

Agenda Item	6.2
Report No	PLN/084/23

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: North Planning Applications Committee
Date: 6th December 2023
Report Title: 23/00580/FUL: Communities For Coul Ltd
Land 1700M NW Of Embo Community Centre, School Street, Embo
Report By: Area Planning Manager North

Purpose/Executive Summary

Description: Construction of an 18 hole golf course, practice area, access, parking, ancillary infrastructure and the change of use of existing buildings to form clubhouse, pro shop, maintenance shed and ancillary facilities

Ward: 4 – East Sutherland and Edderton

Development category: Major

Reason referred to Committee: Manager's Discretion

All relevant matters have been taken into account when appraising this application. It is considered that the proposal does not accord with the principles and policies contained within the Development Plan and is unacceptable in terms of applicable material considerations.

Recommendation

Members are asked to agree the recommendation to **REFUSE** the application as set out in section 11 of the report.

1. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 1.1 The application seeks detailed consent for the formation of an 18 hole golf course, a par 3 course and practice range together with associated infrastructure including access, parking and drainage facilities. The application also seeks to establish the change of use of existing farm buildings to provide an associated Clubhouse, member facilities and office accommodation. The proposed development would be known as 'Coul Links Golf Course' with a new dedicated access from the C1026. It is anticipated the golf course will be constructed over a period of between 18-24 months and will specifically comprise of:
- 18-hole golf course
 - Par 3 course
 - Practice range
 - Parking facilities (85 car parking spaces)
 - Clubhouse
 - Pro shop
 - Office and staff welfare facilities
 - Maintenance shed
 - Member facilities
 - Access road and parking facilities
 - Infrastructure including drainage facilities
- 1.2 There are a number of disused stone built former farm buildings within the site which form part of the proposal and an existing track from the Embo-Dornoch public road. Overhead electricity lines also traverse the site which are proposed to be diverted around the site boundary.
- 1.3 The applicant sought advice through the Council's Pre-Application Advice Service for Major Developments in July 2022. This noted the planning history of golf course development on the site (as set out in Section 3) and particularly the Scottish Ministers decision to refuse planning permission. As such it was outlined that any revised proposal would require to fully address all areas of concern expressed by the Reporter in order for support to be forthcoming.
- 1.4 Prior to this, the proposal was screened and scoped through the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations in July 2020 and May 2022 respectively; this determined that an EIA Report would be required with the Scoping Response providing advice on the level and nature of information that should be included within such a report.
- 1.5 The application is supported by an Environmental Impact Assessment as noted above. Further information was also submitted assessing biodiversity and protected species in October 2023 following which the application was subject to a further advertisement period under the EIA Regulations.

1.6 There have been no variations to the proposal since the application was submitted.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 The application proposal concerns an area of land immediately to the north of the coastal village of Embo in south-eastern Sutherland. To the north of the site is the Loch Fleet estuary, and to the east is Embo beach and the Dornoch Firth. The small town of Dornoch lies around 4km by road to the south west of the application site. The A9 Edinburgh-Thurso trunk road, which runs around 3km west of the site, connects Dornoch and Embo to Inverness and beyond.

2.2 The site, which totals 317 hectares, extends west from the dune system that defines the foreshore and to the east of a disused railway line (which forms a Core Path). It contains a wide variety of ground conditions; the central part of the site comprises improved pasture that has been used for sheep grazing. The land in the southwestern part of the site comprises rough pasture with patches of scrub, heather and woodland. including a stable sand dune system with areas of trees, scrub, bracken and felled woodland. This portion of the site is designated as being of international importance as part of the Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet RAMSAR and of European importance as part of the Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet Special Protection Area, and of national importance as part of the Loch Fleet Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The SSSI is notified for its intertidal marine habitats (eelgrass beds and sandflats), its coastlands (saltmarsh and sand dunes), its native pinewood, its vascular plant assemblage, and its birds (breeding bird assemblage and non-breeding elder).

2.3 The area surrounding the site is rural in character and is predominantly characterised by agricultural land use. Sheep and cattle grazing, livestock raising and forestry plantation are the principal agricultural practices in the area. The lands to the immediate south of the site comprise the village of Embo, which has a population of around 300 and comprises residential properties as well as some commercial properties including a small store as well as the Grannies Heilan Hame caravan park.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

- 15/03874/PREAPP: Development of 18 hole championship links golf course. Issued 17.11.2015 as detailed in Paragraph 3.3.
- 16/02911/PAN: Planning permission for proposed development of an 18 hole championship links golf course, practice area, access arrangements, club house and ancillary facilities. Submitted 29.06.2016
- 16/00081/SCOP: Development of an 18 hole championships links golf course and practice area. The total area of development is anticipated to be approximately 326 hectares (805 acres). Issued 26.01.2016
- 16/00053/SCRE: Development of an 18 hole championships links golf course and practice area. The total area of development is anticipated to be approximately 326 hectares (805 acres). Issued 11.01.2016 (EIA Required)
- 17/04601/FUL: Development of 18 hole golf course, erection of clubhouse, renovation of existing buildings for maintenance facility, pro-shop, caddy hut,

workshop, administration building, information booth, formation of new private access from C1026. The application was originally recommended for refusal due to natural heritage concerns but overturned at committee. As an objection was received from Nature Scot, the application was referred to Scottish Ministers who called the application in. Following a Public Inquiry the application was refused by Scottish Ministers 10.03.2020

- 20/02820/SCRE: Development of an 18 hole championship links golf course, par 3 course and practice area. Issued 25.09.2020 (EIA required)
- 22/01330/SCOP: Construction and Operation of an 18 hole golf course, construction and operation of a par 3 golf course, practice area, clubhouse, parking, paths and ancillary infrastructure. Issued 13.05.2022
- 22/02800/PAN: Development of a new 18 hole golf course including associated infrastructure, new access road, drainage and the change of use of the existing farm buildings to form the clubhouse, pro shop and maintenance shed. Submitted 19.06.2022

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

4.1 Advertised: EIA Development & Unknown Neighbour

Date Advertised: September 2023 & March 2023

Representations: 1047 (746 objections including petitions which are counted as 1 representation, 314 in support and 9 general representations)

4.2 Material considerations raised are summarised as follows:

Support

- The application has overwhelming support from the community following a ballot of the local area
- A welcome addition to the area / unprecedented benefits
- Community based proposal
- Good site for a golf course
- Positive impact for students of golf course management at the UHI Campus in Dornoch
- A better use of the site
- The development has been designed in an environmentally sympathetic way
- A once in a lifetime opportunity
- Land is currently unmaintained and has been neglected by public bodies
- Increase in public awareness of the area
- The development should be compared to Castle Stuart which has been highly successful
- The development can only be good for Embo
- Support from UHI
- Decisions should be made locally
- Tourism and Socio-Economic Impacts

- Positive tourism impacts - in particular the possibility of people staying in the area for longer
- Clear economic benefits
- Job creation
- Retention of young people in the Highland area – less need to move away
- Reverse depopulation of the area
- Positive impacts for other golf courses in Highland
- Largest private investment in East Sutherland ever
- Potential for investment to filter out to communities of east and central Sutherland and Ross-shire
- Benefits to golf courses elsewhere/ creation of cluster

Against

Adverse Impact on Natural Heritage and Protected Species

- Unacceptable impact on a SSSI, Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site – the application has not significantly altered since the previous proposal and should continue to be refused
- EIAR has not been sufficiently updated since the 2017 submission
- Biodiversity enhancement does not over-ride loss of habitat
- Inadequacies of additional information on protected species and biodiversity
- Unrealistic mitigation put forward by developer
- Direct loss of SPA and Ramsar site
- The proposal will have a significant negative effect on a unique sand dune habitat
- Adverse impact on a rare species of fly, the Fonseca fly
- The proposed mitigation measures are unrealistic
- Contrary to planning policy for protecting the natural heritage – NPF4
- Adverse impact of pesticides/fertilisers on the environment/wildlife
- There is no justifiable reason to over-ride the protection that should be provided by the site's natural heritage designations
- Impact on deer on Coul Links
- Destruction of coastline
- The Ramsar secretariat should be informed should the application be granted
- The development should be steered to brownfield sites
- Highland Council has a duty of care to protect designated sites especially when alternatives exist – the development does not over-ride this
- Contrary to National Planning Framework 4 on natural heritage
- Significant deficiencies with the Environmental Impact Assessment
- The developers should adjust the proposal to avoid impacts on natural heritage
- Other decisions on golf courses (Dumbarnie) required development to be outside the SSSI with a buffer zone
- Concern that water levels in the dune system will be affected and that water systems will be enriched with nutrients
- No evidence to suggest mitigation measures to prevent sediment run off will be effective
- Adverse impacts to plant life - Kidney vetch plant which hosts butterflies
- No time/care has been taken to prepare a sound ES
- Insufficient consideration given in the ES to lichen which is important in a national context
- Reduction of small scale, localised disturbance from control of rabbits
- Increased nutrient input into the system through fertiliser treatment

- Possible impact of fungicide treatment
- Transplantation of lichens not considered a workable mitigation in the long term
- Contrary to the provisions of Policy 57 of the Highland-wide LDP and Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan
- The ES conclusions about biodiversity net gain (BNG) are incorrect – BNG cannot be delivered in designated sites
- There is only weak evidence for invasive species at Coul Links; recent SNH info indicates all habitats in the Coul SSSI sector are in favourable condition except for dune heath.
- The dune heath and juniper translocation plans are considered implausible;
- RSBP highlight specific concerns regarding impacts on the Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet Ramsar site; it is Scottish Government policy to apply the same level of protection to Ramsar sites as that which is afforded to designated Natura Sites.
- RSPB believe that it is not possible to conclude that the proposed development will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Ramsar site and its listed features under the Habitats Regulations
- Coul Links is the last complete dune system that has not been dissected by human development in Scotland; we have already lost the similar dune complexes that existed elsewhere in eastern Scotland.
- the explanation has been provided by the applicants as to why the course cannot be moved to a less environmentally fragile area is not reasonable
- There is no over-riding national necessity or public interest benefit in degrading the integrity of this very special dune habitat.
- Only 17 Ramsar sites in Scotland include sand dunes; the unique value at Coul is due to the range of sand dune habitats represented.
- The ES does not give any information about sand dune habitats in the Ramsar site as a whole, or the extent of same dune habitats on other Ramsar sites - it therefore does not contextualise the importance of Coul Links within the wider Dornoch and Loch Fleet Ramsar site
- Concern that water levels in the dune system will be affected and that water systems could be over enriched with nutrients
- No assessment has been made of the seasonal flooding levels, or how it is proposed that these levels would be maintained at a 'natural level'
- The protected status of SSSI's must be safeguarded and maintained
- Permanent damage to the area's reputation as a place where wildlife is respected and the natural environment is looked after

Coastal Impacts

- Artificial sea defences which may need to be built will increase a threat to the beach from wave erosion and rising sea level
- Reference to a storm surge in 2012 which caused specific and large scale local damage to Embo Pier, Dornoch Golf course and Golspie sea front. There is potential for further damage as the area would be disrupted by development.
- Findings of Coastal Protection study are incorrect
- Some holes would be vulnerable to loss in future

Access and Parking

- Management of traffic - concern regarding impact on Dornoch town centre and impact on sandstone houses from pollution/maintenance of stone
- Transport Assessment figures do not tie up with economic impact assessment figures

- Concern regarding drivers not adhering to 30mph limit
- Lines of sight around recent traffic calming measures are poor - further traffic calming measures should be installed
- The Highlands are already struggling to cope with maintaining roads and infrastructure due to high levels of tourism

Economic Considerations

- The development is 'elitism; which is limiting in its economic impact on the majority
- Jobs are service sector only
- Existing local business already cannot recruit
- Tourism based jobs should not be relied on post COVID
- No demand for a golf course in this area
- The nature of the jobs will not stop younger people leaving as their reasons are not always employment related
- Jobs would be unfulfilling and wouldn't stop younger people leaving
- Adverse impact on the local economy which is very dependent on nature and wildlife tourism
- The NC500 route has already increased the amount of disturbance to wildlife in the area
- Impact on horse riders on C1026
- Drainage/ foul drainage concerns
- Local economic benefits are not certain
- Popularity of golf is declining
- An independent study of economic impact has been provided which finds the economic benefits presented by the ES are inaccurate and overexaggerated
- Concern the proposal will lead to increasing house prices, pricing out first time buyers
- There is also an economic case for the numbers of visitors that wildlife and the environment bring to Scotland
- Lack of facilities for tourists

Landscape and Visual Impacts

- Sea defences may be required which would adversely impact on the Landscape Character Type. The ES underplays the impacts on the Long Beaches, Dunes and Links' LCT.
- Receptors of significant adverse visual impact are likely to include users of the minor road to Embo, recreational users of the beach and walkers within elevated parts of the sand dunes
- The proposal will impact on the wild land characteristic of the area;

Recreational Access Management Plan / Public Access

- The Recreational Access Management Plan also underestimates the impact of the development on the current levels of access taken on the site.
- Concern expressed with the layout of the course showing seven holes will be played across the line of the existing core path; this is an unacceptable level of risk for walkers using that route. The trail has the potential to be a significant tourist attraction for the north east of Scotland.

- 4.3 Members will appreciate that a large volume of responses and information have been received in connection with the proposed application, some of which are of a considerable length. The above paragraphs represent a **concise summary** of the key issues raised in representations however all letters of representation are available for inspection via the Council's eplanning portal which can be accessed through the internet www.wam.highland.gov.uk/wam.

5. CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1 **Dornoch Community Council support the application. Its response notes the following:**

Dornoch Area Community Council (DACC) thanks Communities 4 Coull and Not Coull for their presentations at the recent information gathering meeting to discuss the planning application 23/00580/FUL for the '*Construction of an 18-hole golf course, practice area, access, parking, ancillary infrastructure and the change of use of existing buildings to form clubhouse, pro shop, maintenance shed and ancillary facilities*'.

DACC notes:

- the informative contents of these presentations,
- the changes to the submitted plans as compared to the previous application (17/04601/FUL),
- the large numbers of public comments to the planning application already submitted to the Highland Council ePlanning site (1),
- the passionate views held and voiced by the opposing parties,
- the alarming population statistics for Sutherland as published by NHS Highland (2)
- that DACC is not required nor competent to assess all the technical aspects of a complex planning application.
- That DACC exists solely to represent the views of its constituents (the Dornoch area community) to the Highland Council and others.

Summary

DACC concludes that the available evidence consistently shows that more than two-thirds of people resident in the DACC constituency support this application and the opportunities it will bring to the area. This is evidenced by the results of the survey conducted by Civica on behalf of the applicants (67% in favour), the number of supportive responses on ePlanning (1) identified as coming from IV25 residents (as counted by both the applicant (78% in favour) and by a DACC member using different methodology (73% in favour)), and from the first-hand experience of members talking to their constituents.

Conclusion

In light of the above, DACC hereby lends its **support** to the planning application and calls on the various statutory consultees to work with all parties to find a way of ensuring this project can be delivered successfully for the benefit of not only the residents of Embo & Dornoch but also those living in the 'travel to work area' in East & Central Sutherland, whilst adequately safeguarding the natural environment.

(1) *Total public comments standing at 984 at 30th April 2023*

(2) *Sutherland: Partnership Profile - Public Health Intelligence (November 2022)*

- 5.2 **THC Transport Planning** has no objection to the application subject to the matters in its response being addressed through formal agreement or planning conditions.

As noted in pre-application and scoping advice, the interests of the Council, as roads authority, will mainly be in the impacts of development traffic on the local road network during both the construction and operational phases of the project. These impacts may include impact on road carriageway, verges and associated structures, and impact on road users and adjacent communities.

A Transport Statement (TS) by Systra has been submitted in support of the application as Annexe D of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) for the project. The same TS was submitted in support of the earlier Coul Links golf course proposal, ref. 17/04601/FUL. Contrary to pre-application advice, it is disappointing that the TS has not been updated, and anticipated transport changes between the current and previous proposals clearly identified.

Notwithstanding, it is accepted that the revised design and construction of the current proposal will generate less construction traffic on the public road network compared to the earlier Coul Links proposal, and operational traffic associated with the development will remain largely unchanged.

It is also acknowledged that Transport Planning was satisfied that the transport impacts of the earlier development could be accommodated on the local road network, subject to delivery of a number of agreed mitigation measures as detailed below.

Mitigation: Mitigation required may include new or improved infrastructure, road safety measures and traffic management. The following measures will be required to mitigate the impact of traffic associated with the development.

- Shuttle bus link from Dornoch (with potential routing through Embo subject to discussion and agreement with the Council). To avoid increased congestion at Dornoch Square car park, golfers to be picked up at and returned to either their accommodation or Dornoch Golf Club.
- Road widening of the C1026 between site access and Embo junction as per submitted drawing by Systra, Drawing No. SCT4167//GL/01 Rev.A, Junction Design General Layout Plan 1.
- Traffic calming measures on C1026 south of Embo Street. Note: These measures are intended to complement works currently being undertaken by the local roads office. The final details of such measures will be subject to consultation with interested parties in accordance with the Department of Transport Traffic Advisory Leaflet, 11/94.
- Improvement works at the junction of the main site access and the C1026 as per submitted drawing by Systra, Drawing No. 104705//GL/01, Junction Design General layout. Note: The works shall include the provision and maintenance of suitable junction visibility splays commensurate with the assessed speed of main road traffic. Unless otherwise agreed, visibility splays of 4.5 metres x 215 metres in each direction will be required.

The full extent and detail of mitigation measures on the local road network shall be formally agreed with the roads authority through the Road Opening Permit or Road Construction Consent processes, as appropriate.

Travel Plan: A Travel Plan (TP) has been re-submitted in support of the application and this is again welcomed. The contents of the TP, including the measures to be employed and the proposed action plan, are considered acceptable.

Signing Strategy: A suitable signing strategy should be considered. Subject to the development being awarded Visit Scotland accreditation, the provision of tourist post signing from the centre of Dornoch would seem appropriate.

Event Management Plan: Should the hosting of major golf events be intended; suitable event management plans will require to be implemented in consultation and agreement with the Council and other stakeholders.

Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP): A CTMP will be required to generally limit and control the impact of construction related traffic. As a minimum, the following should be included.

- Proposed measures to mitigate the impact of construction traffic on the local road network following assessment of the routes to site for construction traffic.
- Proposed traffic management measures on the access routes to the site. Measures such as temporary speed limits, suitable temporary signage, road markings and the use of speed activated signs should be considered.
- Measures to avoid conflict with school opening/closing times and any planned local events.
- A procedure for the regular monitoring of road conditions and the implementation of any remedial works required during the construction period.
- Details of appropriate traffic management, which shall be established and maintained at the site access point for the duration of the construction period. Full details shall be submitted for the prior approval of Highland Council, as roads authority.
- Measures to ensure that all affected public roads are kept free of mud and debris arising from the development.

Consultation with stakeholders, including community representatives, will be necessary regarding the detailed content and implementation of the finalised CTMP.

Section 96 Agreement: Notwithstanding the above requirements, there will remain a risk of damage to Council maintained roads from development related traffic. To protect the interests of the Council as roads authority, a suitable agreement relating to Section 96 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 2003 may be required. Pre and post condition surveys of affected roads and the provision of an appropriate Road Bond or similar security shall be included as part of any agreement. The agreement, if required, shall take account of any nearby developments that might progress concurrent with the proposed development and provide, as necessary, a mechanism for apportionment of costs between respective developers.

5.3 **THC Access Officer**

The proposed development encompasses a wide area of land on which recreational access rights, as provided by the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, are exercisable by the public in addition to two public rights of way where a public right of passage has been created at common law. The methods for exercise of these access rights can be summarised into the following ways;

- Access along the foreshore and upper beach areas.

- Well trodden paths from the Embo football pitch and Back Street to the dune area, by the Cluain Burn and continuing along the high/primary dunes.
- The old railway line from Station Road and Embo football pitch towards Foupenny.
- Sporadic use of the wider dune and links area for irregular wandering from the foreshore to the old railway line

The change in use of the land to a golf course does affect the exercise of access rights as some land within a golf course is no longer land that access rights may be exercised upon, notably greens and to a lesser extent tees. Whilst other areas of the course may be only accessed for the purposes of passage and cannot be used for general recreational activities, namely fairways, and this will affect how the public access the wider area than they do at present.

HWLDP Policies relating to the development with regards the exercise of public recreational

Policy 61 – Landscape Requires developments to reflect the landscape characteristics and special qualities identifies in the landscape character assessment of the area.

No Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been completed for this application, as opposed to the 17/04601/FUL planning application which did.

An element of the recreation and amenity value of Coull Links is the undeveloped nature and relative remoteness of the landscape that is easily accessed from Embo. The development will alter the landscape characteristics of the site and affect how the public view and interact with the site.

Whilst large areas of the site will remain undeveloped there are significant areas of developed land which will still affect the whole site regards landscape views of the area and as such I do not consider the development proposed accords with Policy 61 of the HWLDP.

Policy 77 – Public Access Where a proposal affects a route included in a core paths plan or significantly affects wider access rights, then the Council will require it to either –retain the existing path while maintaining or enhancing its amenity value; or –ensure alternative access provision that is no less attractive, is safe for public use and does not damage or disturb species of habitats.

The applicants have taken a decision not to build upon or alter the core path affected by the development. So in simple physical terms the development could be said to have no effect upon the core path, though there is likely to be minor disturbance to the core path during the construction phase. However the amenity value of the core path is affected. The development will negatively affect the visual amenity of core path users (as detailed previously in these comments), the playing of golf over the core path will also have a negative affect. The development could be said to increase some aspects of the amenity of users of the core path by increasing available access provision including circular and constructed/improved routes for use by the public

A Recreational Access Management Plan has been submitted with the application. This RAMP does set out a starting point for the development of a RAMP which could be agreed by the Access/Planning Authority (The Highland Council) and NatureScot but there are some areas of the submitted plan requiring further work particularly;

- Construction phase impacts on the wider site and along the core path

- Management of the access road and other built paths/tracks during the closed season
- Public access along the core path
- Management of desire lines which may evolve during the operation of the development

The loss of land for the exercise of access rights, on the greens and tees, is unlikely to be significant apart from the paths and informal desire lines affected by the 14th and 15th holes. The public will be able, subject to any provisions specified in any Recreational Access Management Plan, to access or pass over almost all the remaining areas proposed to be converted to the golf course.

Golf courses in Scotland have traditionally provided the public with a variety of recreational access resource and in particular this is more evident on Links courses. Nearby courses at Dornoch, Tain, Fortrose and Golspie are all used by the public for recreation and it would be inappropriate to say this development could not be undertaken without significant impact to recreation needs. Yet this development is a proposal that has been started from a blank sheet of paper, compared to the evolution of recreation on the aforementioned historic courses, and I do not consider this proposal has adequately considered public access in the context of the HWLDP policy 77 as no meaningful attempt has been made to maintain aspect of the current amenity offered by the site, particularly along the core path.

Should the development be given permission the conditions should be attached to the planning permission.

- A Recreational Access Management Plan shall be approved by the Planning Authority and NatureScot prior to the commencements of any development. The RAMP shall cover but not be limited to the construction, establishment period, playing season and the closed season.

Reason – in the interests of amenity, public safety and natural heritage

- Public use of the core path shall take preference to that of users of the golf course when golfers are playing over the core path. That is golfers shall give way to walkers,riders, cyclists etc. on the core path.

Reason – in the interests of amenity

- All golf course signs related to the management of the public on the course shall be removed from the course during the closed season (December to March) subject to any signs installed for the purpose of protection of the natural heritage as specified in the Recreational Access Management Plan or to control the public access to land on which access rights are not exercisable.

Reason – in the interests of amenity

If there is to be a construction management plan to be approved by the planning or roads authority prior to starting the development, the Access Officer should be consulted to ensure the construction management plan does not contradict the Recreational Access Management Plan.

- 5.4 **THC Historic Environment Team** has no objection. The proposal includes the alteration (including partial demolition) and renovation of a number of original/traditional buildings, all of which are considered by us to be curtilage listed

to Coul Farmhouse (see below). The plans included with the application give sufficient detail to provide support for the broad aspirations of the project, and overall the intention to renovate and re-use the existing buildings on site is welcomed and supported. However, the detail of the proposed alterations will need to be subject to a separate application for Listed Building Consent and Planning Permission and it is not until this stage that the proposals for each building can be considered in detail. We presume this can be stipulated by condition.

Notes: Coul Farmhouse is a Category B Listed (LB604) 2-storey, 3-bay building dating back to 1809. It is the only listed building within the proposed development site; there are therefore several curtilage listed properties also within the proposals boundary. Coul Farmhouse sits approximately 70m to the west from the existing cluster of buildings.

Coul Farm Cottages: The existing semi-detached cottages are proposed to be converted into offices for the golf club. The proposal included the removal of all the connected outbuildings/ porches/ lean-tos which totals to 5 structure removals, however these are not considered to be original and therefore would benefit the building.

