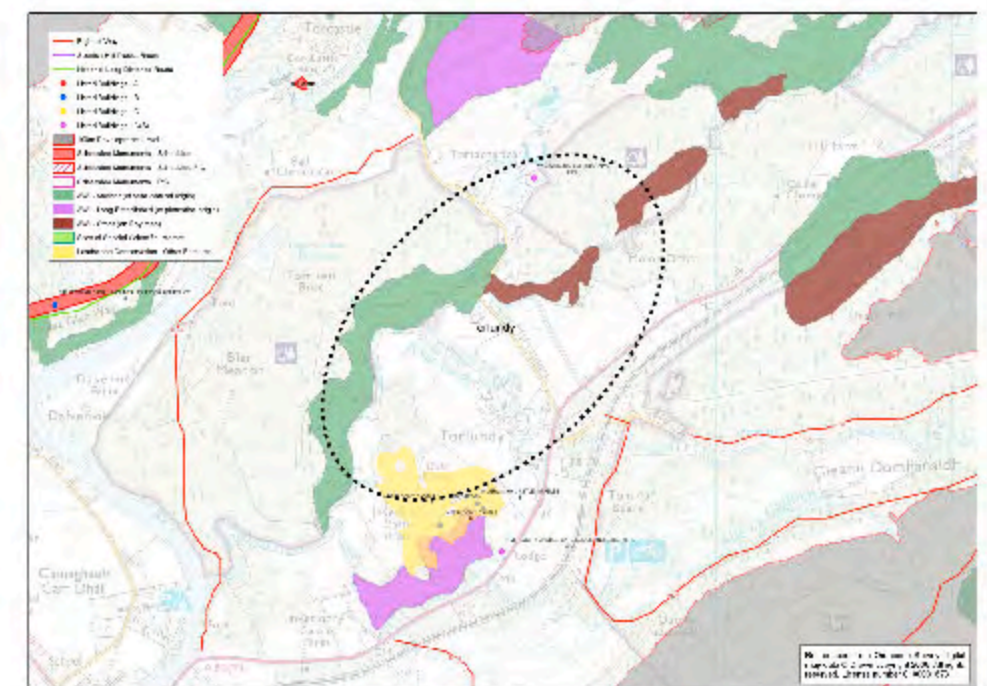
View from Torlundy into East of Site



View of 'Village Green' towards Ben Nevis



View from Inverlochty Castle driveway looking West



### Site Analysis

### *Topography and Drainage*

The River Lundy, a tributary of the River Lochy, meanders through the northern part of the site, fed by the Allt na Caillich stream to the west. East of Torlundy, the Allt Achadh na Dalach enters the river. A small lochan lies to the north of Inverlochy Castle. The gently undulating site lies entirely below the 100m contour line and is, aside from a few localised areas such as a small outcrop of higher ground next to Inverlochy Castle Farm, the most level of all four sites. Towards Tomacharich the land starts to rise as it merges with the ridge of hills that backs Achindaul.

### *Land Cover and Vegetation*

The site is well-wooded, with the mixed woodland that edges the northern banks of the River Lundy and Allt Achadh na Dalach stream being categorised in the AWI as Ancient (of semi-natural origin) and Other (on Roy map). Other AWI (Long-established) woodland backs Inverlochy Castle, and more scattered or scrubby trees fringe the lochan and the river as it runs through Torlundy. Immediately to the north of the castle, the grassland stretching down to the river forms a parkland-type setting to the building. Within the Torlundy/Happy Valley area, the central fields used by the riding school have a 'village green' character. The large area of open ground east of Torlundy is rough grassland with rushy patches.

