

**Michael Dunham**  
**Torlundy Community Group**  
**Mayfield, Happy Valley, Torlundy,**  
**Fort William, PH33 6SN**

**The Highland Council**  
**C/O Mr Tim Stott**  
**Principle Planner**  
**The Highland Council**  
**Glenurquart Road**  
**INVERNESS**  
**IV3 5NX**

Tuesday, 15 December 2009

Dear Mr Stott

**West Highland & Islands Local Plan Examination**  
**Hearing Session – Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2010 @ 14.00hrs**

Please find enclosed the Written Statement and supporting documentation submitted on behalf of the Torlundy Community Group relating to the above Hearing Session.

I will be attending to represent the Group in this matter, assisted by one other member of the Group.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted Signature]

**MICHAEL DUNHAM**  
Secretary  
Torlundy Community Group  
Email: [secretarytcg@btconnect.com](mailto:secretarytcg@btconnect.com)

Enclosures

H.C. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICE		
17 DEC 2009		
PASS TO	INITIALS	DATE
RH		
MM		
TS		
FILE REF:		

**THE TORLUNDY COMMUNITY GROUP (TCG)**

**WEST HIGHLAND AND ISLANDS LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION**

**Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2010**

**EXPANSION SITE MU9 AND BUSINESS SITE B3 (TORLUNDY AND  
LEANACHAN FOREST): THE PROPOSED SCALE, USES,  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT, SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORT  
IMPACTS, AND EFFECTS ON EXISTING RESIDENTS**

### Contents & Index

This document sets out the Torlundy Community Group's (TCG) response to the subjects identified by the Reporter. Michael Dunham, TCG Secretary assisted by a Group member will be in attendance at this Hearing Session. The TCG will refer to the documents/items listed below which can be accessed on The Highland Council (THC) website at [www.highland.gov.uk](http://www.highland.gov.uk) or for which extracts/copies are attached.

<u>Document Name/Title</u>	<u>Reference in statement</u>
Highland Structure Plan: Approved Plan March 2001	<HSP1>
Housing in the Countryside – Development Plan Policy Guideline: March 2006	<HIC2006>
Interim Supplementary Guidance: Housing in the Countryside: September 2009	<ISG2009>
West Highland and Islands Local Plan: Adopted Plan February 1999	<WHILP1999>
Local Public Inquiry West Highland and Islands Local Plan Draft 1999 – Issue 7&8	<LPI1999>
West Highland and Islands Local Plan: Draft December 2007	<WHILP2007>
West Highland and Islands Local Plan: Draft Deposit December 2008	<WHILP2008>
SEA Site Environmental Assessment Matrix - Site MU9	<SEAMU9>
SEA Site Environmental Assessment Matrix – Site B3	<SEAB3>
<b><u>Aerial Photographs</u></b>	
Torlundy looking south towards Ben Nevis 2008	<P1>
As <P1> over-laid	<P2>
Torlundy looking west towards Fort William 2008	<P3>
As <P3> over-laid	<P4>
View from summit of Ben Nevis looking north 2007	<P5>
As <P5> MU9 & B3 over-laid	<P6>
<b><u>Maps</u></b>	
MU9 Map as provided by the Highland Council (Part B3 shown)	<M1>
MU9 Map as <M1> with roads and existing build reinstated	<M2>
<b><u>Red Squirrel Stronghold</u></b>	
Information at <a href="http://www.forestry.gov.uk">www.forestry.gov.uk</a> follow link in News section	<FCSRSS>
<b><u>Abbreviations used</u></b>	
TCG	Torlundy Community Group
THC	The Highland Council
FCS	Forestry Commission Scotland

**THE TORLUNDY COMMUNITY GROUP**

**EXPANSION SITE MU9 TORLUNDY & B3 LEANACHAN FOREST**

**RESPONSE STATEMENT TO REPORTER'S SUBJECTS**

**Subject 1 – What are the sites currently allocated for in the adopted Lochaber Local Plan, and has planning permission been granted for any development already?**

1.1 TCG concur with THC details on allocation of land in MU9 and B3 and granted planning permissions. TCG assert that developments for which planning permission in Fort William has been granted are relevant to MU9 in the overall context of the Local Plan regarding alleged over provision of land for housing use heard at an earlier Session. In summary permission has been granted for in excess of 600 houses with more in consultation at THC's priority Waterfront project. MU9 should not be assessed as a stand alone proposal.

**Subject 2 – What, if any, provisions of the structure plan are relevant to the consideration of these proposals?**

2.1 TCG is unclear about the Council's classification of MU9 as "an expansion of the existing community", a "new settlement" and a "new town". Each has different connotations within <HSP1>, <HIC2006>, <ISG2009>, and each conflict with Planning Policy in some way. THC has taken insufficient consideration of policy and appears to be using as many terms as possible in an attempt to circumnavigate the structure plan to secure the proposal for MU9.

2.2 TCG sees the following policies as relevant:

**General Strategic Policies:-**

G1, G2, G3, G5, G6, G7, G8.

**Housing:-**

H1, H2, H3, H5, H6 – point 6

**Service and Facilities:-**

S2, S4

**Sports and Recreation:-**

SR7 section 2.5.16

**Business and Industry:-**

B1, B3, B7

**Tourism:-**

T2, T5, T6.

**Agriculture:-**

A1

- 4.4 The TCG believes that THC has paid scant regard to this subject by simply relying on the fact that business will take up on the land allocated to business use.
- 4.5 Larger retail development in Fort William will necessitate residents travelling into town, increasing traffic levels further unless a retail complex on the north side of town is allowed such as the proposal being tabled for Blar Mhor.
- 4.6 No provision has been made for local schooling – there will be a significant increase in travel to and from schools at private or Council expense.

**Subject 5 – What scope is there to accommodate different uses?**

- 5.1 The old brickworks and the commercial premises on the east side of the A82 could be assigned to business use, however there would possibly be some displacement of existing businesses.
- 5.2 We find THC's introduction of infrastructure comments in this subject somewhat distracting from the real issues of different uses and the assertions that the physical boundaries will determine how the site is laid out vague and lacking the comprehensive planning requirement of a new settlement. THC makes significant comment of the FCS and its undecided plans which makes them largely insignificant apart from their confirmed designation of Leanachan Forest as a Red Squirrel Stronghold <FCSRSS>.
- 5.3 The TCG suggests that the bulk of new built in B3 should be on the access road (C1205) to the ski base.

**Subject 6 – How does the Torlundy proposal relate to the proposal for Leanachan Forest?**

- 6.1 There is no relationship. THC appears not to have addressed this subject. Maybe this is because in <WHILP2007> B3 did not exist, it was introduced in <WHILP2008> along with further parcels of land to the east of the A82 to try and justify MU9 after the Carver family withdrew their land. This was a disingenuous attempt to justify the building of 300 dwellings in order to try and make the proposal seem self contained and cohesive when in fact it is divided by roads, railway and river. No evidence is available to show that there are any local or incoming businesses wanting to locate in B3 or MU9. Other industrial sites have large areas of unused land which should be occupied first.

**Subject 7 – What are the physical, servicing and environmental constraints on development?**

Physical – Photographs <P1> to <P6> and Maps <M1> & <M2> are relevant here.