- Renew/ repair all external joinery
 - Renew windows in sympathetic style to original building
 - Full internal and external renovation
- Cottage Farmhouse: to Pro Shop
- Demolish all lean-tos/ stores on north and west elevations
 - Demolish porch on south elevation
 - Close up current door on east elevation
 - Addition of rooflights on the rear (south) elevation
 - Renew/ repair roof structure and reslate
 - Retain chimneys, but only one to be reused
 - Renew all sash and case windows in new hardwood with similar configuration to current

- Internal changes proposed but as this is not a listed building so no comment

General Store: The existing general store is proposed to be converted to a caddie hut in which the original building will be repaired with no new alterations. The only changes to the building will be windows being renewed to match the existing pattern.

Steading: The existing steading is proposed to be converted to a club house and machine store, in which no external alterations are proposed. Significant repair work is needed and proposed for the south elevation roof as it has partially collapsed. However, there is no detail as to how it will be repaired or with what materials.

THC Archaeology has no objection. The application lies within an area of archaeological potential and where a number of upstanding and buried sites are recorded on the Highland Historic Environment Record (HER). The previous application at this site provided a detailed assessment of the potential impacts of development. This should be updated to include any new additions included on the Highland HER. An Archaeological Management Plan or a Written Scheme of Investigation, to cover the required Programme of Archaeological Works should be submitted by the applicant for approval. To ensure the mitigation can be implemented, please attach the following condition to any consent issued:

ARC01C. No works in connection with the development hereby approved shall commence unless an archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority and a programme of archaeological works has been carried out in accordance with the approved WSI. The WSI shall include details of how the recording and recovery of archaeological resources found within the application site shall be undertaken, and how any updates, if required, to the written scheme of investigation will be provided throughout the implementation of the programme of archaeological works. Should the archaeological works reveal the need for post excavation analysis the development hereby approved shall not be occupied or brought into use unless a Post-Excavation Research Design (PERD) for the analysis, publication and dissemination of results and archive deposition has been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. The PERD shall be carried out in complete accordance with the approved details.

Reason. In order to protect the archaeological and historic interest of the site.

The ARC01 condition requires that the development area is the subject of an evaluation in the first instance in order to establish the archaeological content and potential. Dependent on the results of this work, further study may be required in advance of, and during, construction works to record any identified remains. The evaluation will be backed up by desk-based research to produce a report setting out the results and any required mitigation strategy. The applicant will need to engage the services of a professional archaeological contractor.

5.5 **THC Environmental Health** has no objections.

Construction Noise: Operations for which noise is audible at the boundary of the site shall only be carried out between 0800 hours and 1900 hours Monday to Friday, between 0800 hours and 1300 hours on Saturdays and at no time on a Sunday or public holiday. Work requiring to be conducted out with these times shall only commence with the prior written approval of the Planning Authority

Construction dust: Work shall not begin until a scheme for protecting neighbouring premises from dust has been submitted and approved by the Planning Service.

Plant/machinery/ventilation Noise: All plant, machinery and equipment associated with ventilation, air-conditioning, heating and refrigeration services or similar and including fans, ducting and external openings shall be so installed, maintained and operated such that any associated operating noise does not exceed NR 20 when measured or calculated within any noise sensitive premises with windows open for ventilation purposes.

Noise Assessments: Where an application is received for a development which is likely to have significant noise implications, we should respond to planning saying that the applicant should be required to submit an assessment. The applicant should be required to undertake a noise assessment in order to assess the likely impact of noise on neighbouring premises. The assessment must be carried out by a competent person and should be submitted to the planning authority prior to the commencement of this development. The following should form the basis of the assessment:-

- Description of the development

- A description of the proposed development in terms of noise sources and the proposed locations
- and operating times of the same.
- A description of any noise mitigation methods that will be employed. The effect of mitigation
- methods on the predicted levels should be reported where appropriate.

Current Ambient Noise Levels and Background Noise: A survey of current ambient (LAeq) and background (LA90) noise levels at appropriate locations, neighbouring the proposed site. (Carried out in accordance with BS4142:1997).

Predicted Noise levels: A prediction of noise levels resultant at neighbouring noise sensitive premises, for the operational phase of the proposed development. (Carried out in accordance with BS5228:1997).

Assessment: An assessment of the predicted noise levels in comparison with standards in..(information missing from response)

General

The report should include a detailed plan showing the location of noise sources, noise sensitive premises and survey measurement locations. The report should have appended to it, the raw data and equations used in the calculation of predicted noise levels.

Private Water Supplies: I have not noted if the development is to be served by a private water supply, if so please be advised by the following: The applicant should be required to satisfy the Planning Service regarding the sufficiency and quality of supply in accordance with the approved planning advice note on private water supplies.

- 5.6 **THC Contaminated Land have no objections.** Our records indicate that parts of this site have a former use as informal waste disposal, pits/quarries, sheep wash, and steadings which may have resulted in land contamination. I therefore recommend that the following condition be attached to any permission granted: CN01C. No development shall commence until a scheme to deal with potential contamination on site has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Planning Authority. The scheme shall include:
- a) the nature, extent and type of contamination on site and identification of pollutant linkages and assessment of risk (i.e. a land contamination investigation and risk assessment), the scope and method of which shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by with the Planning Authority, and undertaken in accordance with PAN 33 (2000) and British Standard BS 10175:2011+A2:2017 Investigation of Potentially Contaminated Sites - Code of Practice;
 - b) the measures required to treat/remove contamination (remedial strategy) including a method statement, programme of works, and proposed verification plan to ensure that the site is fit for the uses proposed;
 - c) measures to deal with contamination during construction works;
 - d) in the event that remedial action be required, a validation report that will validate and verify the completion of the agreed decontamination measures;

e) in the event that monitoring is required, monitoring statements shall be submitted at agreed intervals for such time period as is considered appropriate by the Planning Authority.

No development shall commence until written confirmation has been received that the scheme has been implemented, completed and, if required, monitoring measurements are in place, all to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority.

In response to scoping application 22/01330/SCOP, the Applicant was advised by Highland Council on 10th May 2022 to include potential contamination issues within the EIA (paragraphs 3.73-3.75 of the Highland Council Scoping Response). The EIA submitted in support of 23/00580/FUL does not address potential contamination or release of pollutants from historically contaminated land during development. In response to preapplication 22/02046/PREMAJ, the applicant was advised by Highland Council on 6th July 2022 to include a land contamination Desk Study with a full planning application, and include a drawing which would zone parts of the site with potential contamination, such that the above condition would only relate to areas with potential contamination, allowing development to commence in other parts of the site before completion of site investigation, and if necessary remediation, in areas of suspected contamination. There is no contamination Desk Study or zone drawing of areas of potential contamination submitted to support Application 23/00580/FUL, therefore the above condition shall be applied to the whole site. If the Applicant wishes to submit additional supporting information, the above condition can be reworded to only apply to those parts of the site with suspected potential contamination.

THC Ecology Officer. In the initial, response NatureScot's objection in relation to impacts on the Loch Fleet SSSI was acknowledged, as was their lead role in providing advice on protected areas. THC Ecology Officer initially also objected on a range of additional ecological issues and concerns including insufficient current ecological information/data which did not allow for a robust assessment of the proposal or the impacts on the wider ecology/biodiversity of the application area. That objection was withdrawn following receipt of additional information and an updated response received:

2nd response: NatureScot lead on advice regarding Protected Areas. My comments relate to the non-protected areas of the development and the wider countryside issues.

5.7

Ecology data: Further ecological information has been supplied in response to my previous objection due to lack of information. The Protected Species Survey has been amended of the site with all the information that I requested in my previous response. This survey concluded that there are no protected species present on site. This has excluded bat survey as the buildings present on site will be covered under a separate application. It has been confirmed that an updated NVC survey of the site was undertaken in 2022 and the results are presented in the report The Coul Links: habitats, vegetation & plants: July 2022 by Botanaeco. The typing error that omitted this information has been rectified and the report has been resubmitted.

A lepidoptera larval food source survey was undertaken of the sections of the site that will be subject to construction and mowing regimes to give a baseline indication

of the importance of the site for lepidoptera larva. The results of this survey indicate that there are not anticipated to be any significant impacts upon the larval food source of the butterflies that are deemed to be potentially present on site, from desk study analysis. If this project is given consent a condition is recommended that ensures that a full lepidoptera survey is undertaken at the optimal time of year, of the site and mitigation and enhancement measures are provided.

A lichen survey has not been undertaken of the site, although the NVC survey did determine where the presence of lichen rich habitats are present and these have been avoided through the project design. However, the Reporters comments from the Public Enquiry of the previous golf course application in the same area, identified that the site could be important for lichens, particularly the green felt lichen *peltigera malacea* Therefore, a detailed lichen survey and assessment of the site, should be conditioned if the application is approved.

Biodiversity enhancement is not possible within a protected area, and NatureScot will lead on this. An outline biodiversity enhancement plan was provided for the development out with the protected area. This has demonstrated that biodiversity enhancements for these sections of the development is possible. If the application is approved a condition for a detailed Habitat Management Plan is required for these elements of the development.

Conditions: If this application is approved, the following conditions should be applied:

Butterfly and Moth survey: A detailed Lepidoptera survey and assessment of the site must be undertaken prior to the commencement of works by a suitable qualified and experienced Ecologist. The report must be submitted and agreed by the Planning Authority, this must include any mitigation required and detailed enhancement measures that must be incorporated into the HMP.

Reason: To conserve, restore and enhance the biodiversity value of the site.

Lichen survey: A detailed lichen survey and assessment of the site must be undertaken prior to the commencement of works by a suitably qualified and experienced Ecologist. The report must be submitted and agreed by the Planning Authority, this must include any mitigation required and detailed enhancement measures that must be incorporated into the HMP.

Reason: To conserve, restore and enhance the biodiversity value of the site.

Habitat Management Plan (HMP)

1. There shall be no Commencement of Development unless and until a Habitat Management Plan (HMP) has been submitted to, and approved in writing by the Planning Authority (in consultation with NatureScot if required).
2. The HMP shall set out proposed habitat management of the site including all mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures, during the period of construction and operation, and shall detail the long term management regimes of the compensation and enhancement measures required of the site.
3. The HMP shall include provision for regular monitoring and review to be undertaken against the HMP objectives and measures for securing amendments or additions to the HMP in the event that the HMP objectives are not being met.

4. Unless and until otherwise agreed in advance in writing with the Planning Authority, the approved HMP (as amended from time to time with written approval of the Planning Authority) shall be implemented in full.

Reason: To conserve, restore and enhance the biodiversity value of the site

Data: GIS Shapefiles must be supplied of the compensation and enhancement areas to the Planning Authority prior to the commencement of works.

Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)

1. No development or Site Enabling Works shall commence until a works specific Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) related to development to be undertaken has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The CEMP shall outline site specific details of all on-site construction works, post- construction reinstatement, drainage and mitigation, together with details of their timetabling.

2. The CEMP for each phase of works or development shall include (but is not limited to);

a. site waste management plan (dealing with all aspects of waste produced during the construction period), including details of contingency planning in the event of accidental release of materials which could cause harm to the environment;

b. details of the formation of the construction compound, welfare facilities, any areas of hardstanding, turning areas, internal access tracks, car parking, material stockpiles, oil storage, lighting columns, and any construction compound boundary fencing;

c. a drainage management plan, demonstrating how all groundwater, surface water and waste water arising during and after development is to be managed and prevented from polluting any watercourses, water abstractions and private water supplies if relevant, including details of the separation of clean and dirty water drains, and location of settlement lagoons for silt laden water. Any temporary drainage during construction should be designed to accommodate a 1:200 year storm event;

d. details of temporary site illumination;

e. details of post-construction restoration/reinstatement of the working areas not required during the operation of the Development, including construction access tracks, borrow pits, construction compound, storage areas, laydown areas, access tracks, passing places and other construction areas, all of which are to be provided no later than 6 months prior to the date of first commissioning, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority. Details should include all seed mixes to be used for the reinstatement of vegetation;

f. Species specific surveys and Protection Plans carried out at an appropriate time of year for the species concerned, by a suitably qualified Ecologist. The survey results and any mitigation measures required for these species on site shall be set out in a species mitigation and management plan, which shall inform construction activities.

g. Details of for the submission of a quarterly report summarising work under taken at the site and compliance with the conditions imposed under the Deemed Planning Consent during the period of construction and post construction reinstatement.

Reason: To ensure that all construction operations are carried out in a manner that minimises their impact on road safety, amenity and the environment, and that the mitigation measures contained in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report which accompanied the application, or as otherwise agreed, are fully implemented

A pre-construction survey is required to be undertaken not more than 3 months prior to works commencing and a report of the survey submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. The survey shall cover both the application site and an appropriate buffer from the boundary of application site and the report of survey shall include mitigation measures where any impact, or potential impact, on protected species or their habitat has been identified. Development and work shall progress in accordance with any mitigation measures contained within the approved report of survey and the timescales contain therein.

Nesting Birds

Construction works have the potential to disturb nesting birds or damage their nest sites, and as such, a nesting bird survey should be made, not more than 24 hours prior to the commencement of development if this coincides within the main bird breeding season (March- August inclusive) and throughout the breeding bird season if new areas are being developed or there has been a break in construction. All wild bird nests are protected from damage, destruction, interference and obstruction under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Some birds (listed on schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act) have heightened protection where it is also an offence to disturb these birds while they are in or around the nest.

Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW)

1. There shall be no Commencement of Development unless and until the terms of appointment of an independent Environmental Clerk of Works (ECoW) by the Company have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. This must include a ECoW schedule, detailing when the ECoW shall be present on site. For the avoidance of doubt, the ECoW shall be appointed as a minimum for the period from the commencement of development to the final commissioning of the development and their remit shall, in addition to any functions approved in writing by the Planning Authority, include:

- a. Impose a duty to monitor compliance with the ecological and environmental commitments provided in the: EIA Report, the CEMP, the HMP and any species or habitat protection plans required.
- b. Providing training to the developer and contractors on their responsibilities to ensure that work is carried out in strict accordance with environmental protection requirements;
- c. Require the ECoW to report to the nominated construction project manager any incidences of non-compliance with the ECoW works at the earliest practical opportunity;
- d. Undertake a pre-construction survey not more than 3 months prior to commencement of construction and as required throughout the duration of the project to protect the ecological resources within the site;
- e. Maintains a Register of the weekly inspections, to include an inventory of all measures on the site, their effectiveness, as well as any advice provided;
- f. require the ECoW to report to the Planning Authority monthly, with a concise summary of the actions on site.

NatureScot object to the application (please refer to appendix 1 for Annex 1 referred to below).

5.8

1. Summary

We recognise the potentially large economic benefits that could arise from this proposal and their local and regional significance. We also recognise and acknowledge the commitment by the applicant to develop measures to reduce the footprint of the course, as well as to mitigate and offset impacts on nationally important natural heritage interests. However, the conclusion of our assessment is that this proposal is contrary to National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) requirements not to compromise the objectives of SSSI designation and the overall integrity of Loch Fleet Site of Special Scientific Interest.

While we are unable to support this proposal as presented, we believe that a golf course could be progressed in this general location by using a much higher proportion of the adjacent agricultural land.

Loch Fleet Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

We object to this proposal as it will result in significant adverse effects on sand dune habitat of national importance.

Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar Site, Moray Firth SPA

This proposal could be progressed with appropriate mitigation. However, because it could affect internationally important natural heritage interests, we object to this proposal unless it is made subject to conditions so that the works are done strictly in accordance with the mitigation detailed in our appraisal below.

2. Appraisal of impacts and advice

2.1 Loch Fleet SSSI and Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet Ramsar site

This proposal lies within this SSSI protected for its range of coastal habitats and species. The proposal also lies within this Ramsar site which is classified for a range of wetland habitats, species and waterbirds. In line with Scottish Government Policy we have considered the waterbird interest alongside the Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet SPA, while other interests of the Ramsar site have been considered alongside the Loch Fleet SSSI.

Sand dune

The management objective for sand dune within the Site Management Statement for this SSSI is to 'restore the condition of the sand dune habitat'. We consider that the EIAR underplays the adverse impact of the development.

We advise that this proposal will have a significant adverse impact on the protected sand dune feature at Coul Links in respect of extent, structure and function, with consequent adverse impacts on the characteristic species. We therefore object to this proposal as it will result in unavoidable adverse effects on natural heritage interests of national importance. We provide further detail in Annex 1. We have considered other interests and taken them into account in reaching our conclusion on this proposal.

If the planning authority intends to grant planning permission against this advice, you must notify Scottish Ministers.

Breeding bird assemblage (SSSI)

The management objective for breeding birds within the Site Management Statement for this SSSI is 'to maintain the population of breeding birds and to avoid significant disturbance to these birds during the breeding season.'

There are natural heritage interests of national importance on the site, but these will not be affected by the proposal.

2.2 Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet SPA and Ramsar Site

The proposal lies within the Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet SPA and Ramsar site. This SPA is protected for its range of non-breeding waterfowl and breeding osprey and the Ramsar site is classified for its range of coastal features.

The site's status means that the requirements of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (the 'Habitats Regulations') apply, or for reserved matters, The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Consequently, The Highland Council is required to consider the effect of the proposal on the SPA before it can be consented (commonly known as Habitats Regulations Appraisal). The NatureScot website has a summary of the legislative requirements (<https://NatureScot.scot/professional-advice/safeguarding-protected-areas-and-species/protected-species/legal-framework/habitats-directive-and-habitats-regulations>).

Our advice is that this proposal is likely to have a significant effect on SPA waders (oystercatcher, bar-tailed godwit, curlew, dunlin, and redshank), teal, wigeon, greylag goose and the waterfowl assemblage of Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet SPA as a result of disturbance during construction and operation of the proposal. Consequently, the Highland Council, as competent authority, is required to carry out an appropriate assessment in view of the site's conservation objectives for its qualifying interests. To help you do this, we advise on the basis of the appraisal carried out to date, if the proposal is carried out strictly with the following mitigation, our conclusion is that the proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

The Recreation Access Management Plan (RAMP) mitigation will help reduce human disturbance to bird species during the winter which includes:

- Temporary signage raising awareness of wintering birds;
- Site interpretation boards;
- A walks leaflet identifying sensitive bird areas and suitable seasonal walk routes;
- Provision of a new circular walking route away from the coast; and
- Regular monitoring review of access management to benefit SPA birds.
- To ensure disturbance from golf course maintenance:
 - From December to March (inclusive), green-keeping operations on holes 10-18 must only take place between one hour after sunrise and one hour before sunset. This will reduce disturbance to a level that is more reflective of current use.
 - And to ensure sensitive bird areas are avoided during construction:
 - An access diversion (if required).

We advise that the RAMP mitigation measures will need to be implemented in advance of construction taking place, should the proposal receive consent.

The appraisal we carried out considered the impact of the proposal on the following factors:

- It is considered that the foreshore will receive more recreational disturbance during the winter than the golf course area and the RAMP mitigation measures will help reduce recreational disturbance during winter along the coastal zone.
- Disturbance levels to the dune slacks, which are used primarily by teal and wigeon, will be minimised and be more reflective of current use.
- The RAMP will be monitored to gauge its effectiveness. This will involve bird surveys, observations on access behaviour and effectiveness of temporary signage and a people counter on the main access route through the course.
- On-site meetings will be arranged to review the effectiveness of the RAMP and to agree any future changes that may be required should any unforeseen/unexpected issues be identified. The frequency of the review meetings has been front-loaded so that any issues are addressed early on in the process.

2.3 Moray Firth SPA

The proposal lies adjacent to the Moray Firth SPA, protected for its marine waterfowl and seabirds. Our advice is that this proposal is likely to have a significant effect on SPA eider as result of disturbance during construction and operation of the proposal. Consequently, the Highland Council, as competent authority, is required to carry out an appropriate assessment in view of the site's conservation objectives for its qualifying interests. To help you do this, we advise on the basis of the appraisal carried out to date, if the proposal is carried out strictly with the mitigation as identified above for the Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet SPA, our conclusion is that the proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

If the planning authority intends to grant planning permission against this advice without the suggested mitigation, you must notify Scottish Ministers.

Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) have no objections.

1. Environmental management

1.1 We welcome the Schedule of Mitigation and its appendices and are content that the application includes enough information to demonstrate that there should be enough space to accommodate appropriate pollution prevention measures in terms of soil management and protection of waterbodies. We ask that a condition is applied requiring adherence to it. To assist, the following wording is suggested: All work shall be carried out in accordance with the Coul Links Golf Course Development Schedule of Mitigation 2023 (including Appendices 1 to 6). Any alterations to this document must be submitted for the written approval of the planning authority in consultation with SEPA [and other agencies such as NatureScot as appropriate] and all work shall be carried out in accordance with the up-to-date approved plan. Reason: to control pollution of air, land and water.

5.9

2. Wastewater drainage

2.1 Table C.2 of the EIA Report indicates that the proposal is to utilise the Water Environment (Controlled Activities) Regulation authorisation, which SEPA has consented for foul drainage at the site (authorisation CAR/S/1170212), with a commitment that any additional flows above 125 population equivalent will be directed to the public sewer network at Embo. We ask that a condition is applied to

ensure that connection takes place and to assist, the following wording is suggested: The wastewater strategy and subsequent development of the wastewater system will be in accordance with the technical recommendations of report reference SBA 1719_February 2018: Coul Links Golf Course Development, Wastewater Treatment Review and Revision, Stuart Burke and Kiloh Associates Ltd., 05/02/2018. The subsequent design, construction, operation and maintenance of all integrated elements of the wastewater treatment facility will follow the best practice principles of the most recent edition of Sewers for Scotland, and Scottish Water's Specification 301 (or most recent edition)- Wastewater Treatment Works, Appendix VI, with particular reference to first-time discrete sewerage systems (also known as packaged plants). All waste water drainage from further development within the red line boundary shown on the Site Location Plan Drawing 22-11-MRH-001 must be directed to this system. No wastewater drainage other than that identified within Site Layout Plan Drawing 22-11-MRH-600 can be directed to this system until the system is adopted by Scottish Water.

3. Disruption to Groundwater Dependant Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE)

3.1 As stated above, in accordance with the land use planning working arrangements between SEPA and NatureScot, we advise on the protection of GWDTE outwith designated sites and any GWDTE that are not qualifying features of designated sites. Also as stated above advice on qualifying features of the designated sites should be sought from NatureScot. We recognise that the tests and drivers which NatureScot is required to apply to designated sites differ from those which SEPA applies to GWDTE. The advice below relates solely to GWDTE within our remit.

3.2 We have reviewed the information provided regarding GWDTE outwith the designated site and any GWDTE that are not qualifying features of the designated site. Having considered the overall proportions of habitat and each GWDTE type that will be directly lost, we have no objection to the proposal in terms of the direct impacts upon GWDTE. We are also content that indirect impacts will be limited if the mitigation measures outlined in the Schedule of Mitigation are followed, which we have already requested above be ensured by condition.

3.3 We have concerns about the potential risks that could be posed by nitrates and therefore welcome that the Schedule of Mitigation proposes that the application rates do not exceed the threshold values outlined in 'Table 4 Proposed nitrate trigger values (mg/l N) 'of 'UK Technical Advisory Group on the Water Framework Directive: Technical report on groundwater dependent terrestrial ecosystem (GWDTE) threshold values'. This lists threshold values by GWDTE category with 13mg/l as NO₃ being the relevant concentration in this case. To avoid doubt we therefore request that an additional **condition** is applied requiring irrigation water to have a nitrate concentration below the GWDTE threshold of 13mg/l as NO₃.

4. Water abstraction

4.1 Table C.2 of the EIA Report indicates that the proposal is to utilise the Water Environment (Controlled Activities) Regulation authorisation which SEPA has already consented for borehole abstraction at the site (authorisation CAR/S/1156889), and section 2.9 indicates that a related reservoir will also be built and will "take on board SEPA's request for a design appropriate to the setting and surrounding landscape". However we could not locate a plan showing the proposed design with the Masterplan Drawing 22-11-MRH-100 showing a rectangular structure. We are content that this issue could be addressed by **condition** and

therefore ask that one is applied requiring the design of the finalised reservoir to be agreed by the planning authority in consultation with SEPA. It should be clearly demonstrated how it has been designed to mimic a natural waterbody and include measures to enhance local biodiversity.

Scottish Water has no objection and confirm the development could be serviced by both its waste water and water treatment works subject to capacity which should be confirmed by the applicant.

6. DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY

The following policies are relevant to the assessment of the application

6.1 National Planning Framework 4 (2023)

Policy 1 - Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises

Policy 2 - Climate Mitigation and Adaptation

Policy 3 - Biodiversity

Policy 4 - Natural Places

Policy 5 - Soils

Policy 7 - Historic Assets and Places

Policy 9 - Brownfield, Vacant and Derelict Land and Empty Buildings

Policy 10 - Coastal Development

Policy 12 - Zero Waste

Policy 13 - Sustainable Transport

Policy 14 - Design Quality and Place

Policy 20 - Blue and Green Infrastructure

Policy 21 - Play, Recreation and Sport

Policy 22 - Flood Risk and Water Management

Policy 23 - Health and Safety

Policy 25 - Community Wealth Building

Policy 29 - Rural Development

Policy 30 - Tourism

6.2 Highland Wide Local Development Plan 2012

28 - Sustainable Design

29 - Design Quality and Place-making

30 - Physical Constraints

31 - Developer Contributions

36 - Development in the Wider Countryside

42 - Previously Used Land

43 - Tourism

49 - Coastal Development

56 - Travel

57 - Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage

58 - Protected Species

59 - Other important Species

60 - Other Importance Habitats

61 - Landscape

62 - Geodiversity

- 63 - Water Environment
- 64 - Flood Risk
- 65 - Waste Water Treatment
- 66 - Surface Water Drainage

6.3 **Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan 2018**

No site specific policies

6.4 **Highland Council Supplementary Planning Policy Guidance**

- Construction Environmental Management Process for Large Scale Projects (August 2010)
- Developer Contributions (March 2018)
- Flood Risk and Drainage Impact Assessment (Jan 2013)
- Green Networks (Jan 2013)
- Highland Historic Environment Strategy (Jan 2013)
- Highland's Statutorily Protected Species (March 2013)
- Managing Waste in New Developments (March 2013)
- Physical Constraints (March 2013)
- Public Art Strategy (March 2013)
- Special Landscape Area Citations (June 2011)
- Standards for Archaeological Work (March 2012)
- Sustainable Design Guide (Jan 2013)
- Trees, Woodlands and Development (Jan 2013)

7. **OTHER MATERIAL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

7.1 **Scottish Government Planning Policy and Guidance**

PAN43 - Golf Course and Associated Development

8. **PLANNING APPRAISAL**

- 8.1 Section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Determining Issues

- 8.2 This means that the application requires to be assessed against all policies of the Development Plan relevant to the application, all national and local policy guidance and all other material considerations relevant to the application.

Planning Considerations

- 8.3 The key considerations in this case are:
- a) compliance with the development plan and other planning policy
 - b) planning history
 - c) layout and design

- d) landscape and visual impact
- e) Impact on infrastructure and services and proposed mitigation (developer contributions)
- f) any other material considerations

Development plan/other planning policy

- 8.4 Section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise
- 8.5 This means that the application requires to be assessed against all policies of the Development Plan relevant to the application, all national and local policy guidance and all other material considerations relevant to the application. In this instance the Development Plan comprises National Planning Framework 4, the Highland-wide Local Development Plan and the Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan. Where there is incompatibility between NPF4 and Local Development Plans, NPF4 as the most up to date document will take primacy in the assessment.
- 8.6 National Planning Framework 4 was adopted in early 2023 and for the first time is embedded in the development plan. It sets out an overarching ambition to address the global climate and nature emergencies, reduce emissions and restore, conserve and enhance biodiversity. This ethos is reflected in its general policies many of which echo those of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan however with considerably more emphasis on proposals delivering biodiversity enhancement commensurate to the scale of the overall development.
- 8.7 Its approach to new sports facilities is set out in Policy 21 albeit this relates largely to new play facilities with limited policy context relevant to a proposal of this nature other than a stipulation that development proposals including new or enhanced play or sport facilities will provide effective management and maintenance plans covering the funding arrangements for their long-term delivery and upkeep, and the party or parties responsible for these. Protection of natural heritage assets is set out in Policy 4 which continues to apply the long established planning principle that development will only be supported where any significantly adverse effects on the qualities for which the area has been designated are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of *national* importance.
- 8.8 Policy 30 which relates to Tourism outlines that proposals will take into account the contribution made to the local economy; overall proportionality with the chosen location as well as general criteria relating to sustainable transport, impact on communities and measures taken to minimise carbon emissions. This policy does not conflict with the Highland-wide Local Development which sets out a broadly supportive approach to tourism development where this has potential to increase visitor stay and spend within a local area. The HwLDP also applies protection of natural heritage assets, reflected in Policy 57, which is key in the assessment of the proposal given the designations referred to in the site description.
- 8.9 In addition to the above, HwLDP Policy 56 for Travel requires proposals that are likely to generate increased travel activity at the location should include sufficient

information in order that the impact of this, both on- and off- site, may be assessed. Key considerations include, availability of public transport modes, opportunities for walking and cycling, safety and convenience of potential users, access, and parking.

- 8.10 Finally, HWLDP Policies 64 (Flood Risk), 65 (Waste Water Treatment), and 66 (Surface Water Drainage) seek to ensure that sites are not at risk of flooding or causing flooding elsewhere by avoiding areas of known flood risk in the first instance and including appropriate mitigation where required. Developments must meet standards to minimise the risks of flooding and pollution by being properly drained either through connection to the public sewer and / or being drained through appropriate SUDS arrangements.
- 8.11 The site is not covered by any site specific allocations in the Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan however it sets out an overarching vision up until the year 2035, tying in with the Highland Community Planning Partnership Single Outcome Agreement. This includes, for example, a network of successful, sustainable and socially inclusive communities where people want to live, which provide the most convenient access to key services, training and employment and are the primary locations for inward investment.
- 8.12 By way of further planning guidance, Planning Advice Note 43 – Golf Courses and Associated Development (1994) remains extant. It notes that interest in the development of new golf courses in rural areas is likely to remain strong, and that demand is generally focussed in the vicinity of famous courses which attract growing numbers of tourists. The PAN advises that development plans should indicate the locations which might be acceptable for new golf courses and reaffirm the protection which is normally afforded to the countryside. Paragraph 59 highlights that ‘Coastal erosion on links courses subject to storm action has prompted some clubs to take steps to stabilise dunes in order to protect greens and fairways’, and advises that ‘Planning authorities should consider very carefully the long-term consequences of siting new courses in similar areas.’
- 8.13 The proposal is assessed against the above policy context in the Planning Appraisal which follows in addition to other applicable material considerations.

Planning History

- 8.14 The site at Coul Links was first mooted for golf course development 9 years ago, in 2015 with pre-application advice sought (by a different applicant to the current application) through the Council’s Pre-Application Advice Service and followed by EIA Screening and Scoping Exercises. This culminated in the submission of a planning application in 2017 which, after lengthy consideration by the Planning Authority aided by consultees, was recommended for refusal in the summer of 2018. The recommendation was overturned at the North Planning Applications Committee however owing to the outstanding objection from a statutory consultee (NatureScot), the application was duly referred to Scottish Ministers who called it in for their own determination as it *‘raised issues of national importance in relation to natural heritage issues and its compliance with Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) which require further scrutiny at a national level’*. Their decision was published in March 2020 refusing planning permission following a Public Local Inquiry that saw participation from a number of parties which, in addition to the applicant and Highland Council, included

NatureScot, Ramblers Scotland and a cohort of nature-based charities (named the Conservation Coalition) as well as members of the public both for and against the application. The decision does not include a list of specific reasons for refusal rather it makes an overall judgement that the proposal fails to comply with the development plan following consideration of all applicable issues, with the rationale for Minister's refusal reflecting the views of both NatureScot as well as the Coalition.

- 8.15 This application is now advanced by a community group based in Dornoch, Communities for Coul, and has again followed due process from pre-application advice through to the EIA Scoping process. While the proposal is similar in nature to its predecessor the applicants have stated that it differs from that but is now considered within a new policy context to that which existed previously following adoption of NPF4. The Planning Authority has given careful consideration as to whether to exercise the discretion allowed for in planning legislation to 'decline to determine' any application made following the refusal of a previous application which has been subject to an appeal/notified application process – such discretion is intended to stop developers making repeated submissions of the same proposal however in light of the alterations made to the layout and the additional measures proposed in addition to the updated policy position, it would not be appropriate to use this mechanism in this instance. The planning history, and in particular in the Scottish Minister's decision to refuse planning permission following a lengthy and detailed PLI process does however hold considerable weight in the assessment of this revised proposal. Key to determining its acceptability therefore is the extent to which the applicant has addressed the Reporter's decision. Whilst the application now submitted is not the same as the refused proposal, a number of general conclusions made by the Reporter do remain applicable and are referenced throughout the assessment where this is the case.

Layout and Design (including Cultural Heritage impact)

- 8.16 The EIAR notes that careful consideration has been given to the proposed layout of the course and it has been amended since the previous proposal to reduce impacts on habitats and species, to minimise intervention created through soil stripping or vegetation removal and to use the landscape features and natural contours to create the course layout which in turn is noted to result in a significant reduction in the impact on species and habitats. To this end, it is specified that the greens and tees are the only part of the golf course that are to be formally constructed with areas such as fairways to be created by simply mowing the existing vegetation. This construction method it is stated in the EIAR would allow the course to naturally return to its original state should the golf course cease to operate for any reason. The viability and impacts of these proposals, with respect to natural heritage interests, are considered elsewhere in this report with the above comments relating solely to the rationale detailed in the EIAR that has influenced the layout of the course.
- 8.17 Submitted drawing 'Site Comparison Plan' shows the proposed layout overlaid with the previous in order to differentiate between the two. It is evident that there is less formal connectivity proposed in between holes and therefore less land-take as well as in the north of the site, two holes have been moved further northwards. The course would commence just north of the building cluster on arrival in the site, being played in clockwise direction in the northward section of the site, changing to anti-clockwise in the south and looping back onto the building cluster on completion of the course.

The overall site boundary has been reduced slightly and the overall positioning of the golf course relative to the land holding at Coul Links and its relationship with the coast to allow views across Loch Fleet to be obtained remain broadly similar. As with the previous proposal, the EIAR continues to advise that the re-siting of some holes onto adjacent farmland would be contrary to the applicant's vision of creating a top 100 golf course which necessitates use of the sand dunes in order to achieve a 'links' golf on which the related socio-economic benefits hinge.

- 8.18 In design terms the proposal is able to benefit from use and conversion of existing historic buildings within the site conserving embodied energy and utilising brownfield land in line with the principles of both local and national policy. This application simply seeks to establish a change of use; should consent be granted these buildings would require to be subject to further applications in order to provide the full detailing of each proposal including applications for Listed Building Consent where they concern buildings considered to be 'curtilage listed' in association with Coul Farmhouse which is B Listed. Nevertheless the plans included with the application give sufficient detail to provide support for the broad aspirations of the project, and overall the intention to renovate and re-use the existing buildings on site is welcomed and supported. The large stone steading, formerly the Home Farm Steading which lies closest to Coul Farmhouse will be reduced in size retaining the southern portion for the Clubhouse while the northern part of the steading will be converted for use by green staff as a maintenance facility.
- 8.19 In addition the small stone store adjacent to the Steading, formerly the Smithy, will be used for a Caddy Hut, which will be a small space for staff to rest. The pair of semi-detached one and three-quarter storey stone cottages dating from around 1874 will be used for the Administration offices for the Golf Club while the single storey stone cottage also dating from the 1870s is to be converted to the Professionals' Shop and point of arrival. Whilst further consenting would be required, the proposals currently do not raise any concern with regard the cultural heritage policies of the development plan.

Landscape and Visual Impact

- 8.20 The northern part of Coul Links is part of the Loch Fleet, Loch Brora and Glen Loth Special Landscape Area with the Dornoch Firth National Scenic Area also lying around 4km to the south. The eastern part of the site is characterised as Long Beaches, Dunes and Links in SNH's 1998 Caithness and Sutherland Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) while the western part is Small Farms and Crofts Surrounded by Woodland. The boundary between the two areas does not quite follow the line of the former railway line which seems a more natural boundary, reflective of the limitations of the scale of the mapping used in the LCA.
- 8.21 Whilst a full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment was not a requirement of the EIAR, it is disappointing that the application fails to consider such impacts even in the round in order to set out how such matters had been considered in the preparation of this revised proposal. Objectors to the application continue to raise concern about the 'wild' qualities of the site being eroded and the visual impact that would arise in relation to receptors using the core path within the site and indeed recreational users on the beach and within the dune system.

In lieu of any assessment put forward by the applicant it is appropriate to consider the views that were expressed during the Inquiry process of the previous application where landscape and visual impacts were considered both in terms of during construction and thereafter in the operational phase.

- 8.22 The Reporter noted that in its operational phase the course would have fairly similar characteristics to the current landscape of the site as the landform would be similar as would the vegetated (albeit more manicured in places) land cover. In this regard the Reporter recognised the intention to recreate the look and feel of a naturalistic links golf course and it could be said in relation to the current application such a look would appear even more natural given the alterations to the construction techniques referenced earlier. Given that such golf courses already appear to be characteristic of the Long Beaches, Dunes and Links type, The Reporter did not foresee that the changes to the site would result in a significant effect on that landscape character type with the same also applying to the Small Farms and Crofts Surrounded by Woodland landscape character type. Although golf courses would seem less characteristic of this type, the LCA288 does appear to describe it as a varied and fairly complex landscape containing small villages and being dominated by the activity of people. The golf course development would extend over a fairly limited strip along its eastern edge, and would not result in a significant effect on its character. This position is agreed for the current application.
- 8.23 Policy 77 of the HwLDP states that *'Where a proposal affects a route included in a core paths plan or significantly affects wider access rights, then the Council will require it to either –retain the existing path while maintaining or enhancing its amenity value; or –ensure alternative access provision that is no less attractive, is safe for public use and does not damage or disturb species of habitats.'* While the application does not involve building on or altering the core path affected by the development the Access Officer asserts that the amenity value of the path would however be affected. Whilst the development could be said to increase some aspects of the amenity of users of the core path by increasing available access provision including circular and constructed/improved routes for use by the public, it will negatively affect the visual amenity of core path users and the playing of golf over the core path will also have a negative affect.
- 8.24 The Access Officer further notes that golf courses in Scotland have traditionally provided the public with a variety of recreational access resource and in particular this is more evident on Links courses. Nearby courses at Dornoch, Tain, Fortrose and Golspie are all used by the public for recreation and it would be inappropriate to say this development could not be undertaken without significant impact to recreation needs. Yet this development is a proposal that has been started from a blank sheet of paper, compared to the evolution of recreation on the aforementioned historic courses, and as such it is not considered by the Access Officer that this proposal has adequately considered public access in the context of the HwLDP policy 77 as no meaningful attempt has been made to maintain aspect of the current amenity offered by the site, particularly along the core path.
- 8.25 It is evident that some current recreational users of Coul Links appreciate the site for the qualities of wildness which it invokes, seemingly largely untouched in parts from man made intervention. As noted above the introduction of the golf course would be

likely to introduce a more formal and managed presence to the dune system and as was noted by the Reporter, this would undoubtedly be likely to diminish the enjoyment some users may take from its perceived wildness. The Reporter however did not consider that the site has wild land qualities such that the reduction of these by the development would constitute a *significant* environmental effect. The views of both the Reporter and Access Officer are acknowledged around the impact of perception and amenity along the core path. It is agreed that given the starting point of this development the layout could have conceivably done more to limit the overall impact on the core path however this overall impact would not be considered so significantly detrimental to warrant refusal on this basis especially recognising the positive aspects to overall public access that will be delivered.

- 8.26 While construction methods may have altered, in lieu of any updated assessment and in applying the precautionary principle, there is potential for significant visual effects on receptors within the site itself during the construction phase as was the view of the Reporter. This would include (but would not be limited to) the core path and viewpoints within the site as well the edges of the site. The Reporter concluded that those walking along the dunes on the eastern edge of the site would likely be subject to significant visual effects. So too would people on the southern edge of the site on Embo Street, the construction works would be so prominent as to represent a significant effect. Such effects would however be temporary in nature with construction estimated to take 18 months - 24 in duration and on this basis, not significantly detrimental overall.

Amenity

- 8.27 There is limited noise emanating from a development of this type during its operational phase. No Noise Impact Assessment has been submitted with the application in order to assess construction noise however it is not proposed to undertake construction work, which is audible at the site boundary, outwith the hours of Mon-Fri 8am-7pm; Sat 8am-1pm and that noise levels during the above periods are not likely to exceed 75dB(A) for short term works or 55dB(A) for long term works. In light of this, no noise assessment is required by Environmental Health however should consent be granted a condition would be necessary to secure a noise assessment in the event either of the aforementioned criteria were not able to be complied with.
- 8.28 Notwithstanding the above there is a requirement for developers to comply with reasonable operational practices with regard to construction noise so as not to cause nuisance under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 which can set restrictions in terms of hours of operation, plant and equipment used and noise levels. Should any consent be issued, an informative can be set out which invites the developer to discuss the construction noise level with relevant Environmental Health officers.
- 8.29 No details of proposed lighting have been submitted with the application. It would be expected that some lighting will be required during twilight and early evening. A lighting strategy would therefore be required and it would be expected that should comprise of low level bollard lighting, lighting columns and building mounted lighting (or similar measures) so as to minimise light pollution. Should any consent be

granted, a pre-commencement condition could be added to require the submission of a strategy to be confirmed by the Planning Authority prior to works commencing.

Impact on Natural Heritage

8.30 The site is located within a number of designated sites, as follows:

- The Loch Fleet Site of Special Scientific Interest & Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet Ramsar Site (national designation due to sand dune habitat);
- Dornoch Firth & Loch Fleet Special Protection Area (SPA) (international designation for bird interests)

The site in its entirety extends to 317 hectares with the SSSI designation in it's entirely extends to 180 hectares.

8.31 The Loch Fleet Site of Special Scientific Interest and Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet Ramsar Site is a designation of national importance relating to sand dune habitat and range of coastal habitats and species and range of wetland habitats, species and waterbirds. With respect to sand dune specifically, NatureScot (NS) note that the management objective within the Site Management Statement for the SSSI is to 'restore the condition of the sand dune habitat'. NS go onto state that it considers that the EIAR underplays the adverse impact of the development and that it will have a significant adverse impact on the protected sand dune feature at Coul Links in respect of extent, structure and function, with consequent adverse impacts on the characteristic species. NS therefore object to this proposal as it will result in unavoidable adverse effects on natural heritage interests of national importance.

8.32 It is noted that, due to GIS (Geographical Information Systems) files not being made available to NS by the applicant, it has undertaken that task and digitised the course layout as shown in the documents submitted as part of the planning application to help with its assessment of the proposal. Though this might introduce small differences between NS's statistics and those of the applicant, they will be comparatively small in relation to the significant differences arising from the different interpretation of impacts. The assessment provided by NS is as laid bare in Appendix 1 in which it details its approach to assessment impacts, methodology and overall conclusion detailing that total loss of dune heath, the most important and certainly the most vulnerable element of the dune system on the site, would be 5.6965 hectares exceeding the applicant's assessment which specifies 1.5 hectares. The assessment provided by NS also considers and stipulates loss of other habitats as specified in Appendix 1.

8.33 The applicant disputes the methodology employed by NS specifically in relation to assigning vegetation types within the polygons across the site. The applicant has mapped vegetation using a range of intermediate and 'mosaic' (multiple) vegetation types within many polygons whereas NS note that splitting these statistically detracts from the ecological reality that each of these polygons is wholly of this type across its extent. To this end it has used a hierarchal approach, allocating the entire extent of such polygons to the more/most important of its habitat components. Where there are two vegetation types of equal extent, NS have allocated the entire area of the polygon to the more important type, and this allocation was applied where a more important type contributes a minimum area of 30%, so that a polygon that is 70% dune grassland and 30% dune heath, would have its entire area allocated to dune

heath. The various permutations of vegetation types are listed within the tables in Appendix 1, allowing a perspective on the impact of this approach on calculated totals.

- 8.34 It is interesting to note that the approach to assessing impacts on the SSSI can be approached in different ways however the methodology employed by NS has remained the same as with the previous application with the topic of natural heritage forming a significant part of the PLI process during which this methodology was accepted by the Reporter in its decision. This methodology was accepted and not contested at the PLI. As such, whilst acknowledging the applicant's position, there does not appear to be any reason why the Planning Authority's own assessment should deviate from that of its advisor, NS, and the figures provided in Appendix 1 are therefore accepted. Furthermore, if the applicant's methodology and conclusions were to be accepted, NS have nevertheless not expressed a view as to whether it would accept and therefore not object to the loss of lesser amount of 1.5 hectares of dune heath as ultimately concluded by the applicant and it is evident from the planning history and processes to date that assessment of this matter cannot be simplified as numerical losses given the complexity of the designation as dune features do not exist in isolation but as an interactive, functional whole.
- 8.35 The position of NatureScot is therefore accepted and it is the Planning Authority's view that the proposal would result in significant adverse impact on the protected sand dune feature at Coul Links in respect of extent, structure and function, with consequent adverse impacts on the characteristic species. In this regard, whilst the modifications that have been made to the proposal are acknowledged, the application as it stands fails to comply with Policy 4 of National Planning Framework 4 and Policy 57 of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan.
- 8.36 With respect to the breeding bird assemblage element of the SSSI, the management objective for breeding birds within the Site Management Statement for this SSSI is 'to maintain the population of breeding birds and to avoid significant disturbance to these birds during the breeding season.' The Planning Authority note the views of NatureScot that there are natural heritage interests of national importance on the site, but these will not be affected by the proposal.

Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet SPA and Ramsar site

- 8.37 The proposal also lies within the Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet SPA and Ramsar site. This SPA is protected for its range of non-breeding waterfowl and breeding osprey and the Ramsar site is classified for its range of coastal features. The proposal is likely to have a significant effect on SPA waders (oystercatcher, bar-tailed godwit, curlew, dunlin, and redshank), teal, wigeon, greylag goose and the waterfowl assemblage of Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet SPA as a result of disturbance during construction and operation of the proposal.
- 8.38 The Recreation Access Management Plan (RAMP) mitigation will help reduce human disturbance to bird species during the winter which includes:
- Temporary signage raising awareness of wintering birds;
 - Site interpretation boards;

- A walks leaflet identifying sensitive bird areas and suitable seasonal walk routes;
- Provision of a new circular walking route away from the coast; and
- Regular monitoring review of access management to benefit SPA birds.

To ensure disturbance from golf course maintenance:

- From December to March (inclusive), green-keeping operations on holes 10-18 must only take place between one hour after sunrise and one hour before sunset. This will reduce disturbance to a level that is more reflective of current use.
- And to ensure sensitive bird areas are avoided during construction:
- An access diversion (if required).

The RAMP mitigation measures will need to be implemented in advance of construction taking place, should the proposal receive consent.

- 8.39 Weight also requires to be given to the findings of the Reporter during the PLI on this matter as their overall conclusion differed to that of NatureScot, noting that the construction and operation of the proposed development is likely to have a significant adverse impact on wintering and breeding birds, even after mitigation, arising from disturbance and habitat loss. This position took account of the extensive evidence to the inquiry, cross-examination of witnesses, and the submissions of the parties on the topic for example, the additional bird surveys by RSPB, peer reviewed scientific research on disturbance, and experience of the effectiveness of signage.
- 8.40 Nevertheless, the Council's advise in this regard is provided by NatureScot who, having reviewed the application and proposed mitigation remain of the view that the proposal can be advanced without significantly adverse impact on the SPA; a view which is accepted by the Planning Authority.

Climate Change and Biodiversity

- 8.41 National Planning Framework A Biodiversity Net Gain paper forms part of the planning application. However it does not appear to follow the CIRIA/CIEEM Guidelines as the Executive Summary (Baker et al. 2019) states, "BNG does not apply to statutory designated sites or irreplaceable habitats". Further ecological information was latterly supplied with regards biodiversity (outwith the designated site) and protected species survey. This concluded that there are no protected species present on site. This has excluded bat survey as the buildings present on site will be covered under a separate application. It has been confirmed that an updated NVC survey of the site was undertaken in 2022 and the results are presented in the report The Coul Links: habitats, vegetation & plants: July 2022 by Botanaeco.
- 8.42 A lepidoptera larval food source survey was undertaken of the sections of the site that will be subject to construction and mowing regimes to give a baseline indication of the importance of the site for lepidoptera larva. The results of this survey indicate that there are not anticipated to be any significant impacts upon the larval food source of the butterflies that are deemed to be potentially present on site, from desk study analysis. If this project is given consent a condition is recommended that

ensures that a full lepidoptera survey is undertaken at the optimal time of year, of the site and mitigation and enhancement measures are provided.

- 8.43 A lichen survey has not been undertaken of the site, although the NVC survey did determine where the presence of lichen rich habitats are present and these have been avoided through the project design. However, the Reporters comments from the Public Enquiry of the previous golf course application in the same area, identified that the site could be important for lichens, particularly the green felt lichen *peltigera malacea*. Therefore, a detailed lichen survey and assessment of the site, should be conditioned if the application is approved.
- 8.44 Biodiversity enhancement is not possible within a protected area as noted above however an outline biodiversity enhancement plan was provided for the development out with the protected area and of a level proportionate to the site. This has demonstrated that biodiversity enhancements for these sections of the development is possible. If the application is approved a condition for a detailed Habitat Management Plan is required for these elements of the development. However while it is evidenced through the Enhancement Plan that biodiversity can be enhanced outwith the designated areas of the site, the designated areas cover such a large extent that the overall impacts, when balanced, mean that development as a whole cannot comply with Policy 3 of National Planning Framework 4 due to the overall adverse impact on the protected areas. Ultimately the proposal, in addition to the impacts arising through on the SSSI/Ramsar site considered above, must also be recommended for refusal due to non-compliance with the development on this issue. This is an additional reason added compared with the previous application which was recommended for refusal solely due to the issues in regards the SSSI due to the additional considerations as set out under Policy 3 of NPF 4.