### *Built Elements*

The site is the only one of the four options that has an existing small village at its core, served by two minor roads leading from the A82. The few traditional dwellings at the heart of the village have been extended by two simple groupings of white dwellings that, although more recent, are in keeping with the local vernacular style. At Tomacharich within the site, the almshouses are C(S)-listed. On the edge of the site Inverlochy Castle, Stable and Walled Gardens are all B-listed, and the Gate Lodge and Piers C(S)-listed. Although not included within the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes, the Lochaber Local Plan 1999 indicates the parkland and lochan that fronts the Castle as 'Landscape Conservation: Other Features' with regard to its relevance to the setting and ambience of the Castle. Although there are no public paths within the site, a Right of Way runs along the river between Tomacharich and Camaghael, north of Fort William, and Torlundy sits within an area with a wide-ranging network of Rights of Way and the Great Glen Way, a National Long-distance Route. The Caledonian Canal SAM runs close to the north of the site but is physically and visually separate. Another SAM, Tor Castle, lies on the northern bank of the River Lochy.

### *Views*

Views into the landscape surrounding the Castle from the A82 are limited by mature woodland, with views from the Castle itself focussing directly north-westwards. Only slight oblique glimpses of the rooflines of Happy Valley can be obtained from in front of the Castle. The central 'village green' in Torlundy offers spectacular views towards Ben Nevis, although the houses themselves have less direct views outwards. The open field east of Torlundy can be partly viewed from the A82. Development north of Tomacharich close to the river may have impacts upon the setting of Tor Castle.

### Torlundy/Tomacharich Technical Appraisal

#### *Ground Conditions*

Published geological information indicates the superficial deposits beneath the site to comprise alluvium on the western boundary and northern portion, along the River Lundy and within the area of the small tributary burn. This is underlain by glacial sand and gravel on the northern portion. The site is underlain by morainic drift, typically comprising silty or sandy till commonly interbedded with varying proportions of gravel, sand and silt. Small areas of basin and hill peat are shown in the eastern corner of the site and on the southern boundary. Additionally, bedrock is shown at or near the surface on the southern boundary of the site. No made-ground deposits are noted within the site area. The thickness of the superficial deposits is currently unknown. The geological plan shows a glacial drainage channel within the southern portion of the site, in a north-western direction. The underlying bedrock at the site comprises dominantly quartz-schist with subordinate bands of quartz mica schist. Geological plans indicate morainic till to be present at surface across the majority of the site.

#### *Access*

Principles for access were discussed with the Scottish Executive (SE) in the preparation of the Torlundy Village Expansion report of April 2005. SE supported the provision of ghost island junctions to provide safe access/egress from the A82. A ghost island junction is provided for access to Aonach Mor ski centre a little to the north of Torlundy/Tomacharich. This would suggest that adopting similar junction arrangements is not only appropriate but also represents consistency of approach on the networks, which is a desire under trunk road guidelines for design. The Torlundy Village Expansion report also observed that for the southern extent of the settlement search area relating to Inverlochy, improvements required were demonstrated to be able to be undertaken within land in control of the Estate.

#### *Drainage*

Any of the settlement options would be required to adopt the requirements of both SEPA and Scottish Water in respect of appropriate Sustainable Urban Drainage systems within development proposals. At this point in time, no real comparison can be made of capability within settlement areas to provide adequate treatment of surface run off, suitably attenuated and able to provide amenity. However, the Torlundy Village Expansion report has already shown that 'the masterplan has space to embrace (SUDS) techniques such as wetland ponds or detention ponds which can provide both adequate treatment of surface run-off and amenity value', and SUDS elements would be considered in the extended Torlundy/Tomacharich Masterplan. In respect of wastewater drainage, as is common with rural areas existing provision for minor settlements is restricted to septic tanks, and this is the case with each of the three alternative settlement areas. In contrast, the Torlundy/Tomacharich area is already served by a wastewater treatment plant which serves around 300 housing units. While this treatment plant is currently at capacity, it should be considered advantageous to have the existing infrastructure and land, which can be expanded through current technology to serve further development.

#### *Services*

Water mains, power supply and telecommunications plant already exist in the Torlundy/Tomacharich area to provide the basis for future supply. It is not known whether capacity exists within these supplies for whatever level of expansion is envisaged. The proximity of Torlundy/Tomacharich to Fort William is, however, considered to be advantageous in respect of the extent of upgrading works that may be required.