- A82(T)
- Land form
- River Lundy
- Railway
- Existing developments serve to break up and limit access and contiguity
- Agricultural land – loss of high quality (for the area) land

- Loss of tourism employment
- Loss of rural setting to scheduled building
- Loss of wildlife habitats – B3 and MU9 migration ground, reference FCS Red Squirrel Stronghold <FCSRSS>
- Impact on scenic views from major tourism routes Ben Nevis, Aonach Mor and the A82(T) – reference again photographs <P1> to <P6>

### Conclusion

The TCG asks that the Reporter considers the real need for permanent destruction of a rural community, in a scenic area important to the major industry of the Highlands, tourism, especially in the light of overwhelming objection from the community and those who made representation from around the world by way of petitions. We also ask that the Reporter takes into consideration the previously rejected, at Public Inquiry, attempt to develop the area in the 1999 Local Plan <LPI1999> the Reporter's reasoning at that time has not changed for what was a development on a much smaller scale. The cost of developing MU9 and B3 may be less in monetary terms than alternative sites, but it will be far higher in terms of permanent loss of invaluable landscape/habitat unique to the Highlands.

The residents of Torlundy and Tomacharich ask the Reporter to recommend removal of MU9 and B3 from the proposed Local Plan.

## ISSUE 7: HOUSING AT TORLUNDY/TOMACHARICH

### 7.1 Policy 8.6.4 states:

"The following land is allocated for housing:

- (a) 2.5ha (25 houses) - Achindaal lands, north of the A82(T);
- (b) 2.5ha (12 houses) - Tomacharich Farm, north of the River Lundy;

Subject to S.50 Agreement in relation to a Design Brief and open margins; pro-rata developer contributions to meet the cost of infrastructure ( including access) and structural planting (see 8.6.11); housing mix, traditional building styles and materials."

### 7.2 Policy 8.6.7 states:

"The following land is allocated as follows:

- (b) 1.2ha for open space and a playing field on the Achindaal lands;"

### 7.3 Policy 8.6.11 states:

"The council will promote a substantial woodland planting initiative in and around Torlundy and Tomacharich to integrate existing and future development; improve shelter and amenity and strengthen the landscape context for these communities. Design and species should reflect the mixed deciduous character of the existing woodland in this area. Such measures will be secured in association with development schemes."

7.4 Eight letters of objection in respect of these policies were received from residents in Tomacharich. The principle grounds of objection are:

- sufficient new housing has been allowed in recent years to reinforce and support the existing community;
- there is no overwhelming demand for housing at Torlundy/Tomacharich;
- there are other areas around Fort William and Blar Mhor on which to build houses;
- there would be a loss of rural character and traditional way of life;
- impressive views of Ben Nevis would be obstructed, and views from Aonach Mor would be affected;
- the proposals are not consistent with the existing settlement pattern;
- the effect on local wildlife would be immense;
- access to the A82(T) is inadequate; and
- there is no bus service or footpath link to Fort William.

7.10 The Fort William Area Housing Study and the subsequent Local Plan Alteration No.1, adopted in September 1994, confirmed that the council was prepared to give further consideration to the concept of a new community in the Tomacharich locality as part of the review of the local plan. The Consultative Draft Lochaber Local Plan, published in June 1996, did not promote a new community at Torlundy/Tomacharich although it stated as a priority the need to create a township with identity, employment opportunities and an appropriate fit with its surroundings. It identified that there was spare capacity in the public water supply and drainage networks, and allocated 6.0ha of land for housing, comprising 12 houses on Achindaal land and 12 houses at Tomacharich Farm. A substantial woodland planting initiative was also promoted.

7.11 Lochaber Housing Association expressed support for the policies and the Crofters Commission had no adverse comments. Comments in support were received from both landowners concerned - Dr. Berardelli and Great Glen Holidays. In fact, Dr. Berardelli requested a higher density of development on a smaller area of land which would be less wasteful of farmland, more economic and would relate better to the pattern and form of the existing development. There were no objections from adjoining householders or the local community. As a result, the area identified on Achindaal land, in the Deposit Draft Local Plan, was reduced in size, from 3.5ha to 2.5ha, and the capacity increased from 12 houses to 25 houses.

7.12 With regard to housing demand, Government guidance in NPPG 3: Land for Housing states that development plans must maintain at least five years effective supply of land at all times. Whilst most land is allocated in Fort William, the Plan identifies a role for smaller settlements where limited development can be readily absorbed visually and where recent or programmed service improvements would allow further housebuilding. This is in accordance with structure plan policy P64.

7.13 Planning permissions have been granted for twelve houses in the Torlundy/Tomacharich area in the five year period 1992-96. The local plan seeks to allow individuals to continue to exercise their choice to build houses on individual plots in such areas whilst at the same time preventing piecemeal development. The council's Housing in the Countryside Policy, and policy 8.2.19 in the local plan, maintains a strict presumption against sporadic or piecemeal development through-out the Aonach Mor Corridor.

7.14 The council maintains that 12-15 houses can be readily absorbed into the landscape of the surrounding area. The Design Brief required by the Section 75 Agreement would ensure a high standard of layout and design, and the use of traditional building styles and materials. The woodland framework would integrate existing and new development into the landscape. The extent of future planting would be discussed and agreed with landowners. Although the proposed site would be visible from Ben Nevis and Aonach Mor, it is unlikely to present a significant landscape impact in views from these locations. There is no reference to street lighting in the local plan, but any new street lighting would require to minimise light spillage in accordance with policy 3.5.21 in the local plan.

7.15 Scottish Natural Heritage has expressed no concern about loss of wildlife habitats, and new planting would create new habitats. The allocated land has no statutory conservation value, and the loss of this amount of agricultural land would not affect farm viability.



## Summary of Evidence for Objectors

7.22 Mrs. Day, on behalf of Dr. D F Berardelli, explains that her client was originally concerned about the extent of the land allocated for housing on Achindaal land in the Consultative Draft Local Plan. He was also concerned about the designation of parts of the land for workshop use and for open space/playing field, and how access might be achieved to the development areas.

7.23 Highland Council accepted some of these concerns and made changes to the proposals for Tomacharich in the Deposit Draft Local Plan. Accordingly, allocation 8.6.4(a) was reduced in extent from 3.5ha to 2.5ha and the housing capacity increased from 12 to 25. However, the land allocation still extended into a second field to the east of the small burn draining to the Allt Dallach. The workshop allocation was deleted, but the open space/playing field allocation 8.6.7(b) remained. In fact the open space/playing field area was increased in size as a result of the deletion of the workshop allocation. The proposed access point remained unchanged.

7.24 As a result, an objection to the Deposit Draft Local Plan was lodged on behalf of Dr. Berardelli. The grounds of objection are detailed in paragraph 7.5 above. The council has made no response to this objection, and no modifications to the plan have been proposed to reflect the objector's concerns. In fact, modifications are now proposed which would reduce the number of houses to be built on land allocation 8.6.4(a) from 25 to 12-15 houses and would require the phasing of development to be included in any Section 75 Agreement.

7.25 She considers that the proposed modification to policy 8.6.4 demonstrates inconsistency on the part of the council. In responding to the representations on the Consultative Draft Local Plan, the council accepted the need to maximise opportunities for housing development and reduce servicing costs, factors which have now been ignored. Whilst the development proposed in the Deposit Draft Local Plan would be reasonably economic, the modified proposal, for 12-15 houses at a very low density over an extensive area, would involve high servicing costs. It would also continue to affect both fields to the east of Tomacharich.