Coastal Erosion

- 8.45 The RPS Coastal Report states, "Although the dune system at Coul Links is considered to be dynamically stable, the future increases in relative sea level rise are likely to result in a trend of slow landward retreat of the vegetation line." The report also concedes the likelihood of periodic "arduous storm events". In this context, the developers propose to locate their course within 10m of this dynamic coastal edge. The 18th tee appears to be even closer to the coastal edge. The vegetation over most of the 17th fairway and all of the 17th green is semi-fixed dune, and mowing this risks destabilising the coastal edge. Any response to such destabilisation could result in the introduction of coastal protection, or moving the hole along the coast or into the dune slack, thereby increasing the risk to this site. The location of Mean High Water Springs (MHWS) and the vegetation edge are not the only indicators of future vulnerability. The identity of the vegetation at or near to the coastal edge is also very important, and the likelihood of sediment adjustment in this dynamic zone in response to Relative Sea Level Rise does not seem to have been considered.
- 8.46 The closest parts of the golf course to the sea would be at some risk from coastal erosion. However soft engineering and management has the potential to mitigate this risk. Future proposals for relocation could have effects on the natural heritage of the site, and there would be no guarantee that consent would be forthcoming. However this would be a risk that sits with the applicant, and one which it appears willing to

take. Therefore, although there are risks and some uncertainties for the long-term fate of these elements of the golf course, there would be mechanisms to manage these.

Access and Parking

- 8.47 Vehicular access will be via a single access point; which is to be a new access to be created from the existing C1026 Dornoch - Fourpenny Road. The C1026 is a rural road that runs north to south adjacent to the western boundary of the site. It has a total length of around 9.5km between the A9 Cambusnavie junction and the Castle Street/Church Street fork in Dornoch. The road varies in standard with some single carriageway sections as well as some single track sections with passing places. The proposed site will have its sole access point from this road. In recent months, significant improvement works have been undertaken to the road to widen sections to single carriageway from single track between Dornoch and the Embo junction. As part of this application, further road widening in order to facilitate two way movement has been proposed for the C1026 road between the site access junction and the Embo junction. The applicant would also be required to provide additional traffic calming measures between the Embo Street junction and the east end the settlement (a distance of 500m). The full details of all works affecting the C1029 including the site access shall be agreed with the Council through Roads Permit process.
- 8.48 Cars will arrive on site from the new access road created across the existing farmland south-west of the Home Farm. The new access will join the existing farm track south of the future Professionals' Shop and future Clubhouse. A drop-off point will be created close to those buildings. The track will continue northwards to service the remaining buildings. A staff car park will be created in the car park area. The public car park and parking for coaches will be beyond the steadings. Coaches will park in the yard to the north steading and the main car park will be formed in the walled field beyond it. Eighty-five cars can be accommodated. Coaches will also have the option of using the new designated coach parking area in Dornoch.
- 8.49 A Construction Traffic Management Plan will help to mitigate any traffic related environmental impacts associated with the construction phase. This will ensure planning deliveries and removals which will aim to limit the overall generation of traffic movements and associated noise and air pollution. A dedicated haul route has been incorporated into the layout which has been designed to follow the routing of the golf course only. Thereafter, in the operational phase, when an increase in golfing traffic is expected, it is proposed for the development to appoint a Travel Plan Co-ordinator to implement the Travel Plan which is included in the ES. The objective of the plan is to manage the number of car-borne trips (particularly single occupancy trips) and encourage sustainable travel patterns associated within the proposed golf course for both staff and visitors.
- 8.50 Transport Planning are generally content with the findings of the ES and the proposed measures. In particular, it is advised that the provision of a shuttle bus is supported in principle however the details of this will require to be clarified. Similarly full details of the proposed road widening works will be required; this matter will also be addressed as part of a formal Road Opening Permit or Road Construction Consent process however it is noted that additional road improvements in the form

of traffic calming measures will also be required on the single track section of road immediately north of Embo Street in the Hilton of Embo area.

- 8.51 In terms of parking, Transport Planning advise that the proposed level of car parking is considered to be sufficient for the proposed golf course however some overflow parking will also be required (in the event that the golf course hosts an event for example). Areas of overflow parking can be relatively however would need to be identified on plan; this is a further matter which require to be addressed as part of a planning condition. Similarly provision will require to be made for parking and cycle parking to be used by golf caddies.
- 8.52 Should any consent be granted, conditions would be required to ensure a Construction Traffic Management is submitted and agreed prior to the start of the works and for the Travel Plan to be introduced (by a Travel Plan Co-coordinator) prior to the development becoming operational.

Socio-Economic Impacts

- 8.53 The economic benefits of the proposal are discussed in the EIAR with the assessment, which updates the report prepared by BiGGAR submitted as part of the previous application, predicated on the golf course attracting a similar level of usage as Royal Dornoch Golf Course, noting that since the previous application was determined, interest in golf as a whole has only increased.
- 8.54 Although Dornoch in particular, and the Highlands more generally, enjoy relatively low levels of unemployment, East Sutherland (in common with the rest of the Highlands) has suffered from the effects of outward migration, which has led to depopulation, declining services and an ageing population, the main reason for depopulation being the lack of employment opportunities in the area.
- 8.55 These figures put forward in the EIAR suggest direct employment of around 20 people comprising administrators, food and beverage, golf-operations, and greens. Estimates from the developers suggest around 32 full time (22 on the course 10 in the restaurant/admin) and 47 seasonal jobs associated with the Coull Links golf course (40 on the course and 7 in the restaurant/admin). Additionally, there would be a need to recruit caddies. Based on the recent experience of Royal Dornoch, the requirement for caddies would be at least 60 per day. Weighting the seasonal workers at 0.5 FTE and the caddies as 0.3 FTE suggests that the Coull Links development will generate employment of around 73.5 FTEs with a throughput of 17,000 annual rounds.
- 8.56 Combining green fee income with ancillary income suggests that golf related spending at Coull Links will likely exceed £5.4m in the initial year. As the course move towards capacity of around 25,000 rounds per year over time would imply that turnover would increase to around £7.9m annually. In consideration of wider impacts, by siting the new course near Royal Dornoch Golf Club, the developers will create a “cluster” of world-class courses enabling East Sutherland to become a competitive golfing destination in the wider golf market.
- 8.57 The applicant’s economic case has been disputed by objectors and was a topic of debate the previous PLI. The Reporter, having considered the issues raised,

concluded that the applicant's assessment did appear unrealistic in some areas with reliance on 'unduly optimistic assumptions', in particular noting:

- The applicant's suggestion that the proposal would create over 650 jobs in golf tourism by year 10 appears highly unlikely when related to the total size of the golf tourism economy in Scotland.
- Although the total economic impact would be substantial and positive, it is considered likely to be significantly lower than estimated by the applicant's consultants as their predictions rely on unduly optimistic assumptions on the level of average expenditure by golf tourists, and the behaviour of high spending North American golf tourists.
- In particular, it was considered that the expectation that 33% of all golf visitors to Coul Links, and by extension up to two thirds of American visitors, would not have visited Scotland otherwise, is unrealistic.

8.58 Nevertheless it is evident that creation of new jobs in the area would provide younger people with a greater incentive to stay in the locality, as well as potentially encouraging others to return who have left in search of employment elsewhere. This would be likely to enhance business and community confidence and to have a significantly beneficial effect on the area.

8.59 Overall, whilst the scale of the annual income and job creation may be in dispute, it can reasonably be concluded that, in the context of East Sutherland, the proposed development has the potential to generate a substantial number of jobs and spending in the local area and beyond however not to such an extent that the proposal could be considered 'nationally' significant. This matter was confirmed in Scottish Ministers decision; with the report noting the following:

8.60 'We conclude that the proposed golf course development at Coul Links would have a highly significant beneficial socio-economic impact on the local Dornoch area, and a significant positive impact at a regional (Highland) level. At the Scotland level we consider that the socio-economic impact would be very beneficial, but that the likely volume of employment and expenditure would not, in itself, be nationally significant.

Nor do we consider that the creation of a potentially 'world class' golf course is intrinsically a development of national importance. If Coul Links were successful in achieving a ranking in the Golf Digest top 100, that would increase the number of highly rated courses in Scotland from 12 to 13. There is no evidence that the nation's golf tourism industry is being held back through a lack of iconic golf courses, and there are already at least 84 links courses in Scotland. In short, there appears to be a generous supply of high quality golf courses in Scotland, especially links courses, and while another world class course would be a positive addition to that supply, it would not qualify as nationally important on that count.'

8.61 In concluding on socio-economic impacts, the development evidently would be of considerable benefit both locally and regionally however such benefits are not of a level where they could be considered nationally significant and therefore do not outweigh the concerns expressed elsewhere in this report.

Matters to be secured by Legal Agreement / Upfront Payment

- 8.62 There are no matters identified which would require be secured by a legal agreement. A Section 96 Agreement which relates to Wear and Tear of the public road network would be required which could be secured by condition if consent is granted.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 It is evident, that even with caution applied to the applicant's assessment, that the proposal does represent a significant development proposal for Sutherland with substantial, albeit not unanimous, support locally and in planning terms there is broad support for a development of this nature i.e. a proposal which has the capacity to contribute to the Council's overarching vision with regards tourism. Moreover, the supporting information submitted with the application indicates that the development has potential to create additional economic benefit which would result in increased demand for accommodation and so forth. Such effects are likely to 'trickle' down within the Sutherland area. In particular the proposal will add an additional golf course to the Sutherland area which has the potential to extend the time visitors stay in Sutherland.
- 9.2 Golf course development on the site was first mooted nine years ago and during that period, the same concerns have remained with regards to impact on the natural heritage and specifically the Site of Special Scientific Interest/Ramsar site covering significant portions of the site. Ultimately this led to refusal of a previous application and whilst the intentions of the applicant to address the concerns noted during PLI are acknowledged, the revisions have fallen short of being able demonstrate.
- 9.3 The National Planning Framework is now embedded in the development plan setting out an overarching ambition for Scotland to progress towards net zero, reducing its climate emissions and in planning terms supporting suitably located proposals which contribute to sustainable communities. NPF4 therefore reinforces the need to consider the application in terms of its environmental credentials and in addition to the concerns regarding the designated areas remaining, there is policy context favouring developments where it can be demonstrated that the proposal will conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity, including nature networks so they are in a demonstrably better state than without intervention. The application has not been able to demonstrate this as such biodiversity cannot be delivered within designated areas and does not negate the negative impacts on the designations for which the site is protected.
- 9.4 All relevant matters have been taken into account when appraising this application. It is considered that the proposal does not accord with the principles and policies contained within the Development Plan and is unacceptable in terms of applicable material considerations.
- 9.5 Should the Committee be minded to support the application Members are reminded the application would be referred to Scottish Ministers who have the opportunity to call it in.

10. IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Resource: Not applicable
- 10.2 Legal: Not applicable
- 10.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural): Detailed in the Planning Assessment
- 10.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever: Detailed in the Planning Assessment
- 10.5 Risk: Not applicable
- 10.6 Gaelic: Not applicable

11. RECOMMENDATION

Action required before decision issued	Y	
Notification to Scottish Ministers	Y	Statutory consultee objection – notification required should consent be granted
Conclusion of Section 75 Obligation	N	
Revocation of previous permission	N	

Subject to the above actions, it is recommended to **REFUSE** the application for the following reasons:

1. The application is contrary to the provisions of National Planning Framework 4 Policy 4 (Natural Places) the Highland-wide Local Development Plan Policies 28 (Sustainable Design) Policy 57 (Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage) as the proposed development would result in a significantly detrimental impact on the Loch Fleet Site of Scientific Interest and Loch Fleet Ramsar Site, designated for its sand dune habitat. In particular, the Coul Links support some of the best quality SSSI dune slack habitats in Scotland and the proposal, in its current format, will result in significant and permanent loss of sand dune habitat, particularly dune heath and dune slacks and impacts to other species which depend on it. Although mitigation is proposed the residual losses are extensive and likely to be permanent. In addition, the proposed development will create a high level of disruption to natural dune processes, such as dynamism, due to large dune areas becoming stabilised. It will also result in significant levels of habitat fragmentation, with the course infrastructure spread throughout the dune system. Furthermore, translocation of habitat is unlikely to be successful and therefore not an appropriate technique to safeguard a protected area of such natural environmental complexity and notable dune quality.
2. The application is contrary to the provisions of National Planning Framework 4 Policy 3 (Biodiversity). In particular the proposal cannot demonstrate that the proposal will conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity, including nature networks so they are in a demonstrably better state than without intervention. The proposal also fails to comply with part b)i) which requires the proposal to be based on an understanding of the

existing characteristics of the site and its local, regional and national ecological context prior to development, including the presence of any irreplaceable habitats.

REASON FOR DECISION

All relevant matters have been taken into account when appraising this application. It is considered that the proposal does not accord with the principles and policies contained within the Development Plan and is unacceptable in terms of applicable material considerations.

Signature:

Designation: Area Planning Manager North

Author: Gillian Pearson

Background Papers: Documents referred to in report and in case file.

Relevant Plans: As per plans booklet.

Appendix 1 and 2 attached as separate appendices

Ms Gillian Pearson
Planning Department
The Highland Council

By email – epc@highland.gov.uk

5 May 2023

Your ref: 23/00580/FUL
Our ref: CEA170092

Dear Ms Pearson,

**Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations
Construction of an 18 hole golf course, practice area, access, parking, ancillary infrastructure
and the change of use of existing buildings to form clubhouse, pro shop, maintenance shed
and ancillary facilities
Land 1700m NW of Embo Community Centre, School Street, Embo**

Thank you for your consultation of 1 March 2023 requesting our comments on this proposal and for granting us an extension to the deadline.

1. Summary

We recognise the potentially large economic benefits that could arise from this proposal and their local and regional significance. We also recognise and acknowledge the commitment by the applicant to develop measures to reduce the footprint of the course, as well as to mitigate and offset impacts on nationally important natural heritage interests. However, the conclusion of our assessment is that this proposal is contrary to National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) requirements not to compromise the objectives of SSSI designation and the overall integrity of Loch Fleet Site of Special Scientific Interest.

While we are unable to support this proposal as presented, we believe that a golf course could be progressed in this general location by using a much higher proportion of the adjacent agricultural land.

Loch Fleet Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

We object to this proposal as it will result in significant adverse effects on sand dune habitat of national importance.

Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar Site, Moray Firth SPA

This proposal could be progressed with appropriate mitigation. However, because it could affect internationally important natural heritage interests, **we object to this proposal unless it is made**

subject to conditions so that the works are done strictly in accordance with the mitigation detailed in our appraisal below.

2. Appraisal of impacts and advice

2.1 Loch Fleet SSSI and Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet Ramsar site

This proposal lies within this SSSI protected for its range of coastal habitats and species.

The proposal also lies within this Ramsar site which is classified for a range of wetland habitats, species and waterbirds. In line with Scottish Government Policy we have considered the waterbird interest alongside the Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet SPA, while other interests of the Ramsar site have been considered alongside the Loch Fleet SSSI.

Sand dune

The management objective for sand dune within the Site Management Statement for this SSSI is to 'restore the condition of the sand dune habitat'. We consider that the EIAR underplays the adverse impact of the development.

We advise that this proposal will have a significant adverse impact on the protected sand dune feature at Coul Links in respect of extent, structure and function, with consequent adverse impacts on the characteristic species. We therefore object to this proposal as it will result in unavoidable adverse effects on natural heritage interests of national importance.

We provide further detail in Annex 1.

We have considered other interests and taken them into account in reaching our conclusion on this proposal.

If the planning authority intends to grant planning permission against this advice, you must notify Scottish Ministers.

Breeding bird assemblage (SSSI)

The management objective for breeding birds within the Site Management Statement for this SSSI is 'to maintain the population of breeding birds and to avoid significant disturbance to these birds during the breeding season.'

There are natural heritage interests of national importance on the site, but these will not be affected by the proposal.

2.2 Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet SPA and Ramsar Site

The proposal lies within the Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet SPA and Ramsar site. This SPA is protected for its range of non-breeding waterfowl and breeding osprey and the Ramsar site is classified for its range of coastal features.

The site's status means that the requirements of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (the 'Habitats Regulations') apply, or for reserved matters, The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Consequently, The Highland Council is required to consider the effect of the proposal on the SPA before it can be consented (commonly known as Habitats

Regulations Appraisal). The NatureScot website has a summary of the legislative requirements (<https://NatureScot.scot/professional-advice/safeguarding-protected-areas-and-species/protected-species/legal-framework/habitats-directive-and-habitats-regulations>).

Our advice is that this proposal is likely to have a significant effect on SPA waders (oystercatcher, bar-tailed godwit, curlew, dunlin, and redshank), teal, wigeon, greylag goose and the waterfowl assemblage of Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet SPA as a result of disturbance during construction and operation of the proposal. Consequently, the Highland Council, as competent authority, is required to carry out an appropriate assessment in view of the site's conservation objectives for its qualifying interests. To help you do this, we advise on the basis of the appraisal carried out to date, if the proposal is carried out strictly with the following mitigation, our conclusion is that the proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

The Recreation Access Management Plan (RAMP) mitigation will help reduce human disturbance to bird species during the winter which includes:

- Temporary signage raising awareness of wintering birds;
- Site interpretation boards;
- A walks leaflet identifying sensitive bird areas and suitable seasonal walk routes;
- Provision of a new circular walking route away from the coast; and
- Regular monitoring review of access management to benefit SPA birds.

To ensure disturbance from golf course maintenance:

- From December to March (inclusive), green-keeping operations on holes 10-18 must only take place between one hour after sunrise and one hour before sunset. This will reduce disturbance to a level that is more reflective of current use.

And to ensure sensitive bird areas are avoided during construction:

- An access diversion (if required).

We advise that the RAMP mitigation measures will need to be implemented in advance of construction taking place, should the proposal receive consent.

The appraisal we carried out considered the impact of the proposal on the following factors:

- It is considered that the foreshore will receive more recreational disturbance during the winter than the golf course area and the RAMP mitigation measures will help reduce recreational disturbance during winter along the coastal zone.
- Disturbance levels to the dune slacks, which are used primarily by teal and wigeon, will be minimised and be more reflective of current use.
- The RAMP will be monitored to gauge its effectiveness. This will involve bird surveys, observations on access behaviour and effectiveness of temporary signage and a people counter on the main access route through the course.
- On-site meetings will be arranged to review the effectiveness of the RAMP and to agree any future changes that may be required should any unforeseen/unexpected issues be identified. The frequency of the review meetings has been front-loaded so that any issues are addressed early on in the process.

2.3 Moray Firth SPA

The proposal lies adjacent to the Moray Firth SPA, protected for its marine waterfowl and seabirds.

Our advice is that this proposal is likely to have a significant effect on SPA eider as result of disturbance during construction and operation of the proposal. Consequently, the Highland Council, as competent authority, is required to carry out an appropriate assessment in view of the site's conservation objectives for its qualifying interests. To help you do this, we advise on the basis of the appraisal carried out to date, if the proposal is carried out strictly with the mitigation as identified above for the Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet SPA, our conclusion is that the proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

If the planning authority intends to grant planning permission against this advice without the suggested mitigation, you must notify Scottish Ministers.

Please let us know if you need any further information or advice on this proposal by contacting Alexander.Macdonald@nature.scot.

The advice in this letter is provided by NatureScot, the operating name of Scottish Natural Heritage.

Yours sincerely,

David Mackay

Head of Operations – North

c.c. dafydd.jones@highland.gov.uk

Annex 1.

Direct impact on sand dune habitats

EIAR data and assessment

NatureScot made a number of requests for GIS shapefiles of the course layout prior to the submission of the application, but unfortunately did not receive them. As a result, we have undertaken that task and digitised the course layout as shown in the documents submitted as part of the planning application to help with our assessment of the proposal. Though this might introduce small differences between our statistics and those of the applicant, they will be comparatively small in relation to the significant differences arising from our different interpretation of impacts.

The applicant has mapped vegetation using a range of intermediate and 'mosaic' (multiple) vegetation types within many polygons. Splitting these statistically detracts from the ecological reality that each of these polygons is wholly of this type across its extent. We have used a hierarchical approach, allocating the entire extent of such polygons to the more/most important of its habitat components. Where there are two vegetation types of equal extent, we have allocated the entire area of the polygon to the more important type, and this allocation was applied where a more important type contributes a minimum area of 30%, so that a polygon that is 70% dune grassland and 30% dune heath, would have its entire area allocated to dune heath. The various permutations of vegetation types are listed within the tables, allowing a perspective on the impact of this approach on our calculated totals.

This hierarchy referred to above is as follows:

Dune Heath > all other vegetation (where > means 'more important than')
 Dune slack (SD14-SD17) > all except dune heath
 Mire (M) > Swamp (S)
 Grey dune (SD12) > grassland (MG)

Assessment of impacts to sand dune

We present our advice below with respect to the various sand dune habitats before discussing wider effects to all habitats, before summarising overall impacts.

Dune heath

The EIA concludes adverse impact on 1.5 ha of dune heath. This is probably the most important and certainly the most vulnerable element of the dune system on the site. The mowing of dune heath will tend to convert it to grassland and, even if the heath plants survive, they and the dense growth of mosses will have most of their vertical component removed, along with its microclimate and the rich epiphytic flora and the invertebrate fauna inhabiting this vegetation canopy.

The loss to 'water feature' here amounts to 0.1119ha, and is mainly to vegetation types that are not usually associated with wet areas, so there are grounds for assuming that all the figures above represent habitat loss, amounting to over 5.6965 ha (see Table 1 below), almost four times the 1.5 ha presented by the developer. It is not clear how the developer has calculated total dune heath area to enable us to comment on the apparent differences. Subtracting the 'water feature' impact gives a total damage/loss figure of 5.5846 ha which is significant. Heath is a very fragile habitat, and there will be further losses from trampling damage from golfers seeking lost golf balls or balls that have missed the target fairways, and also from the edge creep of vegetation from new edges, with species

from the matrix (usually grassland) invading and reducing habitat area. The edge effect and the impact of fragmentation are discussed in more detail below.

Table 1: Total area of dune heath habitat that will be lost to the planned development, including a breakdown of habitat area into component golf course features. The attribute 'MapL_NVC' has been taken from the NVC SSSI information provided by the applicant.

MapL_NVC	Total Area_ha	Tees	Fairways	Semi-Rough	Greens	Water
H11b	0.2289	0.0188	0.1480	0.0621		
H11b-SD17	0.1436		0.0451	0.0231	0.0347	0.0408
H11b 50% SD9x 50%	1.3223	0.1262	0.7863	0.2978	0.0751	0.0369
H11c	2.9254	0.2324	1.9485	0.4969	0.2334	0.0142
H11c-MGh	0.0632		0.0599	0.0033		
H11c-W2	0.0085	0.0085				
H11-U2a-W17	0.9038	0.0091	0.6629	0.2118		0.0201
W23a 70% H11 30%	0.1008		0.0625	0.0383	0.0000	
	5.6965	0.3950	3.7131	1.1332	0.3432	0.1119

Dune slack

Sand dune slacks of exceptional quality and scale are widespread at Coull Links. This is a major habitat at Coull, and is now rare on intact systems in east Scotland. Though avoiding the major dune slacks, the course directly impacts almost 2 ha of this habitat, which is significant. We have taken the precautionary approach in relation to flooding of the slacks as water features, assuming this flooding to be permanent. If this is not the case, it should be clarified in the EIAR.

The total habitat loss here would be 1.9356 ha (see Table 2 below), but excluding the 'water feature' element on the assumption that this might not involve any changes to the existing habitat would give a total dune slack loss of 1.1071 ha, which is 10.08% of the total area of dune slack at Coull Links (total area is 10.98 ha).

Table 2: Total area of dune slack habitat that will be lost to the planned development, including a breakdown of habitat area into component golf course features. The attribute 'MapL_NVC' has been taken from the NVC SSSI information provided by the applicant.

MapL_NVC	Total Area_ha	Tees	Fairways	Semi-Rough	Greens	Water
M27 50% SD17 50%	0.2412		0.1995	0.0417		
MG10a-SD17	0.0570		0.0570			
SD12-SD17 80% Burnet rose 20%	0.4374		0.2779	0.1235	0.0360	
SD15-SD17	0.0222			0.0222		
SD15a	0.7380	0.0090	0.0737	0.0075		0.6479

SD15a 70%	0.1318					0.1318
SD15a 70% M27 30%	0.2509		0.1555	0.0954		
SD17	0.0196		0.0082			0.0115
SD17 60% M25a 40%	0.0374					0.0374
	1.9356	0.0090	0.7718	0.2903	0.0360	0.8285

Grey dune (fixed dune grassland)

We have defined this habitat, grey dune, in strict terms, and have not included Mesotrophic Grassland (MG) or the habitat allocated to burnet rose by the applicant. Total area lost to the development amounts to 2.1548 ha (see Table 3 below), with no impact from water features, which is significant. Nevertheless, there are negative attributes of mowing (see below) that should be taken into consideration in assessing the impact on this habitat, one of the more resilient dune habitats on the site.

Table 3: Total area of grey dune habitat that will be lost to the planned development, including a breakdown of habitat area into component golf course features. The attribute 'MapL_NVC' has been taken from the NVC SSSI information provided by the applicant.