#### *Flood Risk*

Based on the broad assumptions outlined above, an estimated level of 21.0m AOD was established as the level which would be appropriate in planning terms in respect of flood risk – i.e. a 1 in 200 year storm event plus allowance for climate change and freeboard. The 21m contour would affect an area within the Torlundy/Tomacharich area to the north beyond that identified in the Torlundy Village Expansion report of April 2005, within part of the 'village green' and along the river to the north-east. It is considered that these areas would be best-suited to forming part of the SUDS/open space network that would be required as part of any new settlement, without adversely affecting the available land for development.

### Fassfern Landscape Appraisal

#### *Site Context and Character*

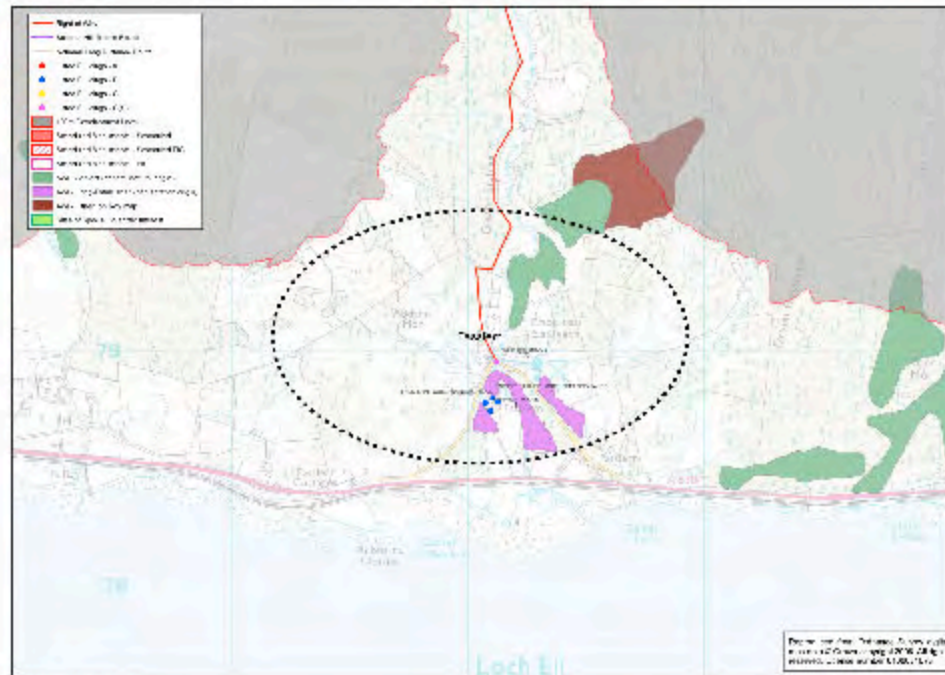
Fassfern is located approximately 12-13km north-west of Fort William town centre, on the northern shore of Loch Eil. It is located predominantly in the 'Settled Lochs' character area of the SNH Landscape Character Assessment, with some of the upper ground lying in the 'Smooth Moorland Ridges' character area. Sensitivity to landscape change and large-scale development such as settlements is high.



View of Lower Ground close to A820



View North along Right of Way



Site Analysis

#### *Topography and Drainage*

Backed by a tight landmass of hills and mountains, the site straddles the An t-Suilleag river which runs through a steep valley into the loch, and faces directly southwards onto the water. It lies entirely below the 100m contour line. A fairly level and low-lying triangular area opens out from the mouth of the river next to the A830, with the land rising first gently and then more dramatically northwards into the hills.

#### *Land Cover and Vegetation*

The site is the most wooded of the four, including some areas of AWI Ancient (of semi-natural origin) and Long-established (of plantation origin) woodland along the valley. The majority of the rest of the woodland is coniferous plantation, interspersed with some areas of rough grazing/moorland.