7.26 She contends that a reduction in the number of houses to be built should be accompanied by a reduction in the area to be developed, preferably by confining the development to the western-most field closest to Tomacharich. This would result in 12-15 houses being built on 1.3ha of land at a density of 9-12 houses per hectare (4-5 house per acre), which would be an appropriate density for this rural area. The eastern-most field would be retained for agriculture.

7.27 With regard to the requirement for a Section 75 Agreement, she considers that such an agreement is unnecessary. A Design Brief could be prepared and agreed as part of the planning process. Its preparation could be the requirement of a condition attached to a grant of outline planning permission. Such a brief could include matters such as structural planting, housing mix, traditional building styles and materials, and the phasing of development. Phasing requirements may, however, conflict with design considerations and could exacerbate servicing and infrastructure costs. The issue of pro-rata developer contributions no longer applies since development is now confined to one owner/developer.

7.33 In response to questions, Mrs. Day:

- explains that Dr. Berardelli owns all the land on the east side of the Tomacharich Road between the junction with the A82(T) and the development access point. There would, therefore, be no difficulty in achieving improvements to this stretch of road;
- points out that the form of the development has not been decided. It would not necessarily be a ribbon of houses along a cul de sac. It could be a courtyard development combined with some single houses on large sites;
- explains that, with access from the southern end of the site and drainage from the northern end of the site, phasing of the development would be difficult;
- indicates that the open space provision at the northern end of the site could have a dual use - agriculture and playing field. It is considered that the provision of this open space should not be linked to the development of the housing site, since it is required for the whole community. Its provision should be a matter for the council alone;
- suggests that a Section 75 Agreement is not necessary to ensure the future maintenance of the tree/woodland planting. This could be achieved through a woodland management agreement with the developer and house owners, implemented by a woodland management company; and
- explains that the tree planting would comprise a mixture of deciduous trees, predominantly Birch, Rowan and Oak, with Scots Pine. It would take at least 10 years for the landscaping/tree planting to provide an effective screen/shelter for the development.

7.34 Mr. Carver on behalf of Great Glen Holidays objects to the deletion of the housing site on Tomacharich Farm allocated under policy 8.6.4(b). There is continuing pressure for housing in the Tomacharich/Torlundy area, and the estate receives on average three to four inquiries a month for housing in this area. He considers that this site is better building land than that to the east on Achindaal lands, and that a development on area 8.6.4(b) would have less visual impact than a development on area 8.6.4(a). It has never been envisaged that the whole area between Tomacharich Road and the River Lundy would be developed for housing. The area could be developed attractively with a mixture of landscaped/planted areas, open areas and groups of houses. A courtyard development of low cost/first time buyers housing is favoured, in conjunction with Lochaber Housing Association, although no discussions on this matter have yet taken place with the Association.

7.35 In response to questions, Mr. Carver confirms that the estate owns all the land on the west side of Tomacharich Road apart from along the frontage of the former brickworks. However, it would be possible to widen the road within the highway boundary along this small stretch of road.

7.36 Mr. Robertson is the community council representative for Tomacharich. He explains that there are 18 houses at Tomacharich at present (it originally comprised only 6 dwellings). Most of these have been built in the past 10 years. The community is concerned at the prospect of further development in the area. The road through Tomacharich is rural, it is used by motorists as a circular drive and it is popular with walkers, joggers and horse riders. There are no street lights and there is much wildlife in the area. Tomacharich is almost four miles from Fort William, not two miles as stated in the Deposit Draft Local Plan, and there are only 3 buses per day to Fort William passing the road end.

allocated should also be reduced, and confined to the western-most field immediately to the rear of the ribbon of houses along Tomacharich Road. He also requests that the open space/playing field allocation 8.6.7(b) be deleted and replaced by an area at the northern end of the western-most field. As a result, the eastern-most field would be totally unaffected by development and would be retained for agricultural purposes.

7.43 Firstly, therefore, I have considered whether any housing development on Achindaal land would be acceptable. The area to the east of the Tomacharich Road is rough grazing land sloping gently in a north westerly direction towards the Allt Dalach. The area allocated for open space/playing field is particularly low lying and boggy, and would appear to be susceptible to flooding from the Allt Dalach. The whole area is open, and exposed to the weather and to views from the A82(T). There are no particular landform features, trees or woodland to integrate a housing development into the landscape, although it would be possible to strengthen the landscape context for any new development through new tree/woodland planting. Dr. Berardelli has suggested that any such planting should be confined to the western-most field.

7.44 Based on the evidence submitted and my inspection of the site and surrounding area, I find that there would be some merit in confining any housing development to the western-most field, immediately to the rear of the ribbon of houses on Tomacharich Road. The visual impact of any housing development would be lessened, less agricultural land would be lost, and servicing costs would be reduced. However, I consider that a housing development on this reduced area would still constitute a considerable intrusion in a prominent location in the Aonach Mor Corridor. Whilst new tree planting/woodland could assist with the integration of a new housing development, in time, it would be at least 10 years before such planting would have any meaningful effect. Also, if tree planting/woodland were confined to the western-most field, as requested by Dr. Berardelli, I doubt whether this would provide sufficient screening to any new housing development.

7.45 I consider that any housing development to the east of the Tomacharich Road would be an unnecessary intrusion into open countryside. It would amount to backland development and would be totally unrelated to the existing form of this settlement, which comprises essentially a string of houses along a narrow rural road. As such, I conclude that any housing development on the area allocated 8.6.4(a) would be contrary to policy P64 in the approved structure plan which states that housing in small communities should fit existing settlement patterns.

7.46 Secondly, with regard to site 8.6.4(b), this area comprises low-lying undulating grassland between the Tomacharich Road and the River Lundy. There are few distinguishing features to this site except for the spread of trees along the banks of the River Lundy. The site is overlooked by the new houses which have been built along Tomacharich Road. The site is not prominent in views from the A82(T), and the main visual impact of any development on this site would be on views from Tomacharich Road and the houses along this road. The site allocated in the local plan is extensive, 2.5ha (6 acres), and the landowner has intimated a desire to provide a relatively small-scale housing development integrated with substantial amounts of landscaped/planted areas and open space. I find that the area could be developed in such a way without having a detrimental impact on adjoining residential property or on the surrounding area in general. However, I am not convinced that such a development would reflect the existing settlement pattern.

7.47 With regard to access, after a short initial stretch of road from the junction with the A82(T), the Tomacharich Road is only some 3-4m wide along most of its length. Some improvements to this road would be required between the junction with the A82(T) and the location of any development access. Access to site 8.6.4(a) would be obtained from the southern end of the existing ribbon of houses along the Tomacharich Road. The owner of site 8.6.4(a) owns all the land on the eastern side of the Tomacharich and would be able to effect improvements to this road. Access to site 8.6.4(b) would be likely to be further north. The owners of this site own most, but not all, the land on the western side of the Tomacharich Road and would be able to effect some improvements to this road.

7.48 On the evidence submitted, I am not satisfied that there is an overwhelming need for additional land for housing at Tomacharich. There would appear, from the statistical evidence provided by the council, to be sufficient housing land in the Fort William area to meet forecasted need and provide an adequate range and choice of housing sites. At Tomacharich, there are no local social, community or educational facilities, only an infrequent bus service, and the existing settlement pattern does not lend itself to further development of the scale and form proposed. There would appear to be little prospect of a rail halt at Torlundy or a footpath/cycleway link to Fort William in the foreseeable future.