MapL_NVC	Total Area_ha	Tees	Fairways	Greens
MG9 60% SD12b 20% SD17 20%	0.0032			
SD12 60% MG1c 40%	0.1047		0.0770	
SD9x	2.0470	0.0849	1.3144	0.1127
	2.1548	0.0849	1.3914	0.1127

Semi-fixed dune

We conclude that a total area of 0.8547 ha will be lost to the development (see Table 4 below). Disturbance from mowing of the vegetation may destabilise this fragile habitat. The intervention proposed to cope with such an event is a disruption of natural processes.

The RPS Coastal Report states, “*Although the dune system at Coul Links is considered to be dynamically stable, the future increases in relative sea level rise are likely to result in a trend of slow landward retreat of the vegetation line.*” The report also concedes the likelihood of periodic “*arduous storm events*”. In this context, the developers propose to locate their course within 10m of this dynamic coastal edge. The 18th tee appears to be even closer to the coastal edge. The vegetation over most of the 17th fairway and all of the 17th green is semi-fixed dune, and mowing this risks destabilising the coastal edge. Any response to such destabilisation could result in the introduction of coastal protection, or moving the hole along the coast or into the dune slack, thereby increasing the risk to this site. The location of Mean High Water Springs (MHWS) and the vegetation edge are not the only indicators of future vulnerability. The identity of the vegetation at or near to the coastal edge is also very important, and the likelihood of sediment adjustment in this dynamic zone in response to Relative Sea Level Rise does not seem to have been considered.

Table 4: Total area of semi-fixed dune habitat that will be lost to the planned development, including a breakdown of habitat area into component golf course features. The attribute 'MapL_NVC' has been taken from the NVC SSSI information provided by the applicant.

MapL_NVC	Total Area_ha	Tees	Fairways	Semi-Rough	Greens	Water
SD7y	0.8547	0.0225	0.5204	0.2592	0.0527	

Other habitats

Impacts including the water feature are given in brackets. There is also a significant impact on mires – 0.1813 ha (0.5839 ha), swamps 0.0584 (0.4567 ha) and inundation grassland MG11 0.1144 ha (0.1144ha). Though these are not protected features, they lie within the extent and function of a protected feature and the functionality of the wider sand dune feature interacts with these, as is true of almost all of the site (see next section).

Wider impacts to sand dune habitats

Fragmentation

The current proposal attempts to reduce the fragmentation associated with the first application. Connecting corridors have been added together with the creation of gradual rather than abrupt vegetation edges. Connecting corridors are useful restoration devices when fragments have been totally severed, but do not begin to provide the level of connectivity associated with an intact area of habitat.

The northern group of holes (2-8) forms a rough circle that isolates the areas in the centre from the rest of the dune system. Only a small seaward section in the NE of the dune system is unaffected by the fragmentation which would be introduced by the course, with most of the site having at least two breaks in a land-sea transect. Though the severance is obviously not total, connectivity is seriously compromised. It is well established that isolated patches of habitats are less viable than large patches.

The main issue with the edge effect is the removal of cover (and its associated microclimate). Breaking up habitat will create edges and gaps. The width of the gap – be it path or fairway – is irrelevant, as animals that occupy the sand dune habitat and are part of its function are reluctant to move outside cover for the simple reason that their survival depends on that cover. As a result fragmented habitats become isolated in terms of biodiversity exchange.

Calculation of the additional 'edge' created within heath habitat by the construction of fairways, green and tees reveals that an additional 6.49 km of edge will be created (derived via GIS analysis of source datasets). Additional edge will lead to significant heathland habitat loss over and above the direct impact, as the patch will be 'invaded' by species from adjacent habitat, for example heath will be replaced with grasses at edges.

Mowing

NatureScot acknowledges that we have not objected to the establishment of golf fairways at Machrihanish Dunes by mowing only (i.e. no reprofiling or use of fertiliser). That response was based

on a view that mowing emulated grazing, a view we have since learned was incorrect. Mowing introduces a level of uniformity in the sward height that is seen only in very heavily grazed swards (which usually have a small area). Grazing not only varies sward height, but hoof imprints, urine and droppings add variation. Mowing constitutes a meaningful biodiversity loss relative to grazing. Mowing of heath will destroy it by removing the all-important canopy of heath and mosses.

Sand Dune Condition

When last surveyed as part of NatureScot's Site Condition Monitoring programme, the Coull Links section of Loch Fleet SSSI failed to meet 17 targets in respect of the sand dune feature. Failure to meet a target does not necessarily lead to Unfavourable status. Analysis of the report suggests that all but three are simply 'less than ideal'. The three failures leading to Unfavourable status cover only two issues: scrub invasion and the presence of other invasive species. Both of these two issues are the subject of an existing management agreement that NatureScot have with the owner of Coull Links which commenced in 2021.

The issue of scrub invasion is not straightforward. It could be argued that the development of scrub is the natural climax vegetation of a dune system, and there is evidence that European dune systems, including some in the UK, have had past wooded phases. We are keeping this situation under review, but in the meantime are complying with prevailing opinion on dune management and encouraging the removal of invasive native scrub.

Though the very dense growth of meadowsweet at the south end of the large dune slack is less than ideal, there is no evidence that this is anything other than a natural development, perhaps in response to the nutrient contribution of wintering wildfowl. In winter, when the slacks are most used by wildfowl, the vegetation has died back, and during our visit on 30 March 2023, most of the area of the large slack was open water.

Biodiversity Net Gain

A Biodiversity Net Gain paper forms part of the planning application. However it does not appear to follow the CIRIA/CIEEM Guidelines as the Executive Summary (Baker *et al.* 2019) states, "**BNG does not apply to statutory designated sites or irreplaceable habitats**".

Intervention

The management proposed by the applicant comprises a level of active intervention that we would not recommend, including active management of meadowsweet and a contingency for dune stabilisation in the event of erosion associated with Hole 17. We promote an ecosystem approach to habitat function and protection, whereby the natural function of processes is encouraged, protecting habitats and their structure and, in turn, protecting the species within these habitats. The proposed active intervention will add to the habitat disruption and damage caused by the construction of the course, which removes significant areas of heath and disrupts this and other natural habitats within this wider dune ecosystem, so that dune structure and function are severely compromised. This in turn will obstruct the ability of the dune system to adjust naturally to environmental change, because so much of the structure has been 'frozen' by the development.

Though intervention in dune systems is frequently undertaken in England and Wales by NatureScot's counterparts, it is almost invariably a response to an extreme situation not experienced at Coull Links: atmospheric nitrogen deposition exceeding critical levels. Even with this justification, the intervention

has been heavily criticised in the scientific press, and such interventionist dune management as practised in England and Wales cannot be used to justify comparable action in Sutherland.

Effects on notable species supported by SSSI sand dune habitat - Fonseca's seed fly (Botanophila fonsecai)

This rare fly is restricted globally to sand dune habitats, in proximity to Dornoch and Embo, and features on the Scottish Biodiversity List as requiring conservation action. The EIAR shows that Coul Links supports a population of the fly.

As so little is known about this fly, we cannot estimate the level of disturbance that would be considered tolerable. The disturbance resulting from the creation of fairways and greens and the subsequent long-term stabilisation of the dunes will very likely damage parts of the species' habitat, with additional impacts arising from any use of herbicides and insecticides.

We welcome the developer's intention to promote further research on this fly. The only mitigation proposed which is likely to benefit to Fonseca's seed fly is the retention of large areas supporting *Compositae* flowers (e.g. sow-thistle and black knapweed, etc.). Therefore, we recommend this is taken forward as mitigation should the proposal receive planning permission:

- Ensure large and important areas of *Compositae* flowers are retained throughout Coul Links for Fonseca's seed fly.

Previous surveys found the species in significantly greater numbers than the latest survey. This factor is likely to reduce the resilience of the population to such a proposal. Like most endemic species, this fly is intrinsically at risk of extinction.

Conclusion – sand dune habitats

Overall impact

Instead of compartmentalising the protected dune feature, it is useful to look at the direct and indirect impact on the dune system as a whole, as dune features do not exist in isolation but as an interactive, functional whole: the dune sectors of the system are dependent to varying extents on their functional context, so that the non-dune sectors are part of the wider dune ecosystem. This aspect has been largely overlooked in the EIAR, despite the EIA Guidance including it.

We calculated the direct impact of the current development on the sand dune protected feature using applicant data as the source, and a GIS approach to calculate area of NVC lost to golf course features (excluding water feature impact). We compare direct loss of protected dune figures for the previous application and current application in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Comparison of estimated direct loss of protected dune features for the two golf course proposals at Coul (all figures in hectares)

Habitat	Applicant loss Coul 1	SNH loss Coul 1	NatureScot loss Coul 2
Dune heath	4.47	8.5	5.58
Dune grassland (fixed dune)	2.51	3.28	2.15

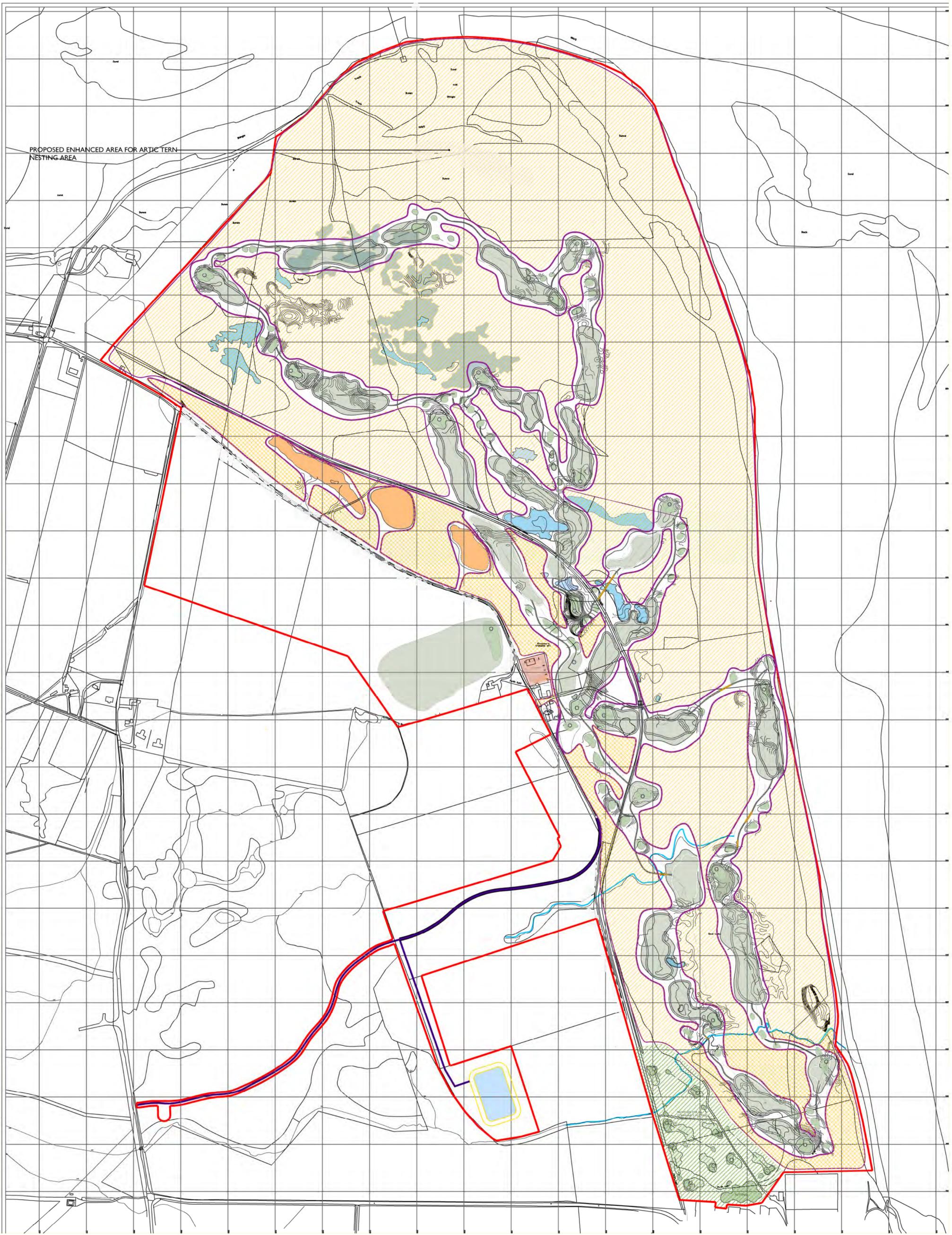
Semi-fixed dune (SD7)	0.74	0.91	0.85
Dune slack	0.27	2.20	1.1
Total	7.99	14.9	9.68

Note: Figures for Coull 1 (previous application) taken from S Angus Witness Statement for PLI. The figures for the NatureScot calculation for Coull 2 (current application) are conservative in respect of dune grassland and do not include grassland that is not SD (dune) vegetation.

Several provisos are made in respect of the above statistics. Firstly there are issues relating to the information supplied by the applicant in that the vegetation identified in some polygons is incomplete, e.g. U2a 40% (no information on remaining 60%). There are then qualifiers to our own interpretation of some situations. It could be argued, for example that the woodland areas converted to golf course (1.5ha) do not constitute habitat damage, but there is a current agreement to restore these areas to sand dune. On some existing golf courses, we have advised that some trimming of semi-rough by mowing improves species diversity, but this situation is not transferrable to a dune system that retains much of its natural structure and function. We have included habitat that will become water features as loss as there is no indication within the application that such water features will not be permanent.

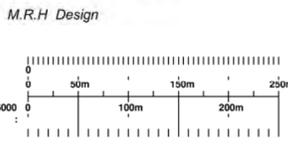
The adverse impact of this proposal will seriously impact the extent, structure and function of Coull Links, with onward adverse impacts on the characteristic species. We consider that the EIAR underplays the adverse impact of the development.

Though this application differs from the previous one by reducing the use of fertiliser, reducing reprofiling, and by not removing turf from fairways, it nevertheless constitutes a major adverse impact on the sand dune feature of this protected area in direct and indirect terms. Its indirect impact on structure and function are on a similar scale to the previous development, other than in respect of nutrient input.



PROPOSED ENHANCED AREA FOR ARTIC TERN NESTING AREA

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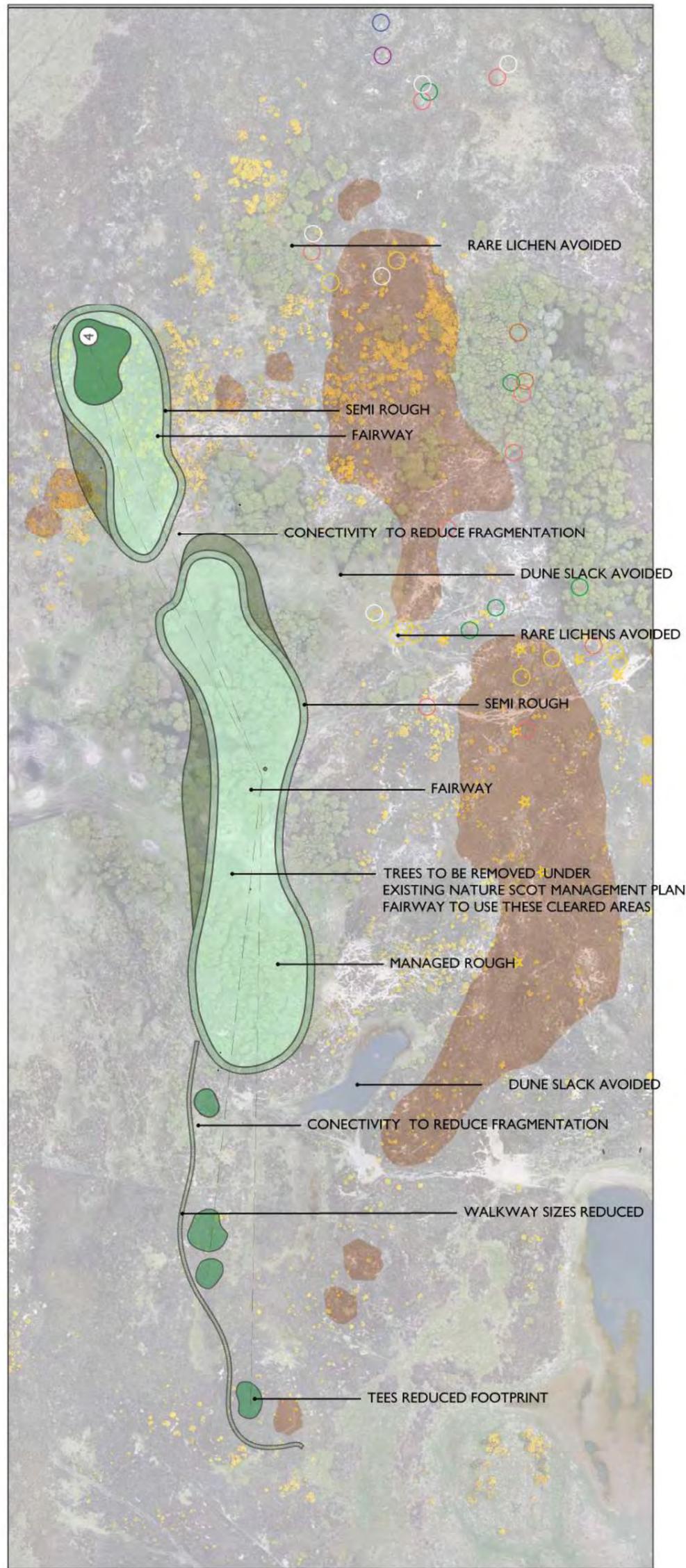
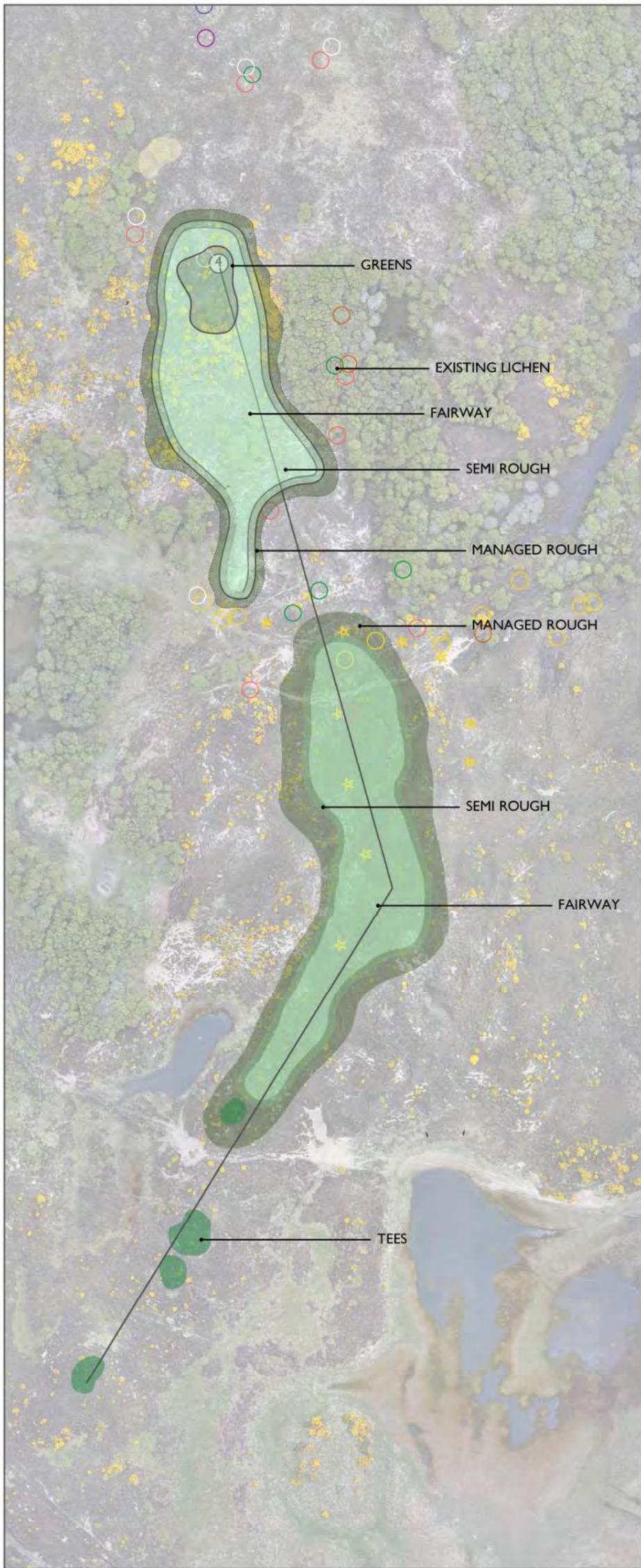


M.R.H Design

- AREA UN TOUCHED WITHIN SSSI NO DEVELOPMENT ZONE
- AREA UN TOUCHED OUTWITH SSSI NO DEVELOPMENT ZONE
- 6m CONSTRUCTION CORRIDOR
- PROPOSED BORROW PITS OUTWITH SSSI
- CONSTRUCTION COMPOUND FUTURE CAR PARK



 Creating prospects. Protecting places.	Drawing title: 01 SITE ESTABLISHMENT ZONE 22-11-MRH-106	Drawing date: 22-11-2022 Drawing scale: 1:5000	Revision history table with columns: No., Description, Date, By, Check, Appr.
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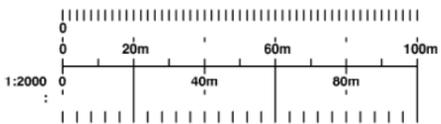
01 ORIGINAL HOLE FOUR 1:1000

02 REVISED HOLE FOUR 1:1000

PREVIOUS COURSE OVERLAY

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<p>Creating prospects. Protecting places.</p>	<p>Drawing title: CHIEF LINKS FOR COURSE HOLE 4 COMPARISONS</p>	<p>Drawn by: MRH</p> <p>Checked by:</p> <p>Date: 01.03.2022</p> <p>Scale: 1:1000 @ 1/3</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Revision</th> <th>Date</th> <th>DR</th> <th>CR</th> <th>AP</th> <th>Date</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Revision	Date	DR	CR	AP	Date						
	Revision	Date	DR	CR	AP	Date									
<p>NESS planning</p> <p>PLANNING CONSULTANT</p>	<p>Project Number: 2022-11</p> <p>Drawing Number: 22-11 -MRH-401</p>	<p>The Studio 9 Heights of Woodside Westhill Inverness IV2 5TH</p> <p>Tel/Fax: 01463 794410 Mobile: 07760 195141 Email: info@mrhdesign.co.uk Web: www.mrhdesign.co.uk</p>	<p>This drawing, design and information is subject to copyright of the MRH design and must not be reproduced in any way without written permission of the company.</p> <p>It is the contractor's responsibility to ascertain the location of all services prior to the commencement of work. Existing services shall be the responsibility of the contractor; any discrepancies shall be reported and clarified at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p>DO NOT SCALE, IF IN DOUBT PLEASE ASK</p> <p>All setting out must be checked on site prior to commencement. Any discrepancy must be reported to client</p>												