#### *Built Elements*

Fassfern House, Walled Garden and East Steading Range (all B) and Fassfern Bridge (C(S)) form a cluster of Listed Buildings and structures, with a few more modern houses/chalets dotted along the access road which loops into the site from the A830. At the high point of the road, a well-used Right of Way leads up the valley along Gleann Suileag from a small picnic/recreation area.

#### *Views*

The well-wooded nature of the site greatly restricts views to and from the dwellings and access road. Views into the site from the A830 are also limited by woodland and the quickly rising landform, although clearer views into the site could be obtained from across Loch Eil on the A861.

### Fassfern Technical Appraisal

#### *Ground Conditions*

No URS in-house information is held for the site area; however the geological plan (Inverness 139) for the area to the immediate east of the site area indicates that the superficial deposits to comprise post-glacial higher raised beach deposits and morainic drift. The thickness of the superficial deposits is not recorded. The underlying bedrock within the area of the site is recorded to comprise the Eilde Flags, banded psammitic (quartzo-feldspathic) granulite.

#### *Access*

The A830(T) adjacent to Fassfern by-passes the settlement. Access is provided by a through road which connects to the A830 both east and west. Junction provision on the A830 for future settlement will required to be reviewed with SE. The level of development will determine the actual junction form, but it can be reasonably assumed that ghost-island turning lanes will be required as a minimum improvement.

#### *Drainage*

A limited public drainage network is recorded in the broad settlement option area, sufficient to serve the existing settlement via what is recorded as Fassfern septic tank. An outfall to Loch Eil is indicated from the septic tank (possibly incorrectly identified as a rising main). This may be an emergency overflow from the septic tank. Subsequently, it is expected that development of any significance would require a wastewater treatment plant to be established, with treated effluent discharged a suitable identified watercourse. Any such discharge would be subject to conditions placed by SEPA for wastewater treatment. Should a discharge to Loch Eil be permitted, the outfall would require to be taken beyond the MLWS level of the loch, which may involve significant work.

#### *Services*

At the present time, only records for water supply have been obtained. No assessment has been made in respect of capacity within the public water supply system to provide for new settlement. Supplies are present in the Fassfern area, which is served by a 125mm diameter supply pipe which continues east and west along the route of the A830.

#### *Flood Risk*

The low-lying area between the existing Fassfern settlement and the A830 has been identified at risk during a 1 in 100 year event. Subsequently, a similar area can be expected to be taken into account in planning terms when planning any future settlement against the provisions of SPP7.

The following table summarises the known opportunities for, and constraints upon, development of each site:

SITE LOCATION	Strengths/Opportunities	Weaknesses/Constraints
<b>Auchnahate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SNH LCA denotes low sensitivity to change</li> <li>• Served by A82 trunk road</li> <li>• Mature woodland provides containment/screening</li> <li>• No flooding risk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located in geomorphologically unique and internationally important SSSI, upon which development would have significant adverse impacts – conflict with SPP3</li> <li>• Large areas of AWI woodland limit development</li> <li>• Large area above 100m contour limits development</li> <li>• Cost of bridging river prohibitive to development of eastern side</li> <li>• Significant adverse impacts upon panoramic view from A-listed Commando Memorial</li> <li>• Distance from Fort William joint least sustainable of 4 options</li> <li>• Possible coalescence issue with Spean Bridge</li> <li>• New settlement rather than expansion of existing village contradicts preference in SPP3</li> <li>• Although fairly substantial area of relatively level ground at Achmahokane, and smaller areas closer to river, not sufficient for 500 homes</li> <li>• New WWTW required</li> </ul>
<b>Achindaul</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SNH LCA denotes low sensitivity to change</li> <li>• Served by A82 trunk road</li> <li>• Large area of relatively level ground – could accommodate 500 homes</li> <li>• No flooding risk</li> <li>• Less woodland than other 3 sites – none AWI</li> <li>• Distance from Fort William second most sustainable of 4 options</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located in geomorphologically unique and internationally important SSSI, upon which development would have significant adverse impacts – conflict with SPP3</li> <li>• Area of land above 100m contour line limits development</li> <li>• New settlement rather than expansion of existing village contradicts preference in SPP3</li> <li>• New WWTW required</li> </ul>
<b>Torlundy/Tomacharich</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SNH LCA denotes low sensitivity to change</li> <li>• Served by A82 trunk road</li> <li>• Large area of relatively level ground – could accommodate 500 homes without impact upon areas with flooding risk</li> <li>• Potential to utilise land at flooding risk for SUDS/open space network</li> <li>• Only option to expand existing village instead of new settlement and therefore support SPP3</li> <li>• Some existing community, recreational and business facilities</li> <li>• Distance from Fort William most sustainable of 4 options</li> <li>• Mature woodland provides containment/screening</li> <li>• Land all below 100m contour line</li> <li>• Only site with existing WWTW that could be extended</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possible flooding constraints on lower ground next to River Lundy</li> <li>• Large areas of AWI woodland limit development</li> <li>• Adverse impacts upon views from/setting of Listed Buildings just outwith site must be avoided</li> <li>• Adverse impacts upon views from/landscape setting of Inverloch Castle Hotel must be avoided</li> </ul>