7.49 I conclude that housing development on either of the proposed areas would not fit the existing settlement pattern, is not supported by known housing demand, and is strongly resisted by the local community. The site allocated 8.6.4(a) would be particularly intrusive in the Aonach Mor Corridor, although I am not convinced that either of the proposed sites would have any material impact on views from Ben Nevis or the Aonach Mor Skiing Area.

7.50 I would recommend, therefore, that no additional land is allocated for housing at Tomacharich in this Plan. I am aware that the council is reviewing its structure plan, and I consider that any decision on the allocation of land for housing at Tomacharich should await any review of housing need and land supply in the structure plan review. However, I am conscious of the fact that the council wishes to maximise recent investments in water and drainage services. If this is a priority, and if the council is satisfied, contrary to my view, that there is an overwhelming need for further houses in Tomacharich, the evidence suggests that a development on site 8.6.4(b) would be the most acceptable from a planning point of view. This site is bounded by housing development to the west, by the former brickworks identified for redevelopment for business purposes to the south, by the ribbon of houses along Tomacharich Road to the east, and by buildings associated with the pony-trekking centre to the north. A housing development on this site, integrated with substantial landscaping and open space, would not have a detrimental impact on the surrounding area.

#### **Recommendation**

7.51 It is recommended that policy 8.6.4 be deleted in its entirety. It is also recommended that policy 8.6.7(b) be deleted from the Plan. It is suggested that consequential changes be made to paragraph 8.6.1 in respect of the references to the creation of a township etc. Also, that Fig. 1, which indicates that there is capacity in the drainage system for an additional 100 houses when, in fact, it is 100 persons (40 houses approximately), should be amended. It is recommended that policy 8.6.11, which applies to the whole area surrounding Torlundy/Tomacharich, be reworded as proposed by the council (see paragraph 7.7 above).

## ISSUE 8: AONACH MOR CORRIDOR

### 8.1 Policy 8.2.19 states:

**"The council will promote development and land use activity in the lower Great Glen between Fort William and Spean Bridge in accordance with the following principles. These recognise the major economic, recreation and conservation value of this corridor and are founded on safeguards for sensitive landscape and habitats and (without prejudice to existing uses) a strict presumption against sporadic or piecemeal development for which no operational/management need exists:**

**(d) maintaining the mixed pastoral/wooded landscape west of the A82(T) and distinctive ridge, enabling diversification of existing activities where development is small scale and related visually to existing buildings....."**

8.2 Policy 3.2.14(i) maintains a strong presumption against new housing in the surrounding countryside up to 10 miles from Fort William. The north eastern end of the Aonach Mor Corridor lies within the Parallel Roads of Lochaber SSSI. Policy 3.6.3 states that the council will maintain a presumption against development which would have a significant detrimental effect upon designated NNRS/SSSIs.

8.3 A representation in respect of policy 8.2.19 has been received from Mr. MacGregor of Achnaboban Farm which lies 2.5km west of Spean Bridge, and some 500 metres to the north of the A82(T). The landowner has offered the Achnasol woodland, which is to the west of Achnaboban Farmhouse, as a location for housing development. He requests that part of this woodland be allocated for housing purposes.

8.4 Mr. MacGregor maintains that there is a shortage of medium priced affordable housing in the Spean Bridge area. He points out that the council has recently granted planning permission for two houses within the Achnasol plantation, and that there is considerable scope for further housing within this plantation. The site is south facing, towards the Grey Corries, in maturing woodland comprising 14 years old spruce and pine trees. Tree cover would ensure that any development is screened, and a very attractive development could be achieved. There are no objections from neighbours, there is mains water supply and septic tank provision could be made. The farm access road between the A82(T) and Achnaboban is being brought up to adoptable standard, and an access drive from this road is being constructed to serve the two new houses in the Achnasol woodland. This could also be constructed to adoptable standard if more development is allowed in the plantation.

8.5 For the council, Mr. Short explains that the adopted Fort William Local Plan applies the council's General Housing in the Countryside Policy. This allows for well sited and well designed single houses in rural situations. The Fort William/Aonach Mor Interim Guidelines, produced in 1989, recommended a presumption against development, except small scale

properties. I agree with the council that further development in a westerly direction would be likely to lead to totally inappropriate suburban-type development in this rural location.

8.12 I acknowledge that improvements are being made to the access road to Achnaboban, but these improvements are related to planning permissions which have already been granted for houses at this location. I do not consider the availability of an adopted access road to be of sufficient merit as to outweigh the detriment to the character of this area which would be caused by a housing development in Achnasol woodland. I have noted that the woodland is in the Parallel Roads of Lochaber SSSI, but I find that this area has been designated because of its outstanding importance for geomorphology. No importance would appear to be attached to Achnasol woodland itself, and no evidence has been submitted in support of the view that a development in this woodland would have a significant detrimental effect upon the SSSI.

8.13 Nevertheless, I conclude that the development of further housing in Achnasol woodland should be resisted in the interests of safeguarding the character of the landscape in the Aonach Mor Corridor.

#### Recommendation

8.14 It is recommended that no housing land allocation be made at Achnaboban, and that no change be made to policy 8.2.19 in the Deposit Draft Local Plan.

Photo <P1> (Copyright: M. Dunham)