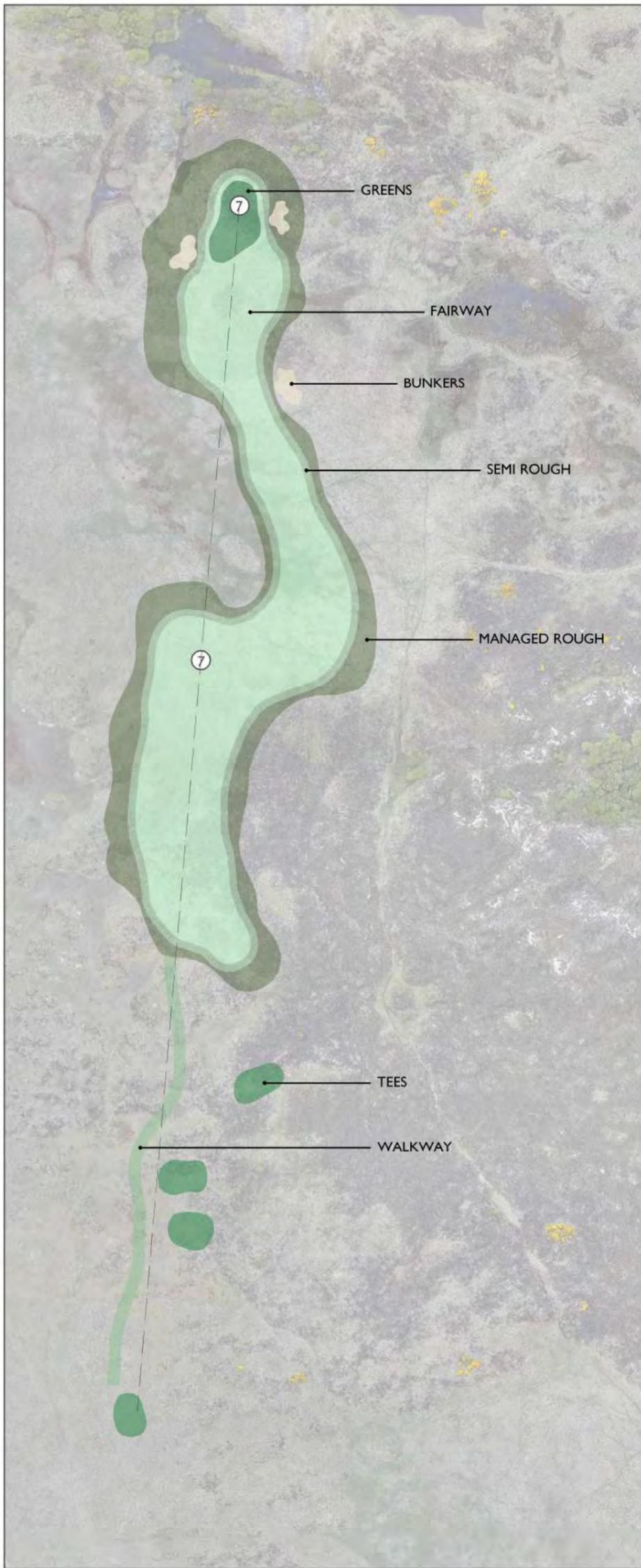


FIG 01
ORIGINAL HOLE SEVEN 1:1000

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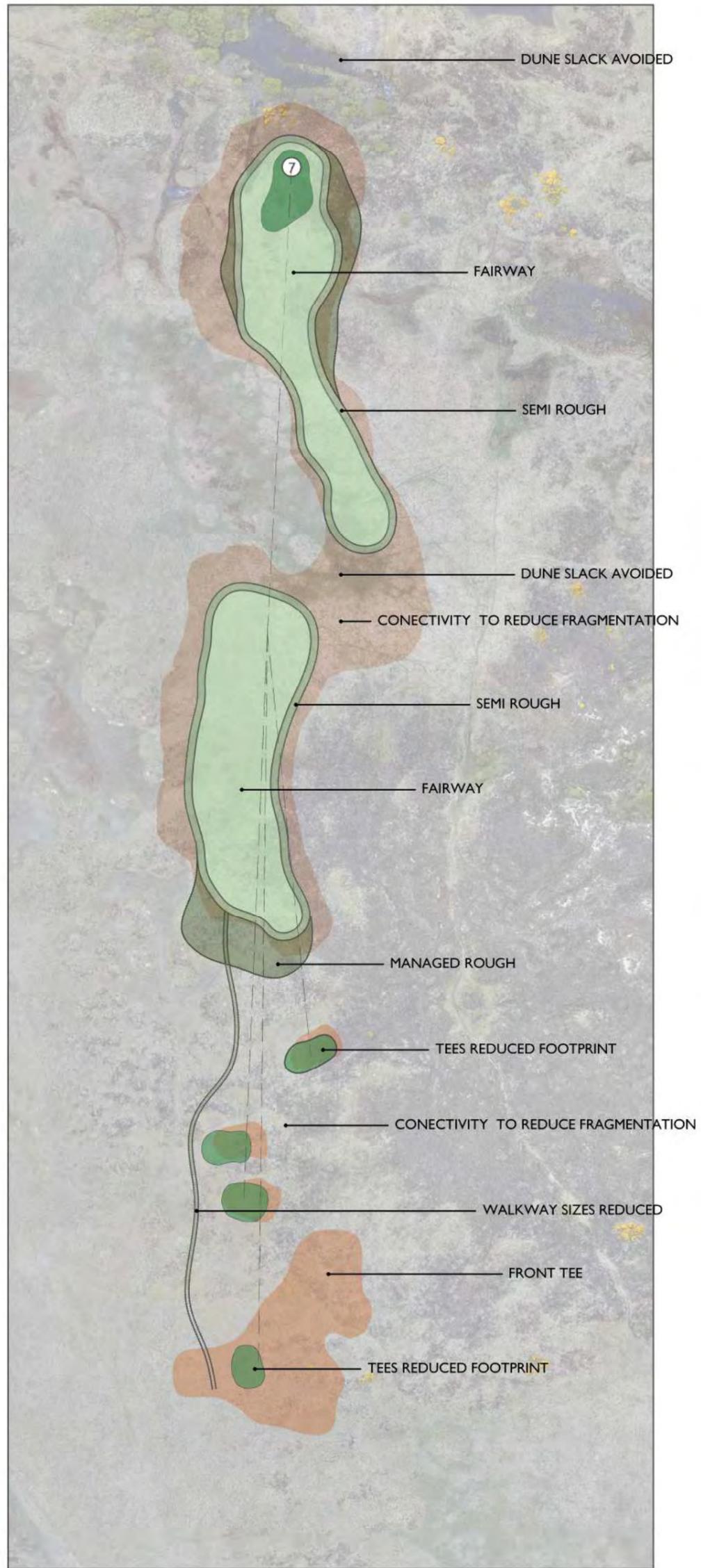
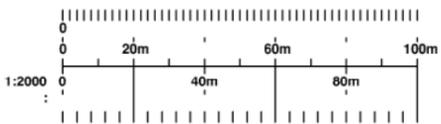
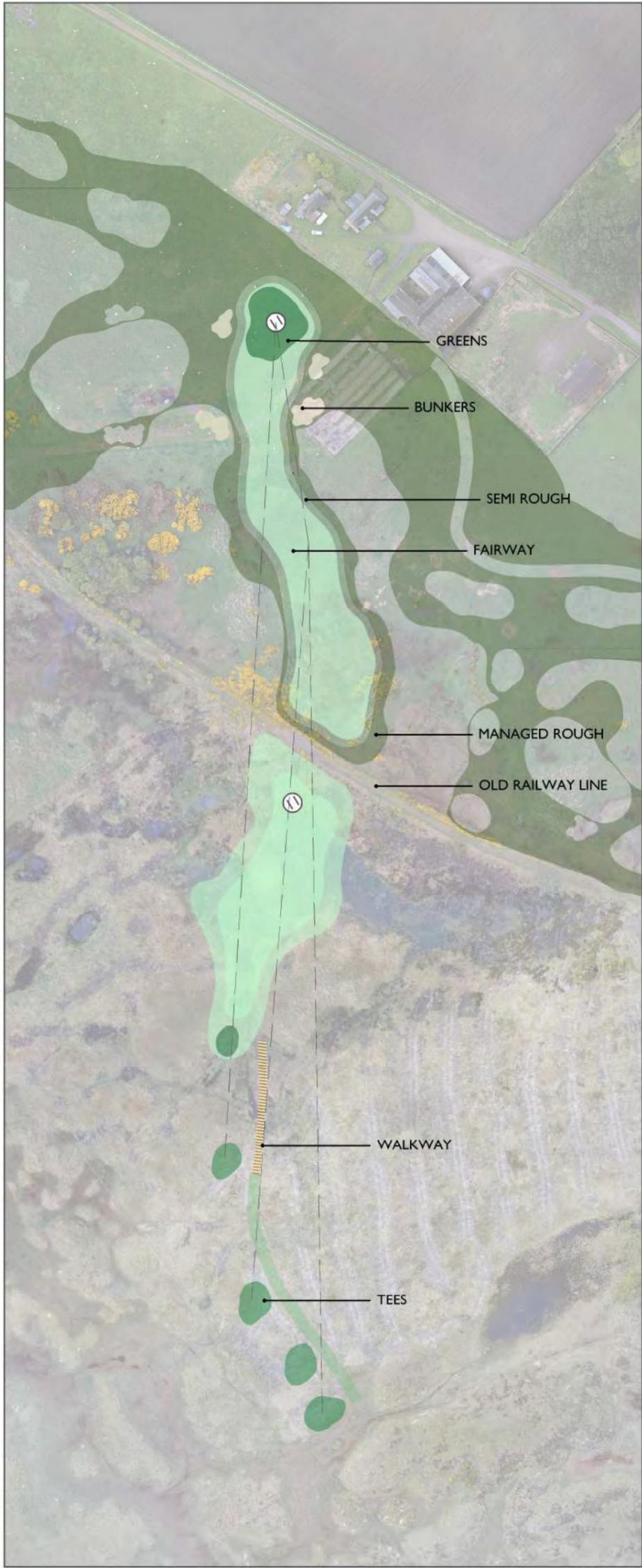
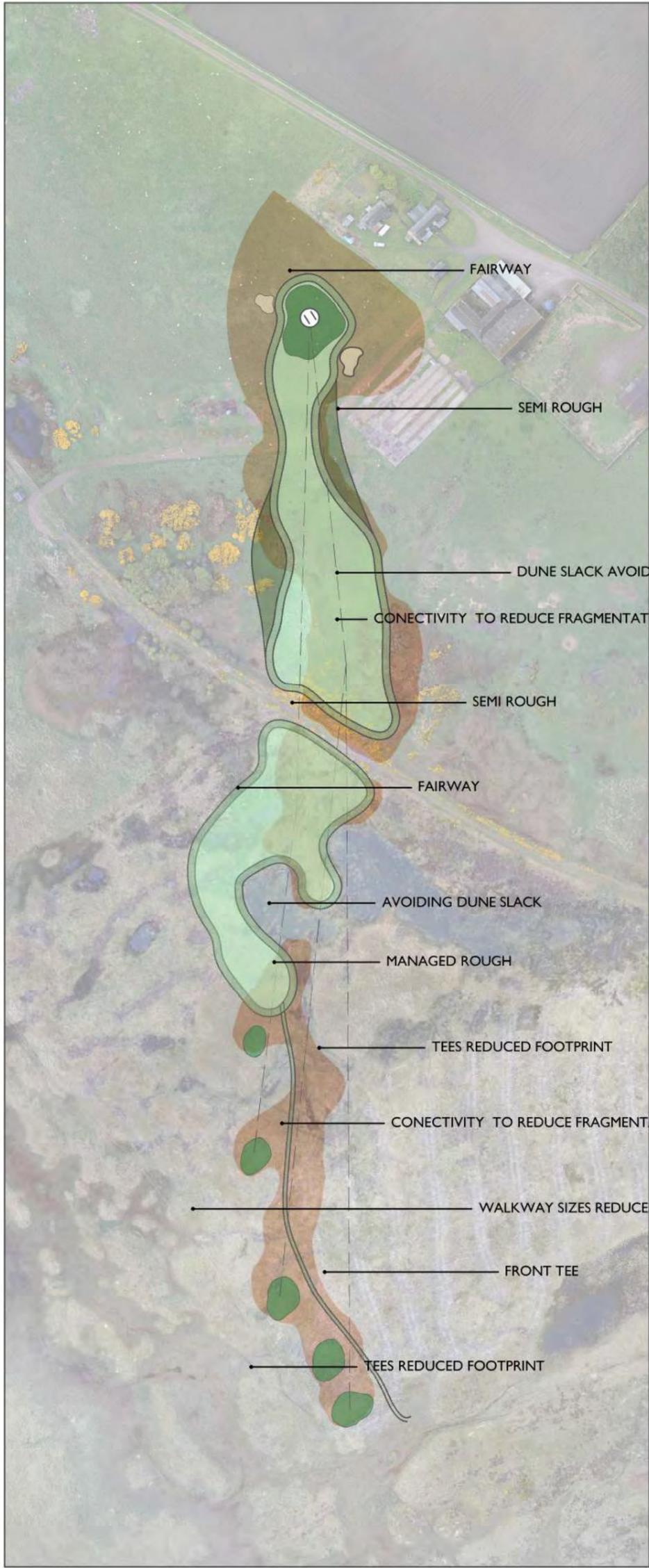


FIG 02
REVISED HOLE SEVEN 1:1000

<p>Creating prospects. Protecting places.</p>	<p>Drawing title: CHIEF LINKS 15th Course HOLE 7 COMPARISONS</p>	<p>Drawn by: MRH</p>	<p>Revision: Date:</p>
	<p>Checked by:</p>	<p>Date: 01.03.2022</p>	<p>Scale: 1:1000 - 1/1</p>
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01 ORIGINAL HOLE SEVEN 1:1000

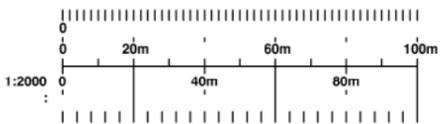


02 REVISED HOLE SEVEN 1:1000

 PREVIOUS COURSE OVERLAY

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 Creating prospects. Protecting places.	Drawing title: CHM Link 1528 Council HOLE 11 COMPARISON	Drawn by: MRH Checked by: Date: 01.03.2022 Scale: 1:1000 @ 1:1	Revision / Details <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Rev</th> <th>Chg</th> <th>By</th> <th>Date</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Rev	Chg	By	Date				
	Rev	Chg	By	Date							
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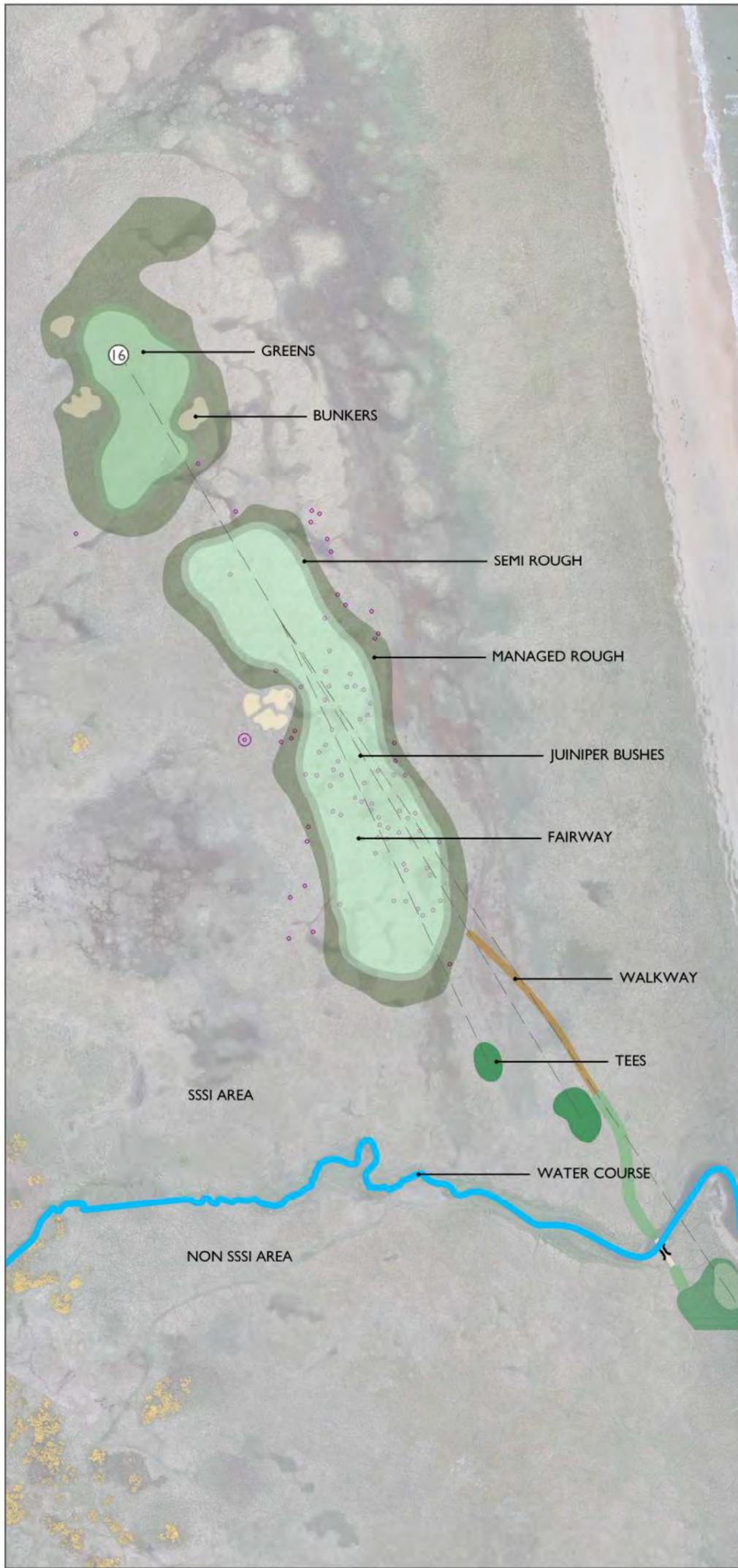


FIG 01
ORIGINAL HOLE SIXTEEN 1:1000

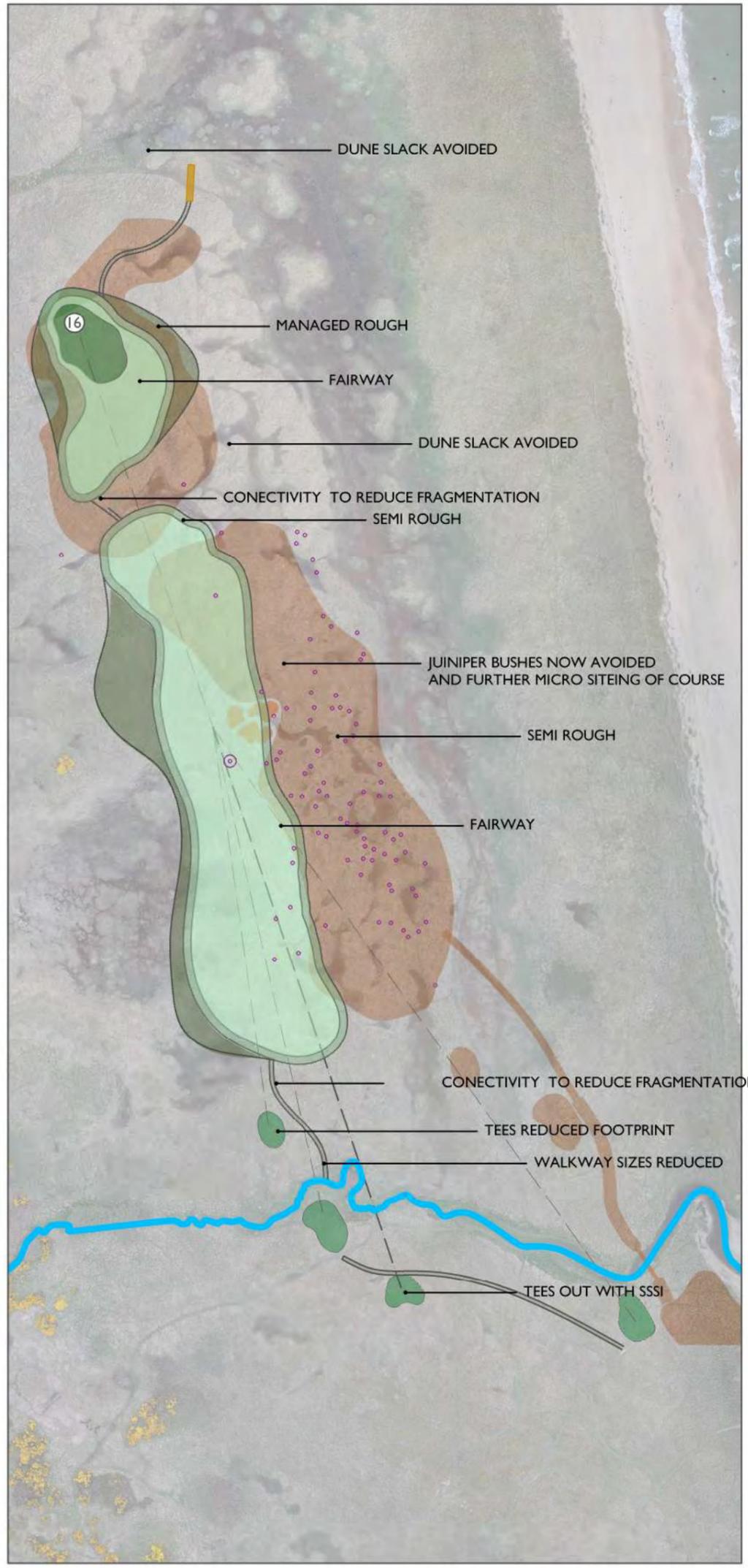


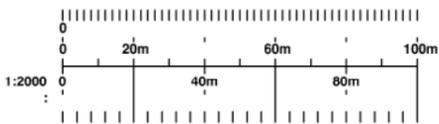
FIG 02
REVISED HOLE SIXTEEN 1:1000

 PREVIOUS COURSE OVERLAY

GENERAL NOTES:
ORIGINAL HOLE LAYOUTS TO BE FULLY STRIPPED OF VEGETATION
AREA :
REVISED HOLE LAYOUT TO ONLY STRIP TEES & GREENS LOCATION ONLY - MAJOR REDUCTION IN HABITAT LOSS AREA:

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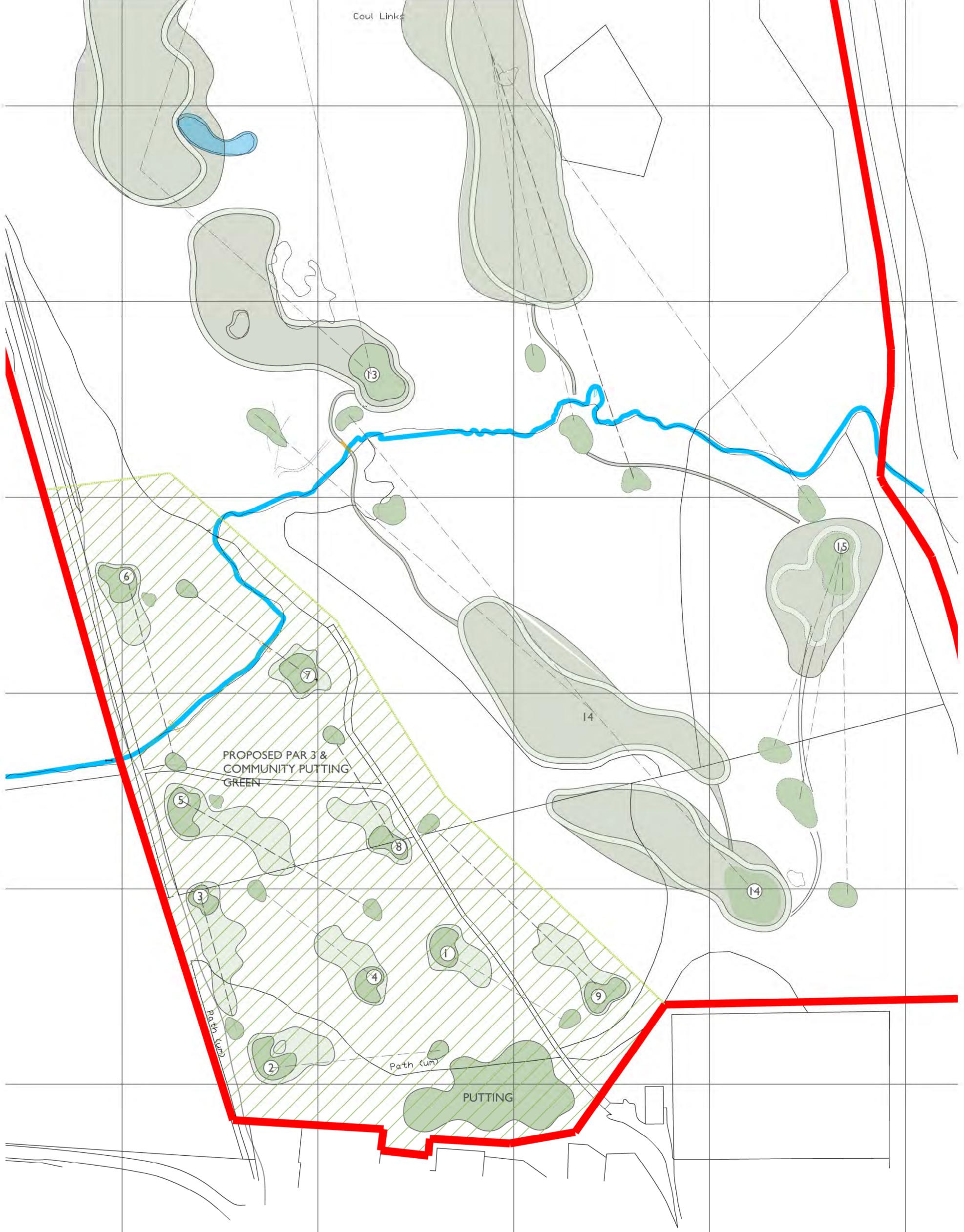
M.R.H Design