SITE LOCATION	Strengths/Opportunities	Weaknesses/Constraints
<b>Fassfern</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Served by A830 trunk road</li> <li>• Mature woodland provides containment/screening</li> <li>• Land all below 100m contour line</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SNH LCA denotes high sensitivity to change</li> <li>• Distance from Fort William joint least sustainable of 4 options, and furthest from regional facilities in Inverness</li> <li>• Possible flooding constraints on lower ground next to A830 – restricted space for avoidance/compensation</li> <li>• New settlement rather than expansion of existing village contradicts preference in SPP3</li> <li>• Large areas of AWI woodland limit development</li> <li>• Adverse impacts upon views from/setting of Listed Buildings within site must be avoided</li> <li>• Only small areas of fairly level ground outwith possible flooding area</li> <li>• New WWTW required</li> </ul>

## Summary of Development Potential

### *Auchnahate*

Although development is not entirely ruled out in this site, it should be limited to no more than a few small-scale clusters of housing in order to preserve the integrity of the SSSI (which could not occur with the development of 500 houses), avoid adverse impact upon views from A-listed memorial, retain the existing landscape and settlement character, and limit damage to AWI woodland. A new settlement here would contradict SPP3 on two counts (entirely new rather than extended settlement; adverse impact upon SSSI of international importance).

### *Achindaul*

The landform of this site would technically allow a larger scale of development; however, the integrity of the SSSI could not be preserved with the development of 500 houses. In addition the open character and views across the valley would be irreversibly altered. It is considered that small-scale development around the existing farmstead could be accommodated without significant adverse impacts. A new settlement here would also contradict SPP3 on two counts (entirely new rather than extended settlement; adverse impact upon SSSI of international importance).

### *Torlundy/Tomacharich*

There is sufficient open relatively level ground within the site to avoid damage to AWI woodland, position development outwith lower areas with flooding issues, and avoid adverse visual impacts upon Listed Buildings, including in particular Inverloch Castle and its setting. An extended settlement here would also be the only option to conform with the guidance contained in SPP3 regarding 'Guiding Development to the Right Places', where policy states that extension of an existing village is preferable to an entirely new settlement. It is also the most sustainable in terms of proximity to Fort William yet without danger of coalescence. As shown in the above comparison table, the site is the only one where the opportunities outweigh constraints.

### *Fassfern*

Due to the constraints of AWI woodland, potentially adverse impacts upon views from/setting of Listed Buildings, and limited areas of fairly level ground, this site could only accommodate small-scale clusters of housing. There are also potential flooding issues that are likely to significantly restrict developable land, and topographical constraints would restrict compensation elsewhere. A new settlement here would contradict SPP3 on one count (entirely new rather than extended settlement).