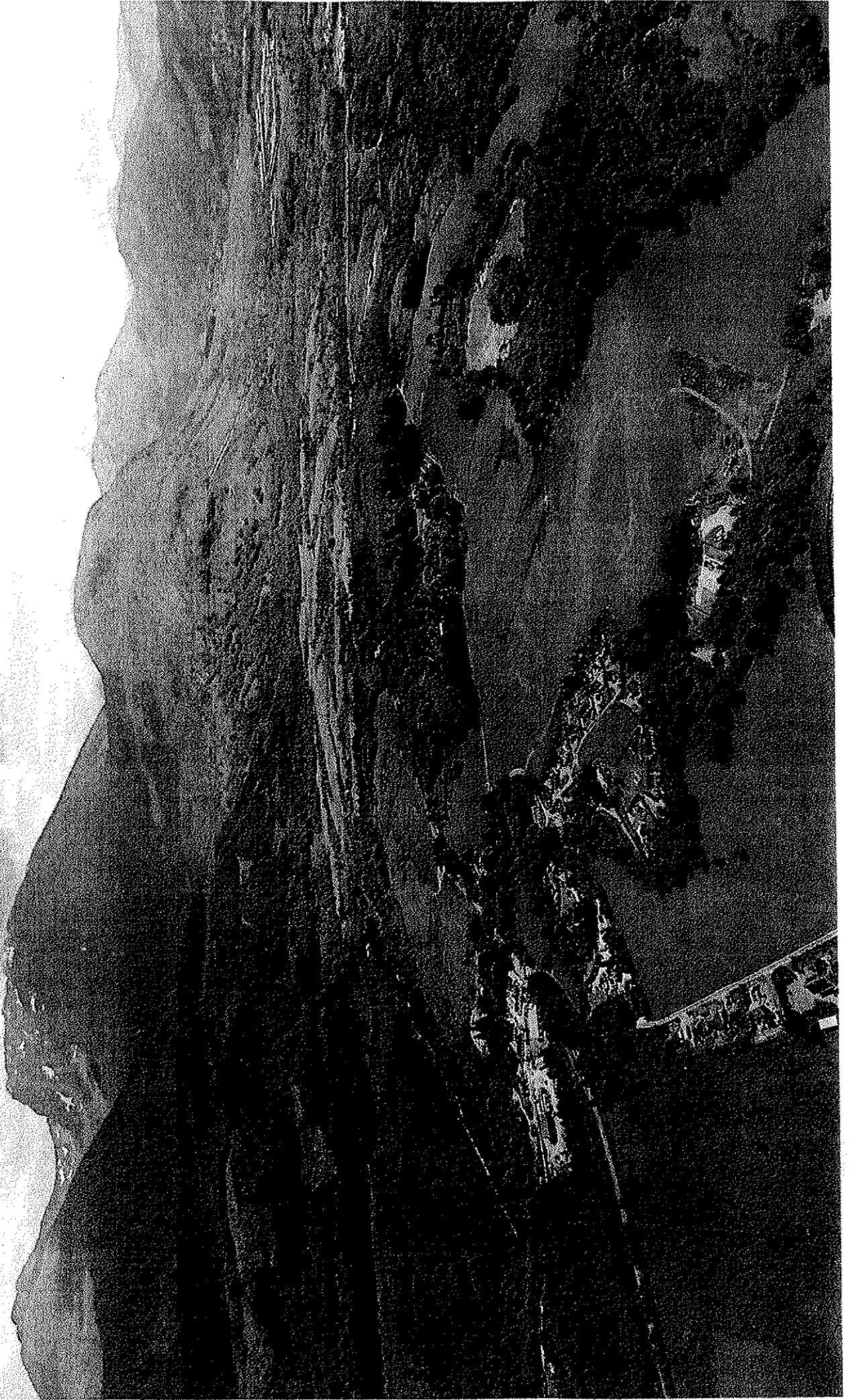


Photo <P2> (Copyright: M. Dunham)

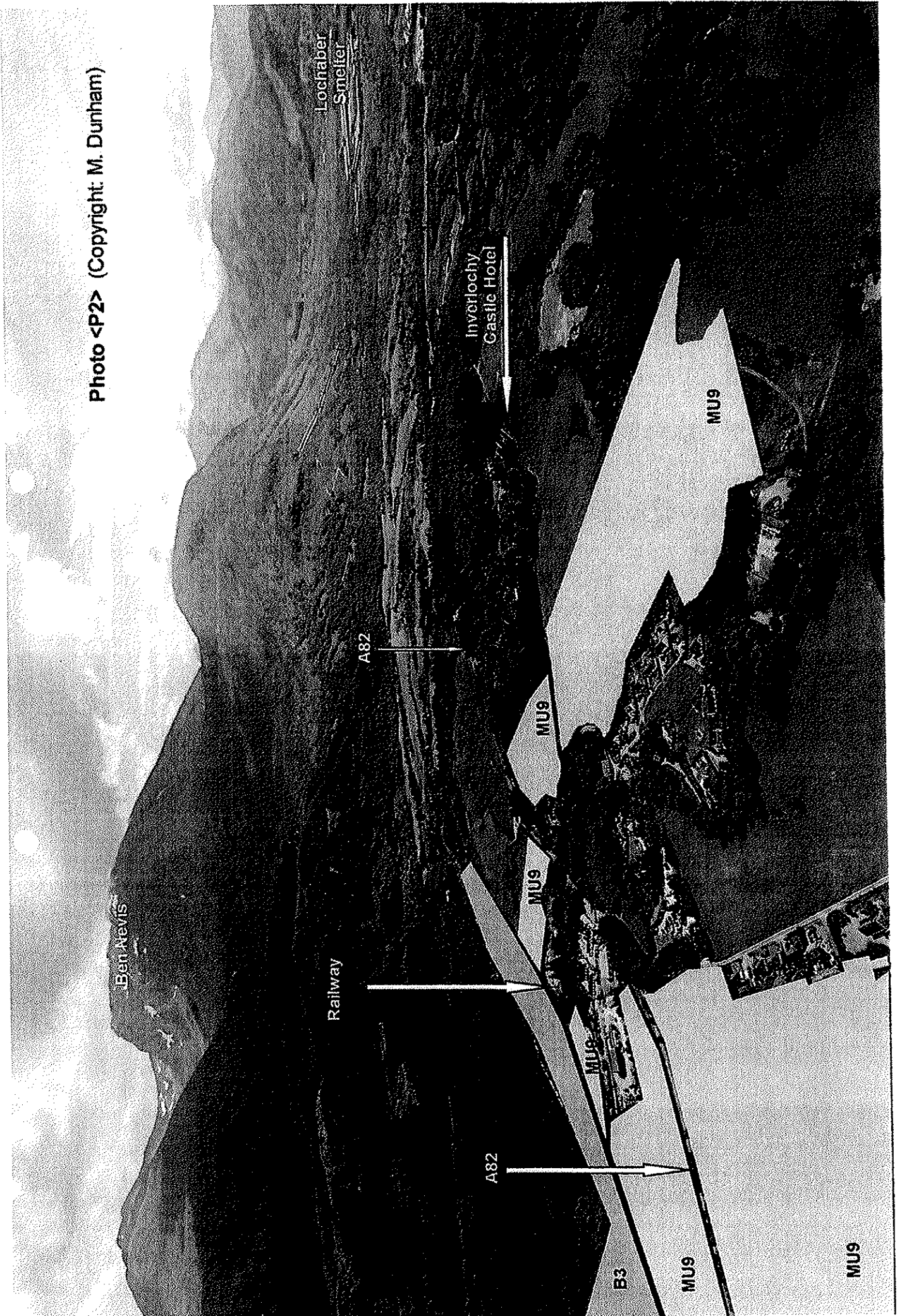
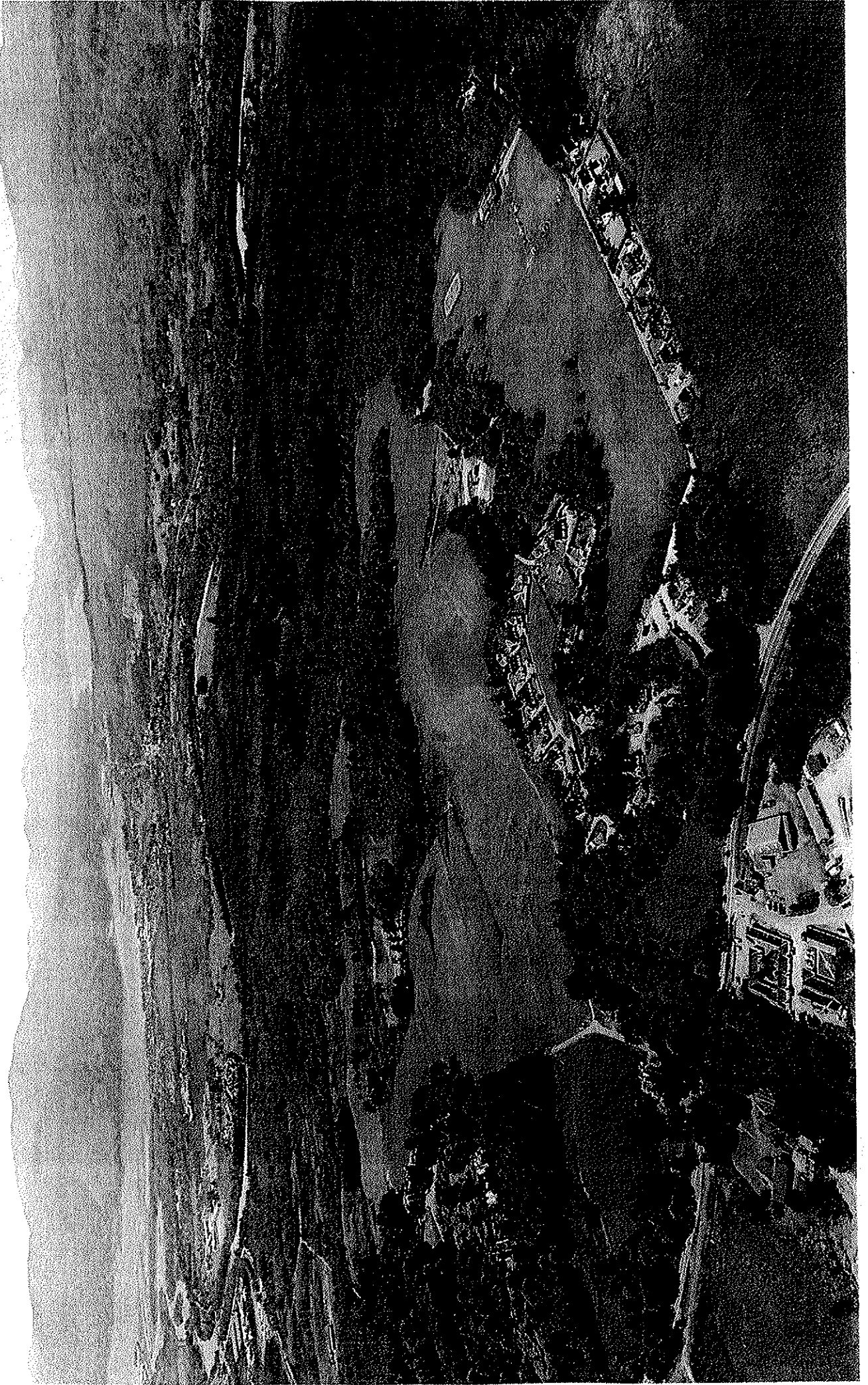