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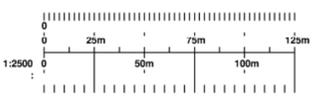
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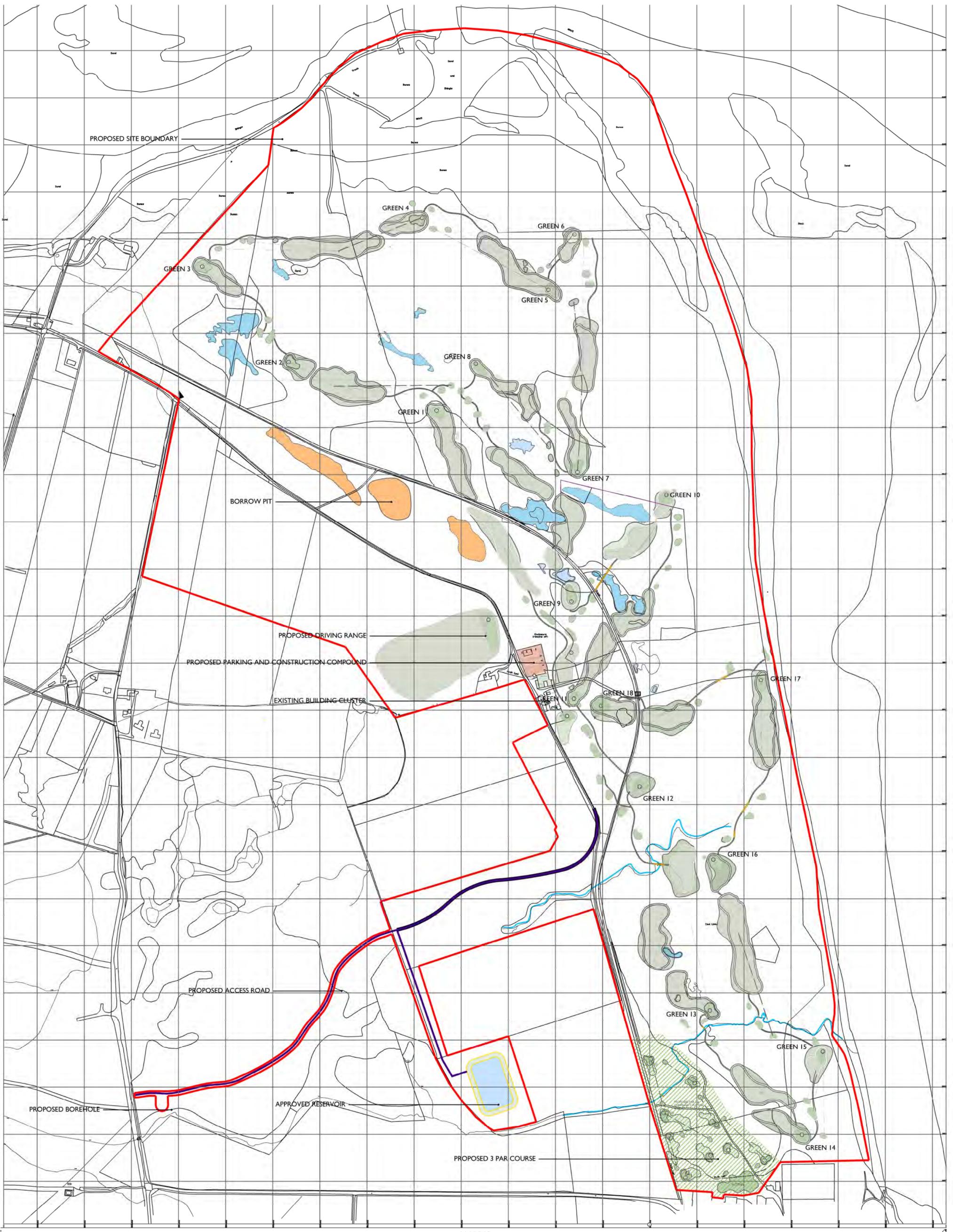


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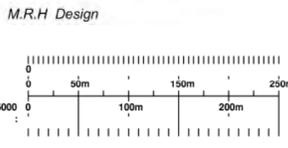


		Drawing title: PROPOSED PAR 3 & COMMUNITY PUTTING GREEN		Drawing number: 22-11-MRH-105	
Creating prospects. Protecting places.		Drawing date: 2022-11		Drawing number: 22-11-MRH-105	
NESS planning PLANNING CONSULTANT		PLANNING ISSUE		Drawing number: 22-11-MRH-105	
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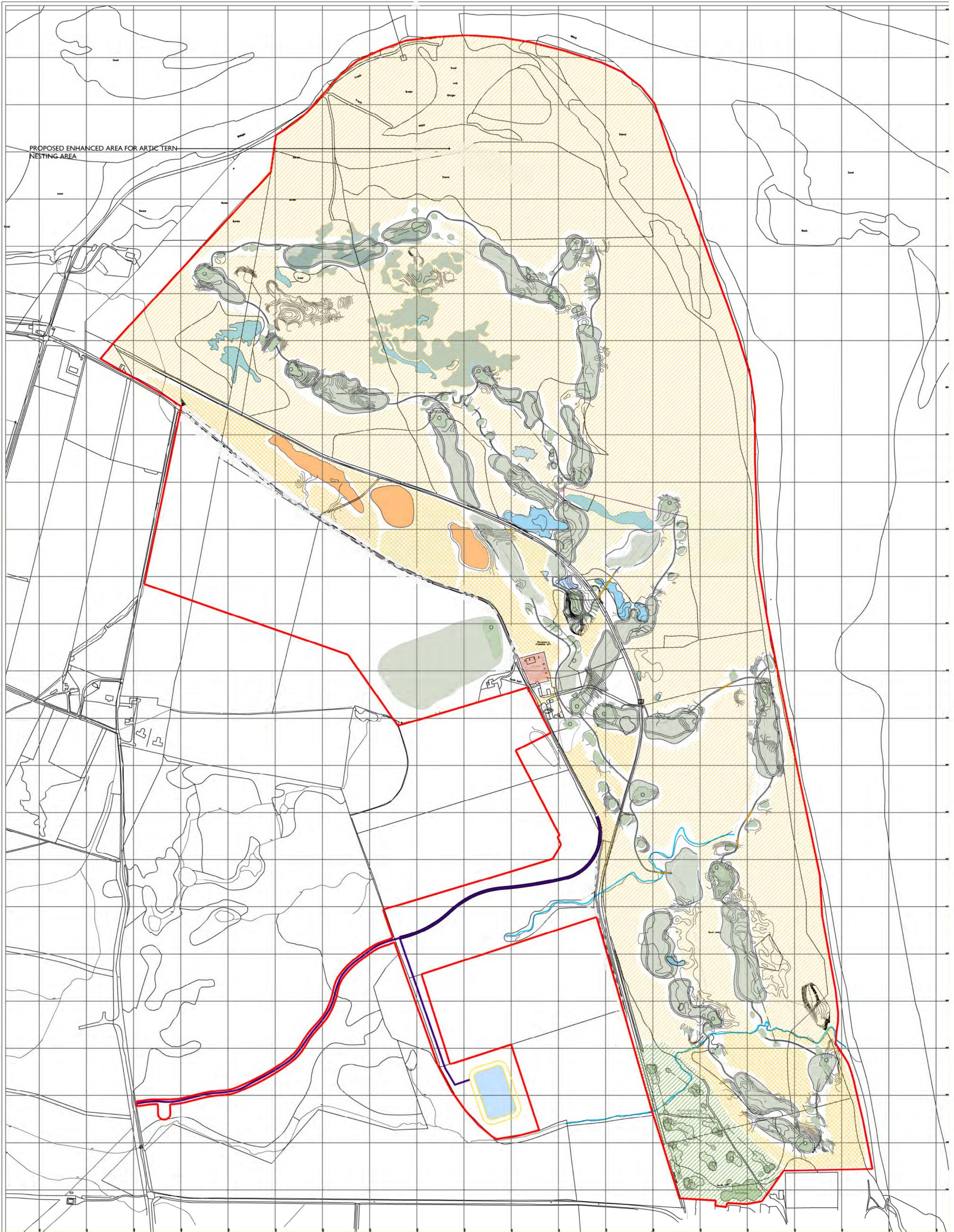
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-  BRIDGES AND WALKWAYS
-  PROPOSED GREENS
-  PROPOSED FAIRWAYS
-  PROPOSED TEES



 <p>Communities for Coul Creating prospects. Protecting places.</p>	<p>Drawing title: COURSE LAYOUT PROPOSED LAYOUT</p>	<p>Revision history</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <th>Revision</th> <th>Description</th> </tr> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>Issue for comment</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>Issue for comment</td> </tr> </table>	Revision	Description	1	Issue for comment	2	Issue for comment
Revision	Description							
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2	Issue for comment							
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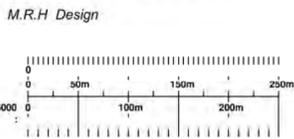
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PROPOSED ENHANCED AREA FOR ARTIC TERN NESTING AREA

02
SITE BOUNDARY PLAN
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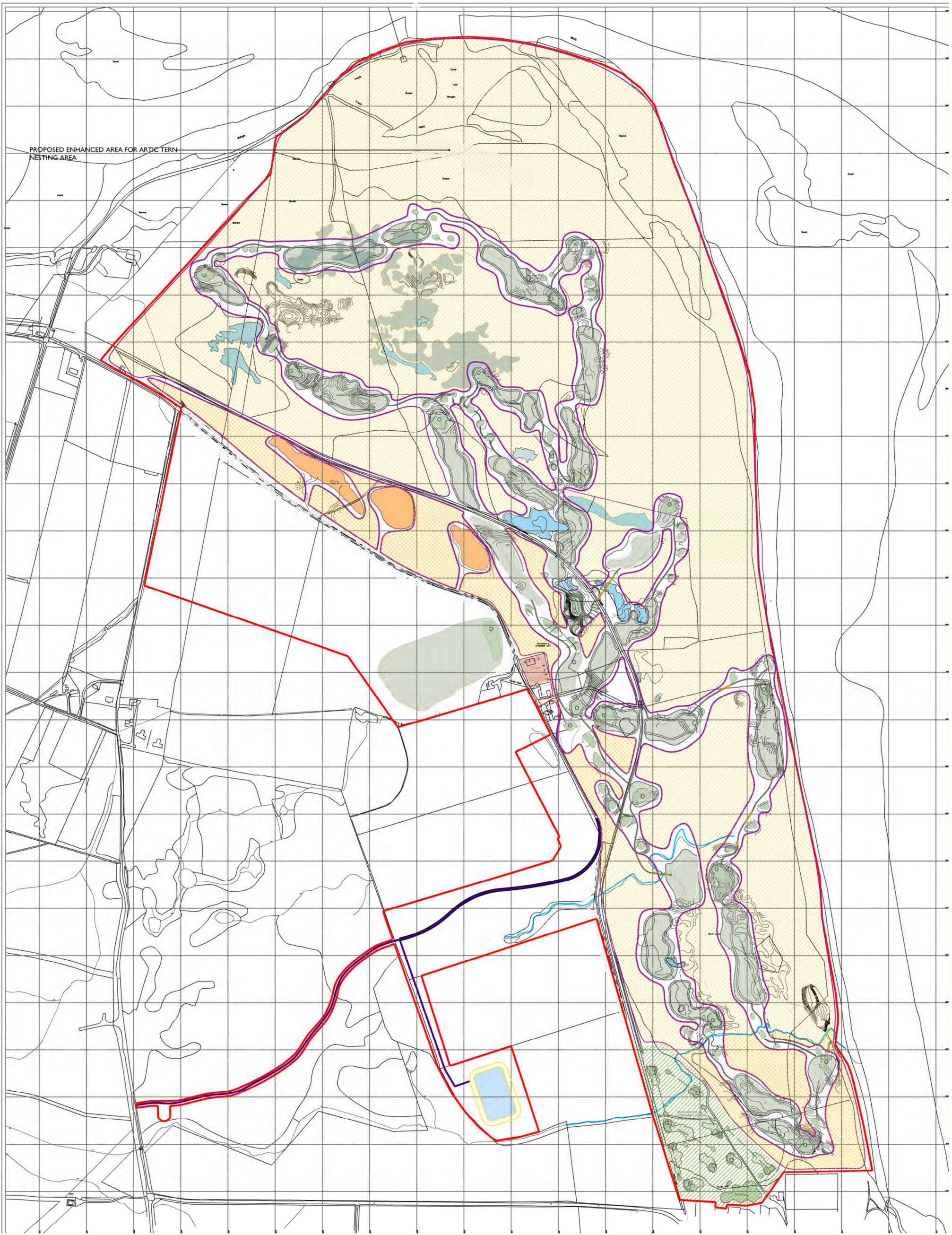
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- AREA UN TOUCHED WITHIN SSSI
- PROPOSED BORROW PITS OUTWITH SSSI
- AREAS OF INVASIVE GORSE TO BE REMOVED
- AREA OF ADDITIONAL PLANTING LOW LEVEL PLANTING
- AREA UN TOUCHED OUTWITH SSSI



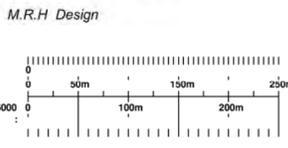
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Revision	Description					
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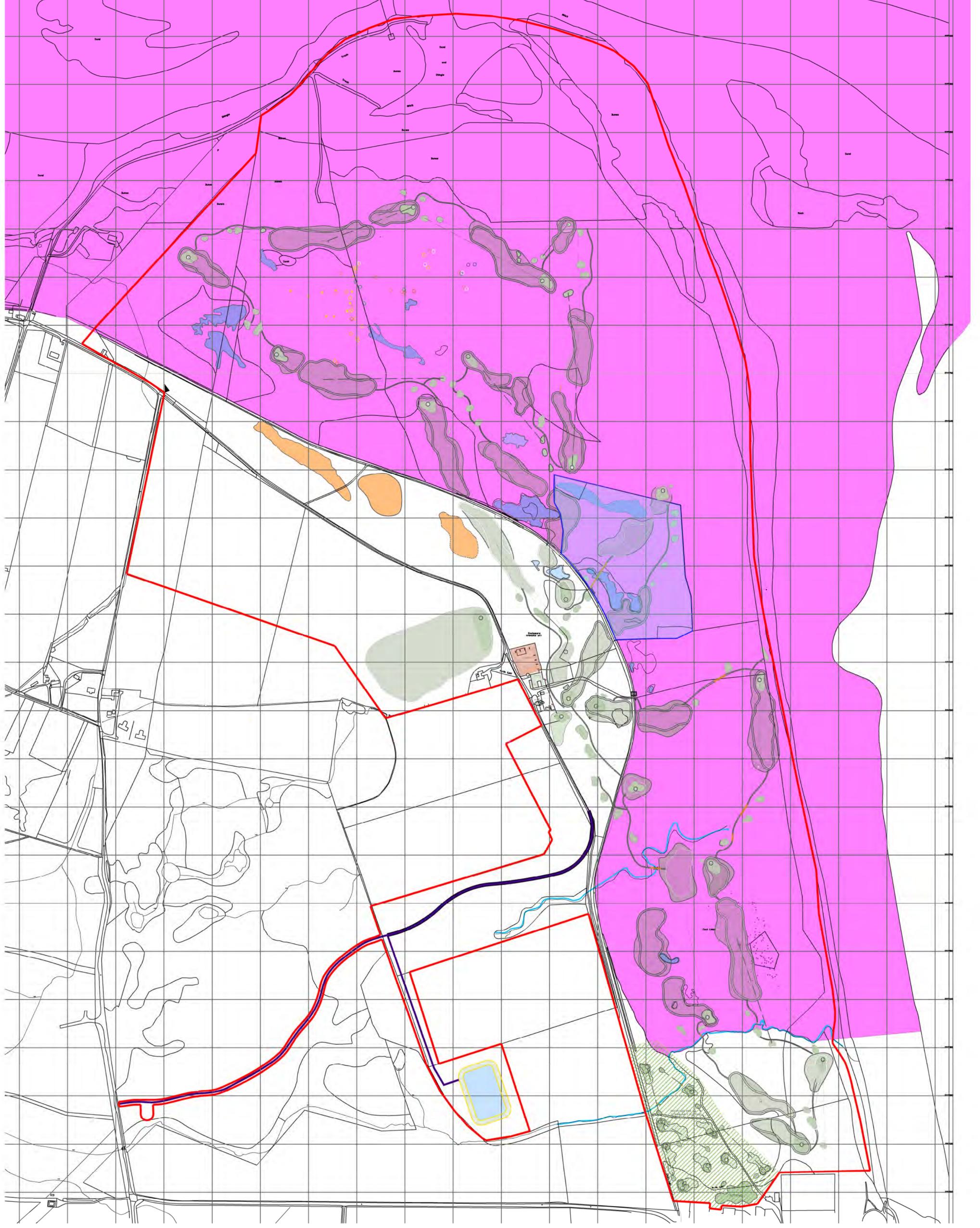


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- AREA UN TOUCHED WITHIN SSSI NO DEVELOPMENT ZONE
- AREA UN TOUCHED OUTWITH SSSI NO DEVELOPMENT ZONE
- 6m CONSTRUCTION CORRIDOR
- PROPOSED BORROW PITS OUTWITH SSSI
- CONSTRUCTION COMPOUND FUTURE CAR PARK



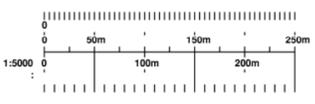
 Creating prospects. Protecting places.	Drawing title: 01 SITE ESTABLISHMENT ZONE 22-11-MRH-106	Drawing date: 22-11-2022 Drawing scale: 1:5000	Revision history table with columns: No., Description, Date, By, Check, Appr.
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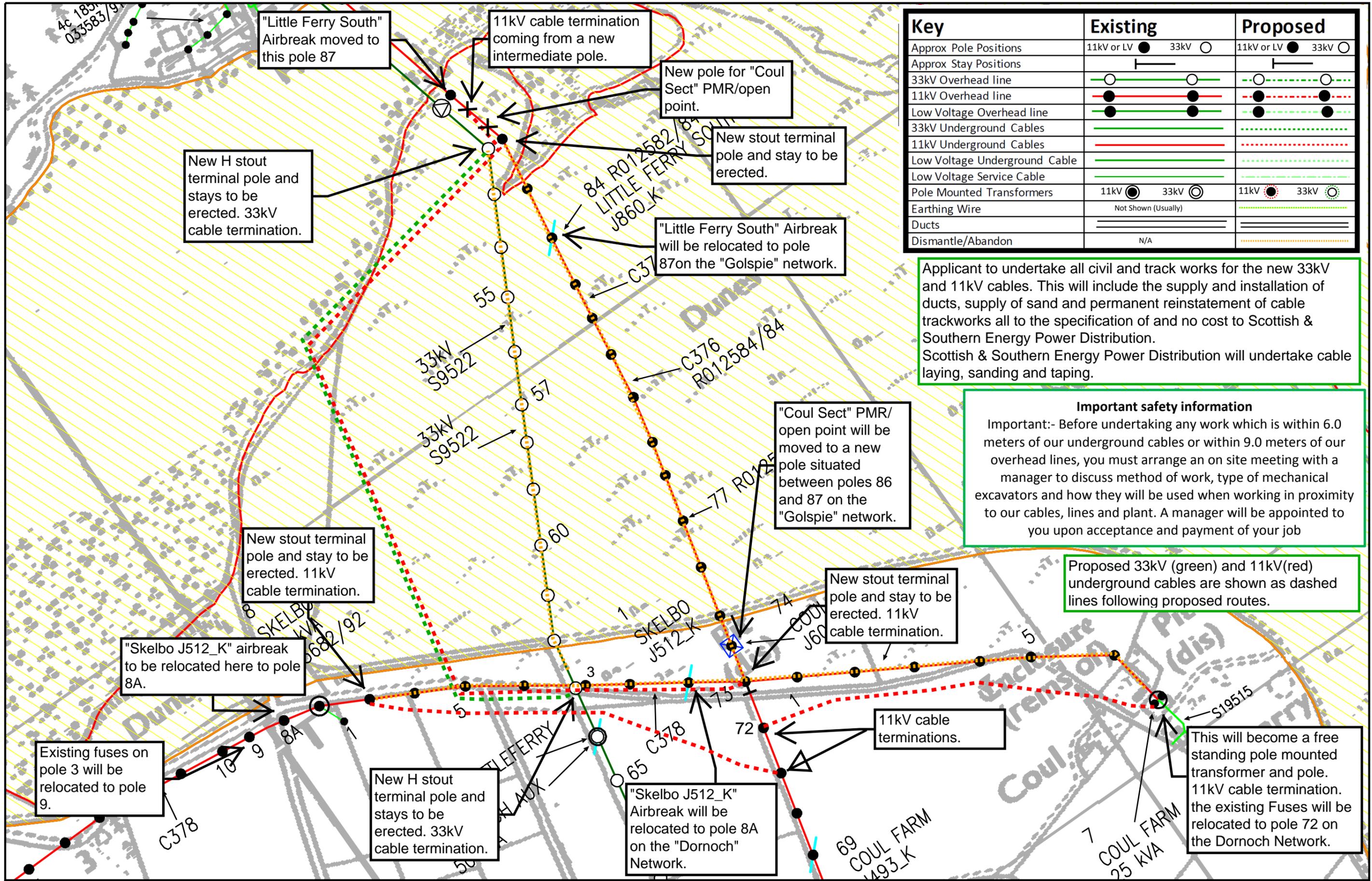
- SSSI ZONE
- 5.8 H ENVIRONMENTAL REGENERATION



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Key	Existing	Proposed
Approx Pole Positions	11kV or LV ● 33kV ○	11kV or LV ● 33kV ○
Approx Stay Positions	—	—
33kV Overhead line	—○—○—	—○—○—
11kV Overhead line	—●—●—	—●—●—
Low Voltage Overhead line	—●—●—	—●—●—
33kV Underground Cables	—	—
11kV Underground Cables	—	—
Low Voltage Underground Cable	—	—
Low Voltage Service Cable	—	—
Pole Mounted Transformers	11kV ● 33kV ○	11kV ● 33kV ○
Earthing Wire	Not Shown (Usually)	—
Ducts	—	—
Dismantle/Abandon	N/A	—

Applicant to undertake all civil and track works for the new 33kV and 11kV cables. This will include the supply and installation of ducts, supply of sand and permanent reinstatement of cable trackworks all to the specification of and no cost to Scottish & Southern Energy Power Distribution. Scottish & Southern Energy Power Distribution will undertake cable laying, sanding and taping.

Important safety information
 Important:- Before undertaking any work which is within 6.0 meters of our underground cables or within 9.0 meters of our overhead lines, you must arrange an on site meeting with a manager to discuss method of work, type of mechanical excavators and how they will be used when working in proximity to our cables, lines and plant. A manager will be appointed to you upon acceptance and payment of your job

Proposed 33kV (green) and 11kV(red) underground cables are shown as dashed lines following proposed routes.

This will become a free standing pole mounted transformer and pole. 11kV cable termination. the existing Fuses will be relocated to pole 72 on the Dornoch Network.