## OTHER DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

Although this report concentrates on the development potential of Inverloch Castle Estate and the Torlundy/Tomacharich settlement option in comparison to the other three new settlement sites, the other proposals suggested were looked at for viability.

### **Holiday Villages**

Both the Aonach Mor and Tomacharich locations shown in the Futures Paper have potential as holiday developments. The former is better marketed towards active recreation suited to its location, with the latter site being a well-contained riverside location that links with existing small-scale chalet development at Torlundy, and is more suited to family holidays, perhaps with an eco-friendly bent appropriate to its wooded location. In addition, there is potential for high-quality second/holiday homes to be accommodated close to Inverloch as part of the Torlundy/Tomacharich settlement.

### **Other Proposals**

The existing business/industrial facilities at Torlundy could potentially be extended/revitalised to support the local economy; however, other locations are likely to be preferable for a new business park development, depending on the required scale of such a development. The expansion of the Nevis Range base station and the proposed transport improvements in the vicinity of Inverloch, including, an airstrip, rail halt and transport terminus, would be a welcome boost to tourist and local use, particularly associated with new public recreational and access proposals.



## DEVELOPMENT OF THE PREFERRED OPTION

### Previous Master Plan Proposals

The Refined Master Plan of 2005 shown within the previously submitted Torlundy Village Expansion Report had itself evolved from a Conceptual Master Plan of March 2004. The master plan was determined through analysis and evaluation, in which a number of development options were tested and refined, and the various constraints and opportunities overlaid to identify those parts of the site which were most constrained. Consequently, development was sited to avoid any constrained areas while also taking advantage of the most appropriate locations in landscape and visual terms.

The extension of the remit of this report beyond ICL's landholdings to consider the broader Torlundy/Tornaharich area, as shown in the Lochaber Futures Paper as one of four new settlement options, has therefore necessitated a further refinement of this previous exercise to encompass land to the north-east of Inverlochy. At this stage, baseline information and assessment remain outline in nature, and therefore an Indicative Village Expansion layout has been prepared which suggests how the extended settlement could be developed. ICL wishes to work closely with the Council, other consultees and the local community in bringing forward a more detailed masterplan for the Torlundy/Tornaharich village expansion and associated speciality retail outlet.

As the Refined Master Plan was prepared in greater detail than this new Indicative Village Expansion layout, reference should be made to the previous Torlundy Village Expansion Report of April 2005 for a full description of the proposals. These proposals remain included in their entirety within the new indicative layout, and have been expanded upon as follows:

### Land for Housing

The areas of new housing shown on the previous Master Plan (numbered on the Indicative Village Expansion layout as 1, 2, 3 and 4) would form the western side of the village expansion. Although not considered in detail, initial proposals would suggest that Area 1 (already with planning permission for housing) would be an appropriate location for staff housing for Inverlochy Castle. Area 2, with its proximity to Fort William, could accommodate some affordable housing at a higher density, and Areas 3 and 4 closest to Inverlochy Castle would seem appropriate for low-density, high-quality houses with some element of second/ holiday homes. It is proposed to retain the central 'village green' for landscape character, open space and flooding reasons, with the eastern expansion of the village (Area 5) being suited to medium-density housing.

EDAW had carried out a check on the housing capacity of the previous Master Plan, which indicated capacity for around 200 houses; a similar check on the Indicative Village Expansion layout would suggest further capacity of up to another 300 units, thereby meeting Council requirements for 500 new homes.

### Commercial Development

The proposals include the development of a high-quality speciality arts and crafts, retail and restaurant outlet at Inverlochy Farm, adjoining the A82. It will display local arts and crafts and host temporary exhibitions by local artists. It will also exhibit and sell products and produce indigenous to the West Coast of Scotland and Lochaber district. This facility (with similarities to House of Menzies (Aberfeldy) and Loch Fyne Oyster Bar) will create employment opportunities and generate tourism in an important tourist corridor. It could also have educational benefit, such as the inclusion of a digital film studio and interpretative exhibitions of the physical and social life of Lochaber, perhaps in association with local museum facilities. ICL also considers that this would be an excellent location for the headquarters of the Mountain Rescue Service which, as it depends solely on public donations, would benefit from the site's visibility and opportunities for interaction with the public. The site could provide space for all associated infrastructure, including parking and a helicopter landing pad.