Photo <P3> (Copyright: M. Dunham)



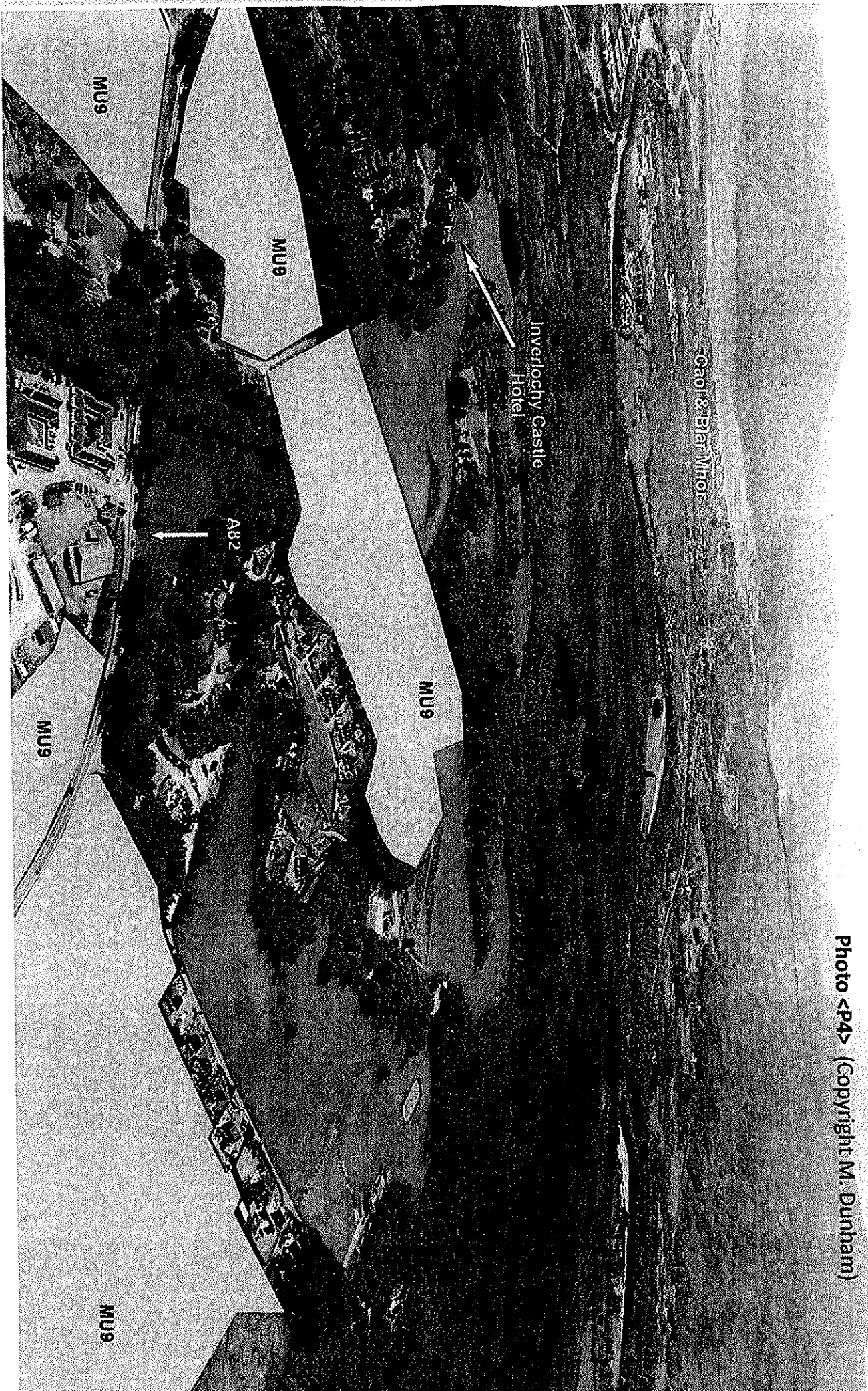


Photo <P4> (Copyright M. Dunham)

Photo <P5>

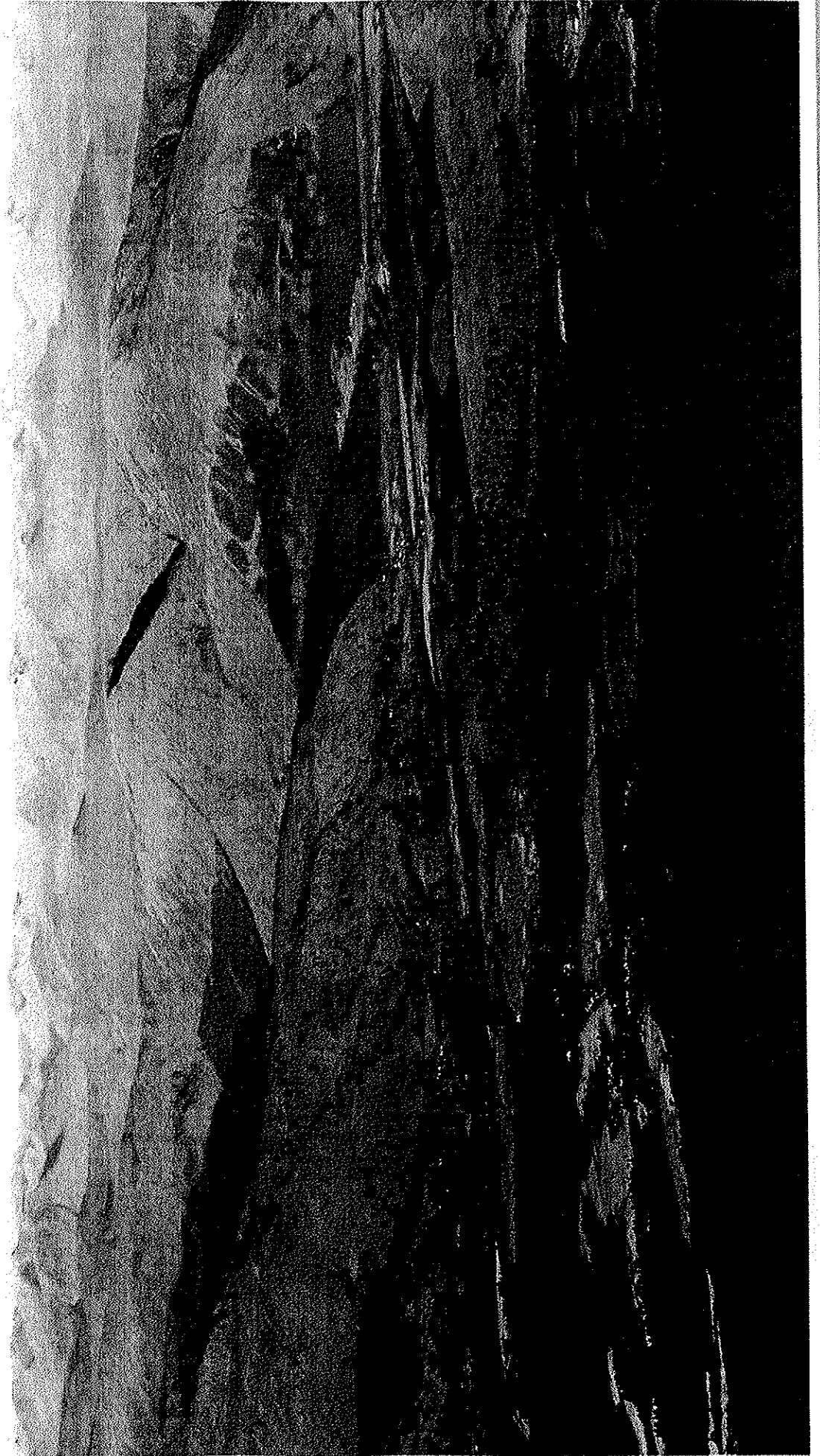
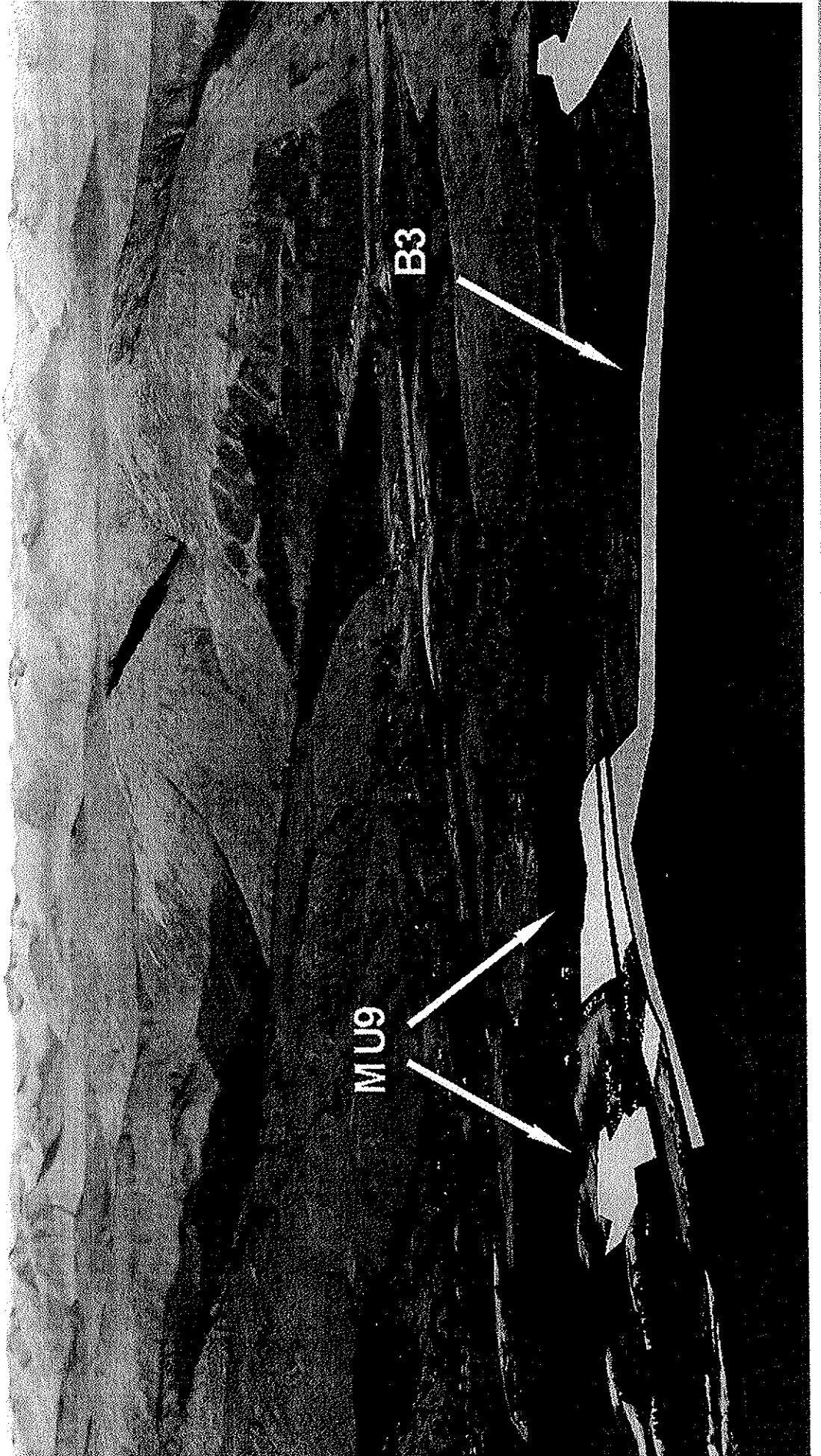