ICL is fully committed to this high-quality specialist outlet, and has commissioned an appraisal by Tribal HCH which demonstrates the economic benefits of such a proposal to the Fort William area. It will provide a much-needed boost to the local economy and will not, as confirmed by Tribal HCH, compete with the differing retail elements within Fort William itself. Rather, it will be complementary to the town centre and attract and hold visitors within the Fort William area with significant economic and tourist benefits overall.

### Public Benefits

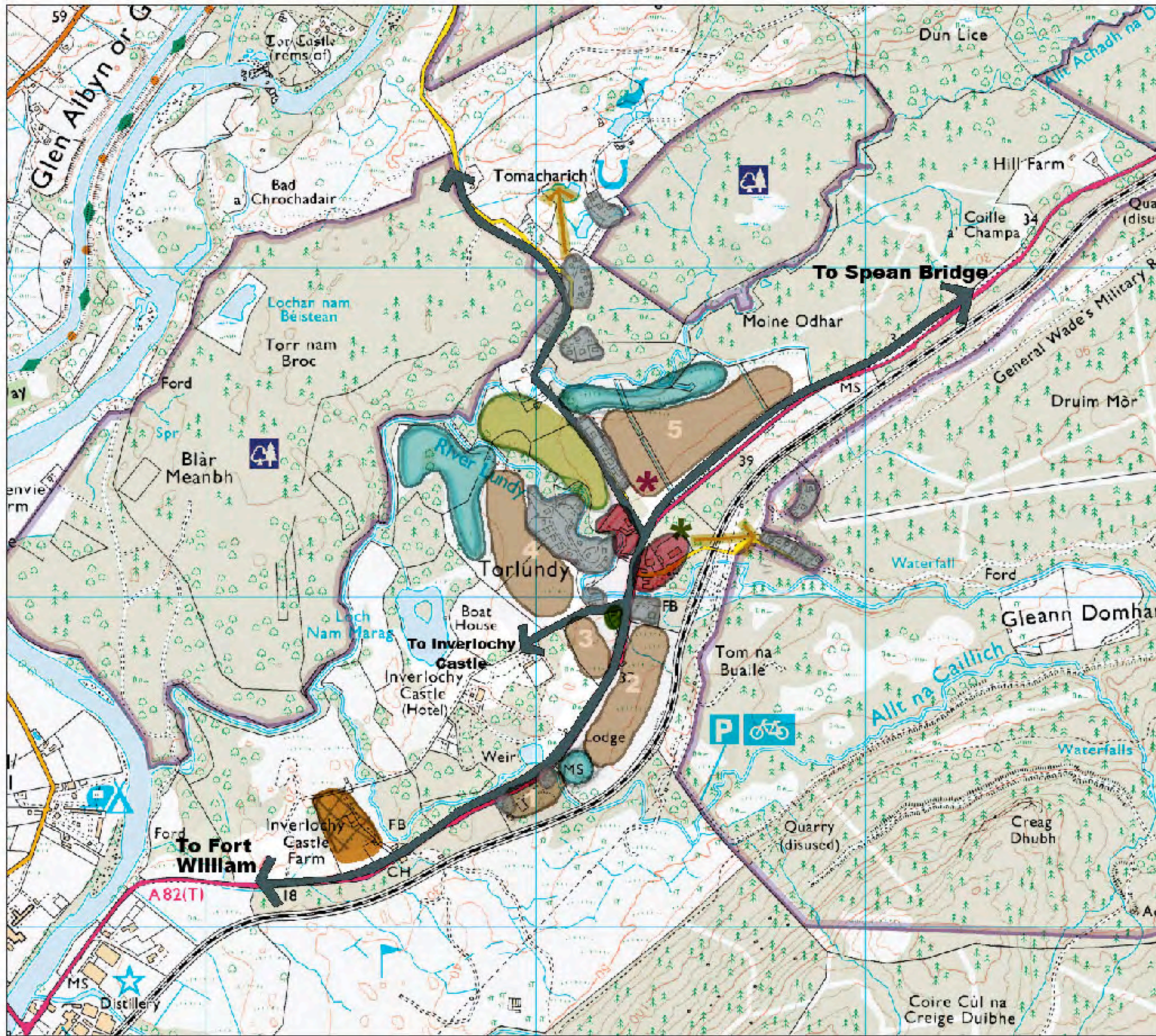
The new community would incorporate play facilities, land for a footpath/cycleway to link with the edge of Fort William, provide for retention of a central green and link with a new linear park connecting the settlement to the river and encompassing new SUDS facilities. Extensive new structure planting would extend existing mature planting, assist with containment and provide nature conservation opportunities. Area 5 would also be most appropriate for the location of a safe and well-accessed primary school at the heart of the settlement. There is also potential for expansion/revitalisation of the existing business/industrial area of Torlundy, and further land available in the longer term for future expansion if necessary.













Conceptual Master Plan: March 2004



Refined Master Plan: March 2005



Key

-  Existing houses and holiday homes
-  Proposed residential development for 500 houses
-  Existing business/industry
-  Potential area for business facilities
-  Potential location for new primary school
-  Existing community facility (pub/restaurant)
-  Existing central open space/village green
-  Potential SUDS/open space
-  Proposed arts/crafts/retail centre
-  Potential future areas for residential expansion

Indicative Village Expansion

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The comparative assessment undertaken in this report of the four new settlement options proposed within the Lochaber Futures Paper demonstrates that the Torlundy/Tomacharich option is clearly the preferred and most suitable site for a settlement of up to 500 new homes which:

- is environmentally acceptable and located in a Landscape Character Area that is robust enough to accommodate change;
- has enough land to avoid adverse impacts upon AWI woodland and Listed Buildings, including the setting of Inverloch Castle;
- is well-served by the A82 trunk road;
- is effective within Local Plan timescales and can deliver much needed housing requirements;
- provides a large-enough area of relatively level ground, which could accommodate 500 homes without impact upon areas with flooding risk;
- provides potential to utilise land at flooding risk for SUDS/open space/path network;
- builds upon existing small-scale community, recreational and business facilities;
- is the closest to Fort William and the most sustainable of the four options;
- has enough mature woodland to provide immediate containment/screening;
- is all below the 100m contour line;
- has an existing WWTW that could be extended; and
- is the only option to expand the existing village instead of being an entirely new settlement and therefore support SPP3.

In addition to delivering urgently-needed housing to the area, the proposals for a new Arts and Crafts and Retail Centre will involve the creation of just under 100 long-term jobs, with this boost further increased through the growth in local sourcing of tourism products. The jobs created will be varied and include retail, catering, office-based jobs, highly technical digital film production jobs and visitor centre staff, and indirectly, arts, crafts and food production employment. This range includes significant scope for increasing average wages, as well as building a range of skills into the local labour force.

The proposed housing development which forms part of the Torlundy Village proposals will also create substantial social and economic benefits for the Fort William area. It will represent the biggest single contribution to the achievement of the required level of housing provision and will positively assist the Council's aims in relation to provision of affordable housing. None of the other potential locations for housing development in the area could achieve a comparable impact over the foreseeable future.

The Torlundy/Tomacharich village expansion project and retail showcase offer an outstanding development opportunity, supported by ICL's commitment to innovation and excellence, which will have major social and economic benefits for the Fort William area. ICL wholeheartedly supports the approach being taken by the Council towards the identification of future housing provision in Lochaber, and is keen to play an active role in the practical realisation of the Council's objectives.



High-quality Rural Housing



# INVERLOCHY CASTLE

*Hotel & Restaurant*