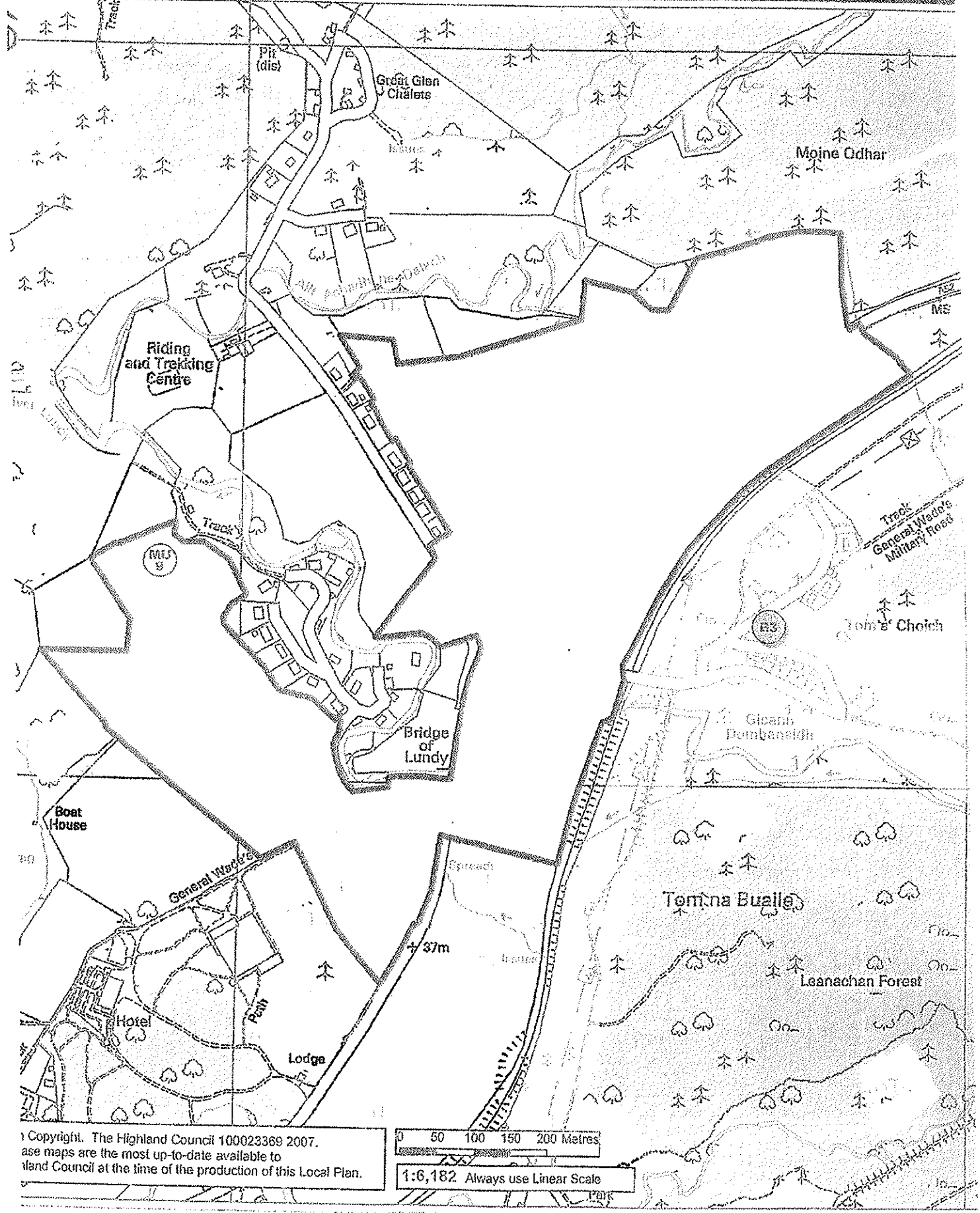
Photo <P6>



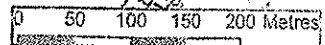
<M17

West Highland & Islands Local Plan Deposit Draft - December 2008

Port William



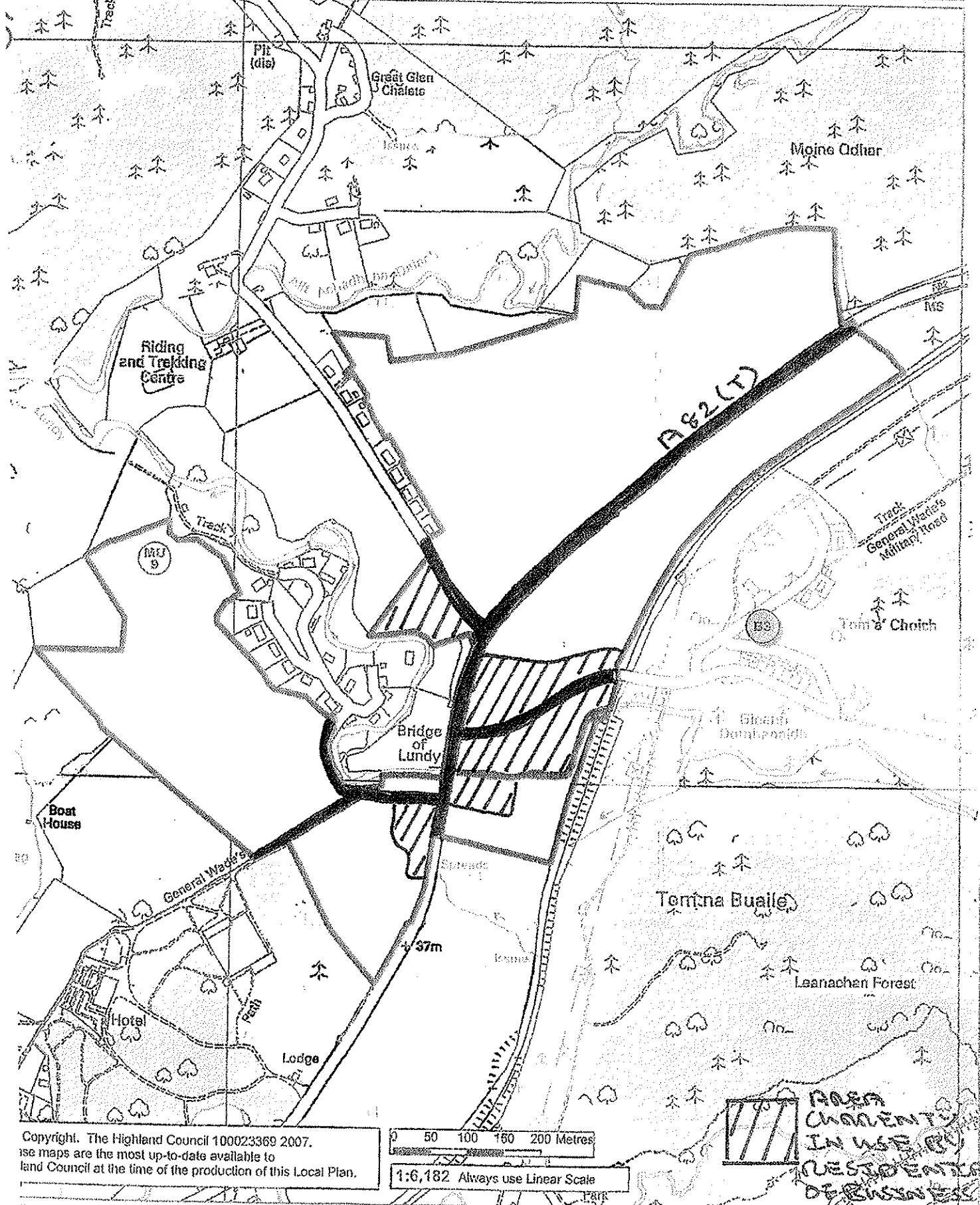
Copyright. The Highland Council 100023369 2007.  
 These maps are the most up-to-date available to  
 the Highland Council at the time of the production of this Local Plan.



1:6,182. Always use Linear Scale

West Highland & Islands Local Plan Deposit Draft - December 2008

Port William



ROSA CHARLTON  
IN USE BY  
WESTERN  
DEVELOPERS