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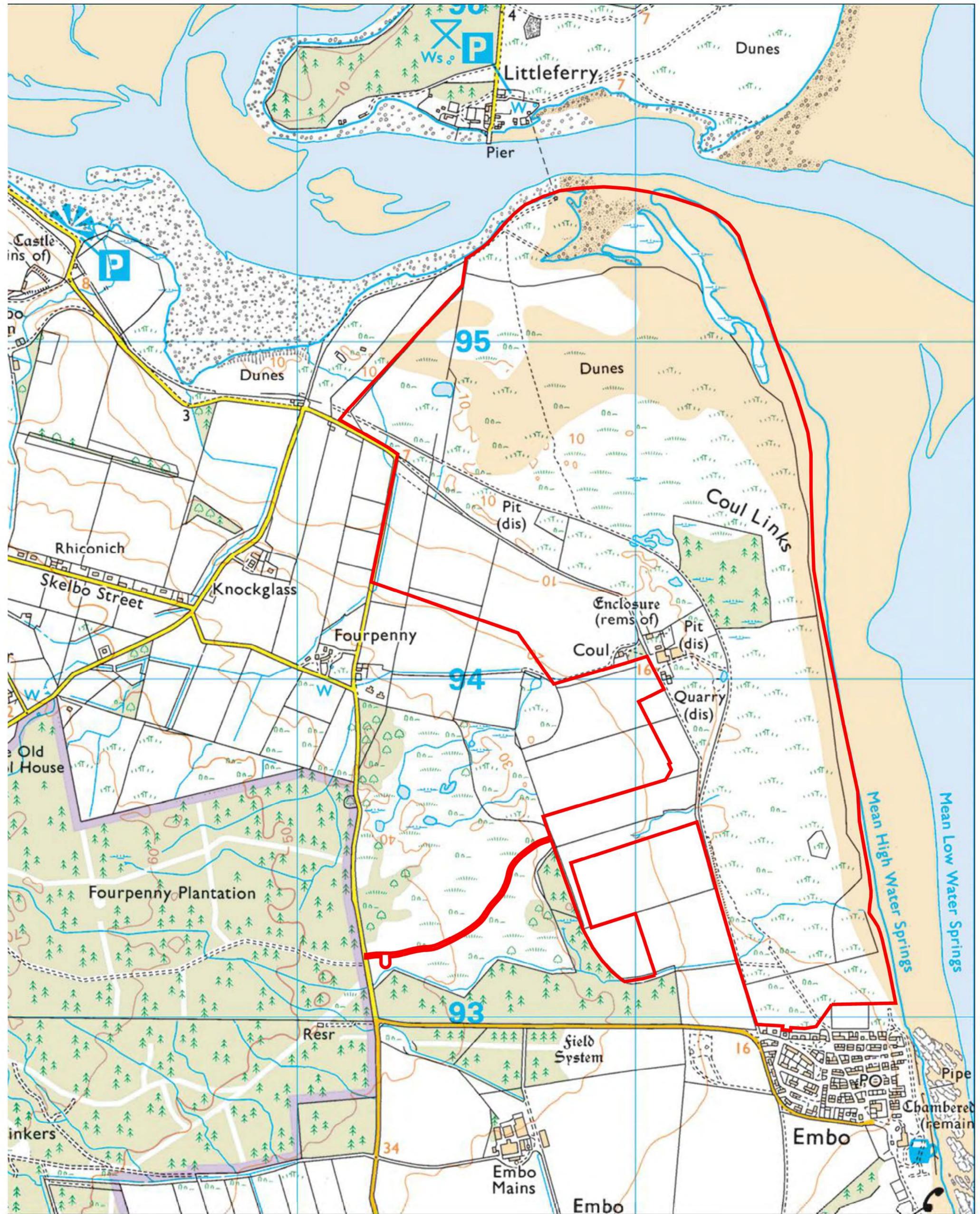
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 nh8195, nh7993
 nh7995, nh8193

Date: 30/08/2016
 Scale: 1:5000



Title: Bandon Dunes Golf Resort
 >>> EGG628/1 Drawing Date 31/08/2016





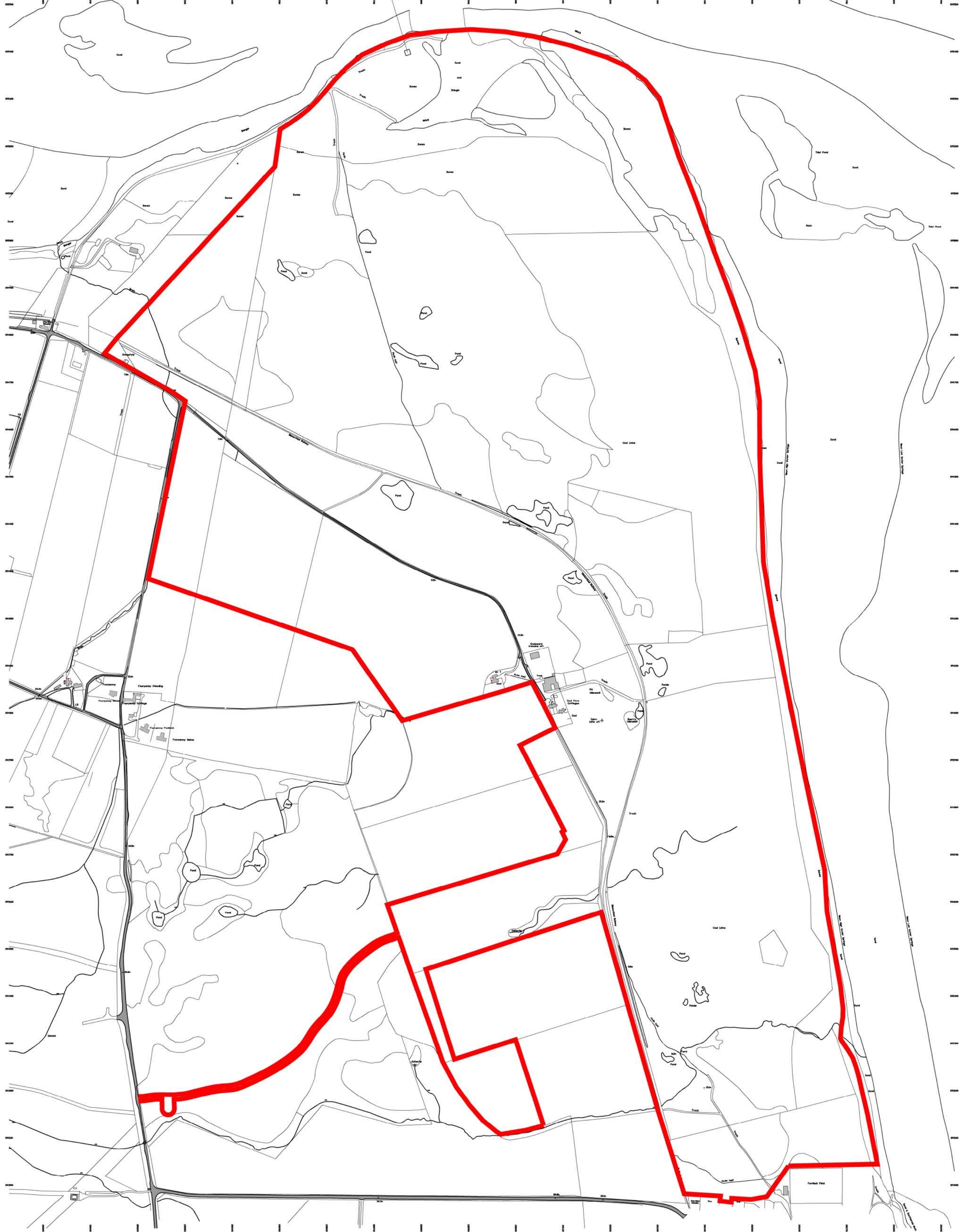
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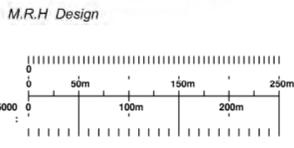


<p>Creating prospects. Protecting places.</p>	<p>Drawing title: 01 Site Location Plan</p>	<p>Revision history</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Rev</th> <th>Description</th> <th>Date</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>Issue for comment</td> <td>22-11-2022</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Rev	Description	Date	1	Issue for comment	22-11-2022
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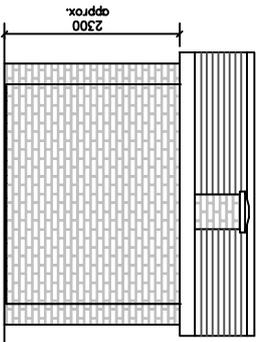


M.R.H Design

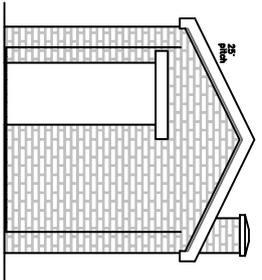


<p>Creating prospects. Protecting places.</p>		<p>Drawing title: 01 - Site Boundary Plan</p>									
<p>NESS planning PLANNING CONSULTANT</p>		<p>PLANNING ISSUE</p>									
<p>MRH design ARCHITECTURAL TECHNOLOGY</p>		<p>The Studio 9 Heights of Woodside Weswell Inverness IV2 5TH</p>									
<p>Tel/Fax: 01463 794410 Mobile: 07760 195141 Email: info@mrhdesign.co.uk Web: www.mrhdesign.co.uk</p>		<p>Revision history</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Rev</th> <th>Description</th> <th>Date</th> <th>By</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>Issue for Planning</td> <td>2022-11</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Rev	Description	Date	By	1	Issue for Planning	2022-11	
Rev	Description	Date	By								
1	Issue for Planning	2022-11									
<p>All selling out must be checked on site prior to commencement. Any discrepancy must be reported to client.</p>		<p>DO NOT SCALE, IF IN DOUBT PLEASE ASK</p>									

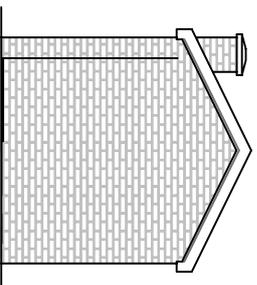
EXISTING RAILWAY HUT



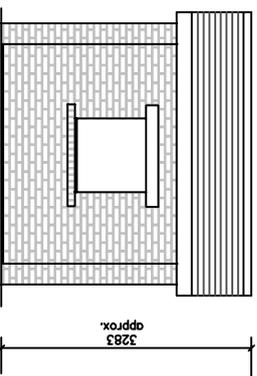
02 EAST ELEVATION 1:100



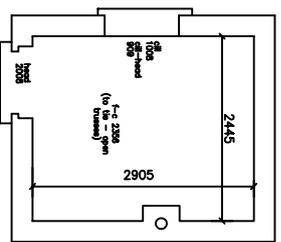
03 SOUTH ELEVATION 1:100



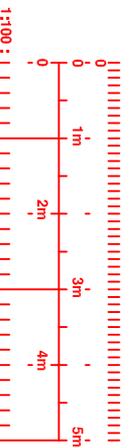
04 NORTH ELEVATION 1:100



05 WEST ELEVATION 1:100



01 EXISTING GROUND FLOOR PLAN 1:100



Drawing details

Revision history



Drawing title:
Coal Line and Course
EXISTING RAILWAY HUT

Drawn by: MRH
Checked by: DMK, 01.02.2022
Scale: 1:100 @ A3

Revision	Comments

NESS planning
PLANNING CONSULTANT

PLANNING ISSUE

Drawing Status

Name

Project Number: 2022-11

Drawing number: 22-11 -MRH-202

MRH design
ARCHITECTURAL TECHNOLOGY

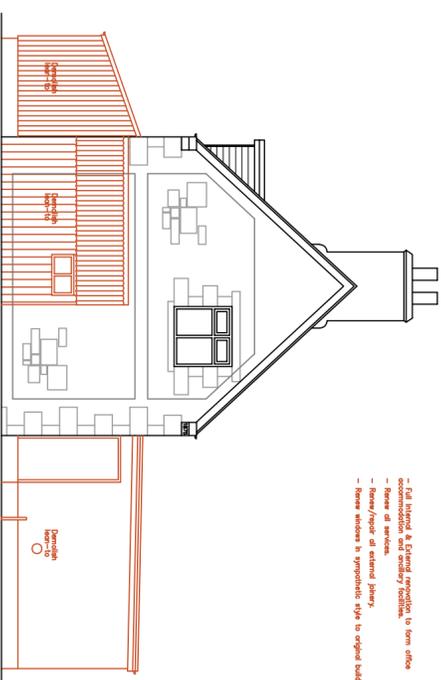
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9 Heights of Woodside
Westhill
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Tel/Fax: 01463 794410
Mobile: 07746 195141
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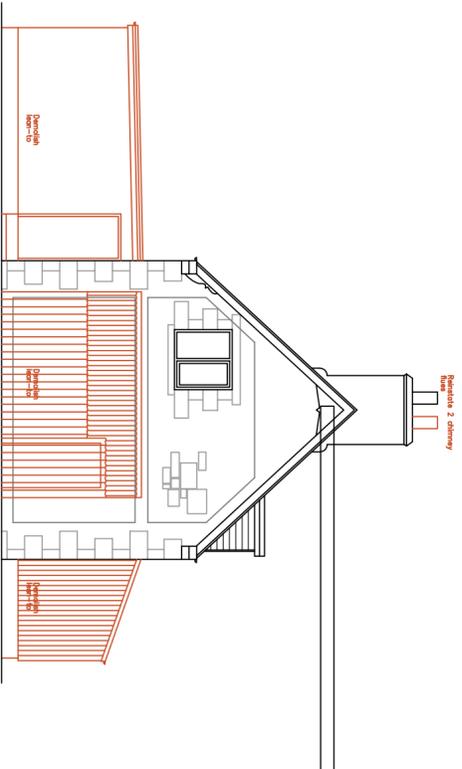


03 NORTH ELEVATION
1:100

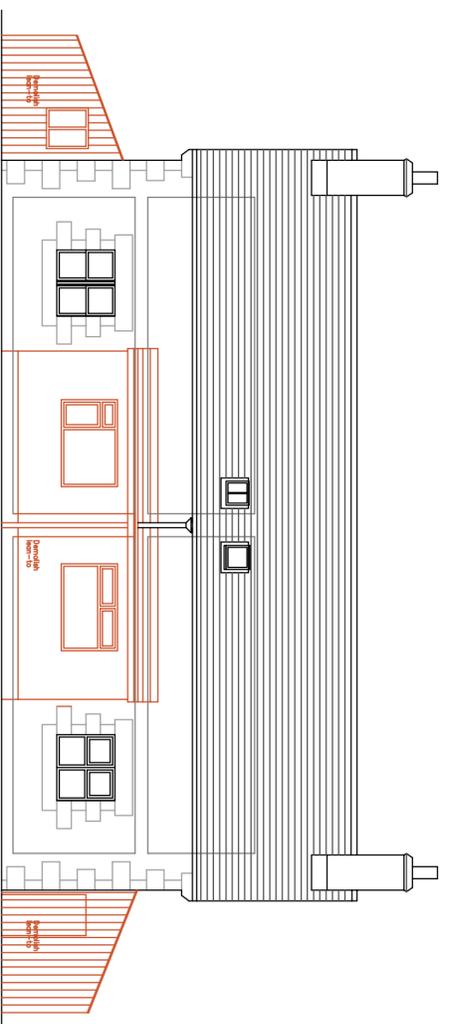


04 WEST ELEVATION
1:100

- Full Internal & External remediation to form office accommodation and existing facilities.
- Review of services.
- Renew/replace all external glazing.
- Renew windows to sympathetic style to original building.



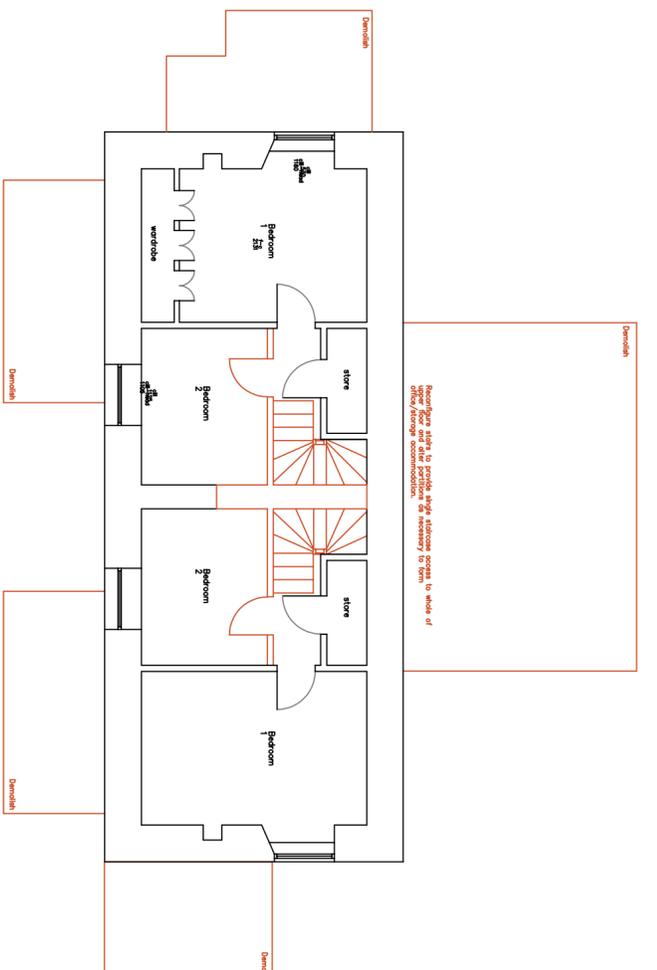
05 EAST ELEVATION
1:100



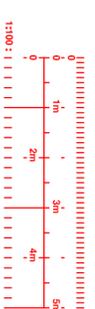
06 SOUTH ELEVATION
1:100



01 GROUND FLOOR PLAN
1:100



02 FIRST FLOOR PLAN
1:100



Communities for Coal
 Charitable Incorporated Organisation
 Registered Office: 10, 11 & 12, The Old Mill, 10000 St. Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex TN38 9JL

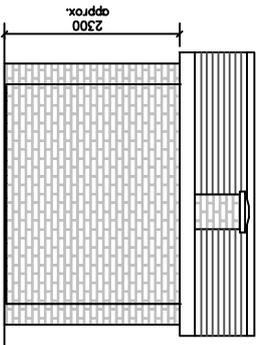
MRH design
 ARCHITECTURAL TECHNOLOGY

NESS planning
 PLANNING CONSULTANT

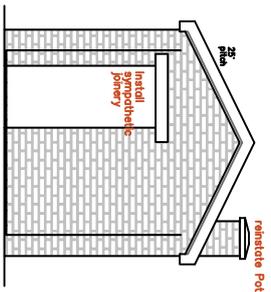
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 Project Number: **2022-11**
 Drawing Number: **22-11 -MRH-300**

Date: **2022-11**
 Scale: **1:100**

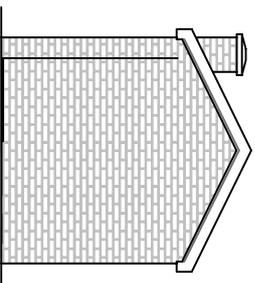
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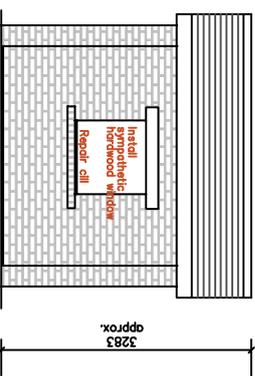
02 EAST ELEVATION 1:100



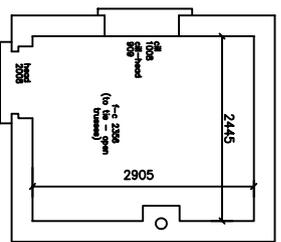
03 SOUTH ELEVATION 1:100



04 NORTH ELEVATION 1:100

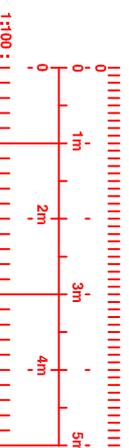


05 WEST ELEVATION 1:100



- Renovate internally/externally.
- Install new joinery.
- Incorporate display material for interpretation.

01 EXISTING GROUND FLOOR PLAN 1:100



Communities For Coal
Creating prospects. Protecting places.

Drinking Water
Coal Lifestyle and Course
Proposed BAKELANDY HUT
19/01/2022

Drawn by: MHN
Checked by: DMK, 01/02/2022
Scale: 1:100 @ A3

Revision:

Rev	Chg	By	Date

Revision history

Project Number: **2022-11**

Drawing number: **22-11 -MRH-302**

NESS planning
PLANNING CONSULTANT

MRH design
ARCHITECTURAL TECHNOLOGY

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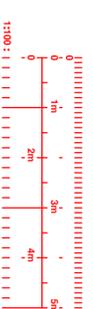
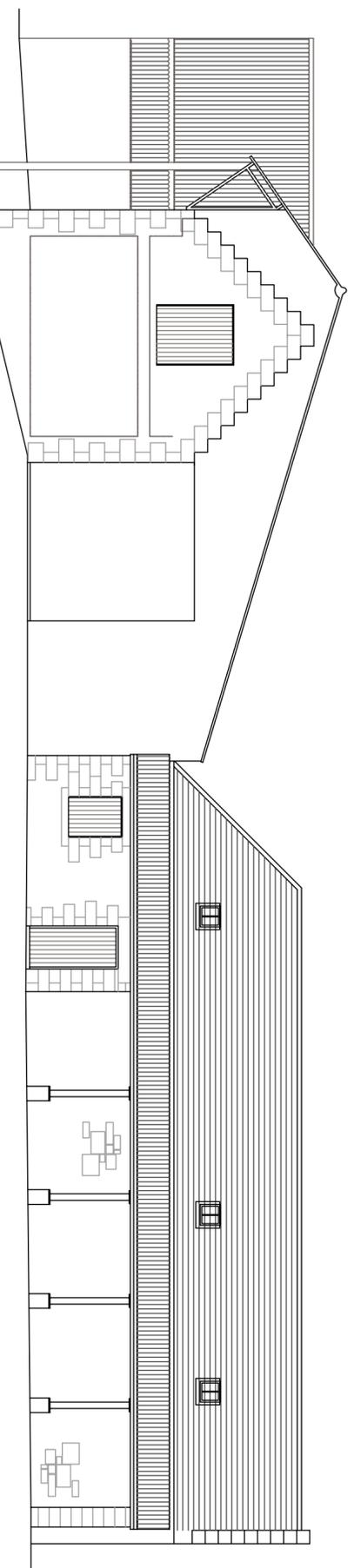
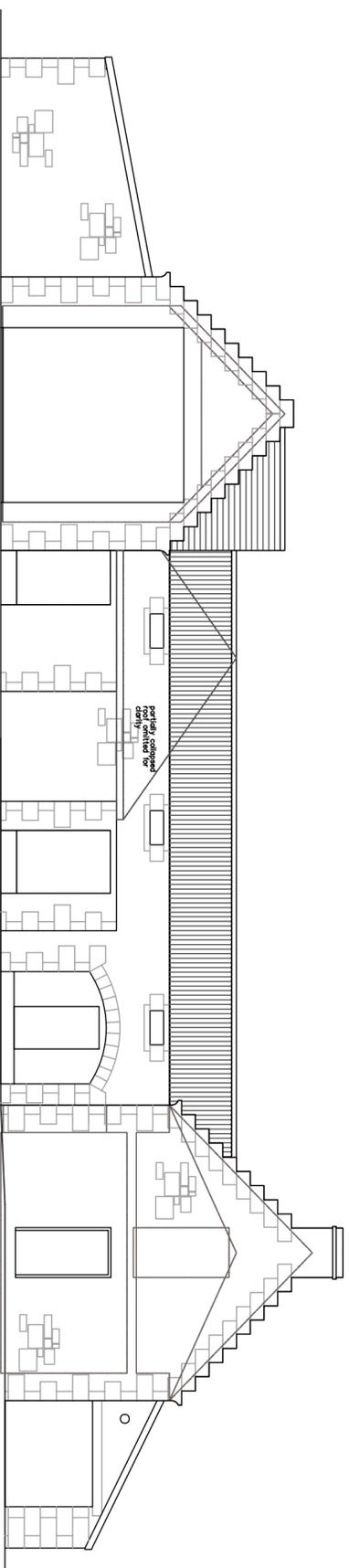
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PLANNING ISSUE

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PROPOSED CLUBHOUSE CONVERSION




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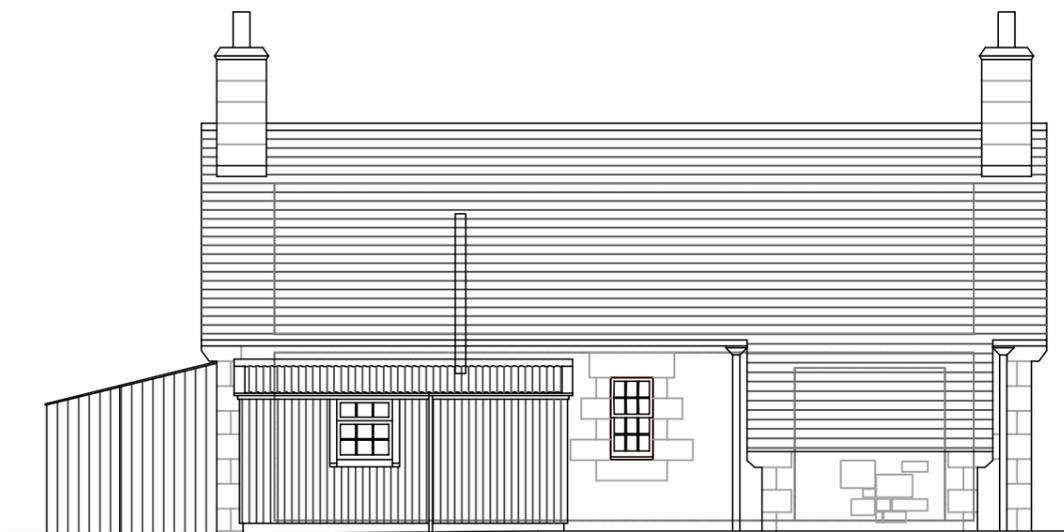
NESS planning
 PLANNING CONSULTANT
 PLANNING ISSUE

MRH design
 ARCHITECTURAL TECHNOLOGY

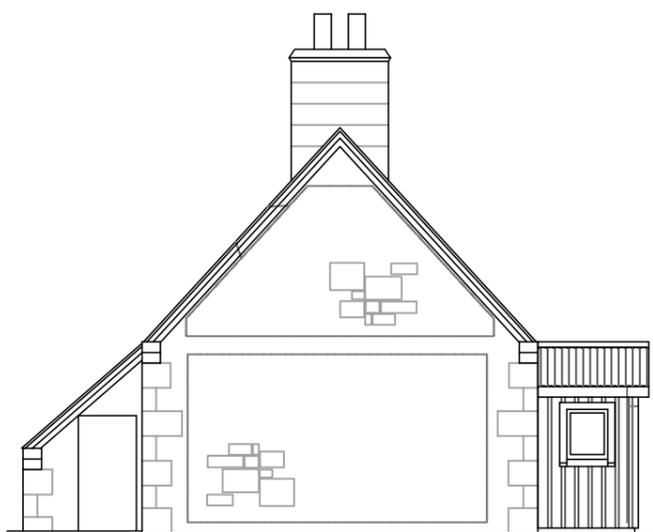
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 Drawing Number: 22-11 -MRH-304
 Date: 2022-11-15
 Scale: 1:100

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EXISTING COTTAGE



03
NORTH ELEVATION 1:100



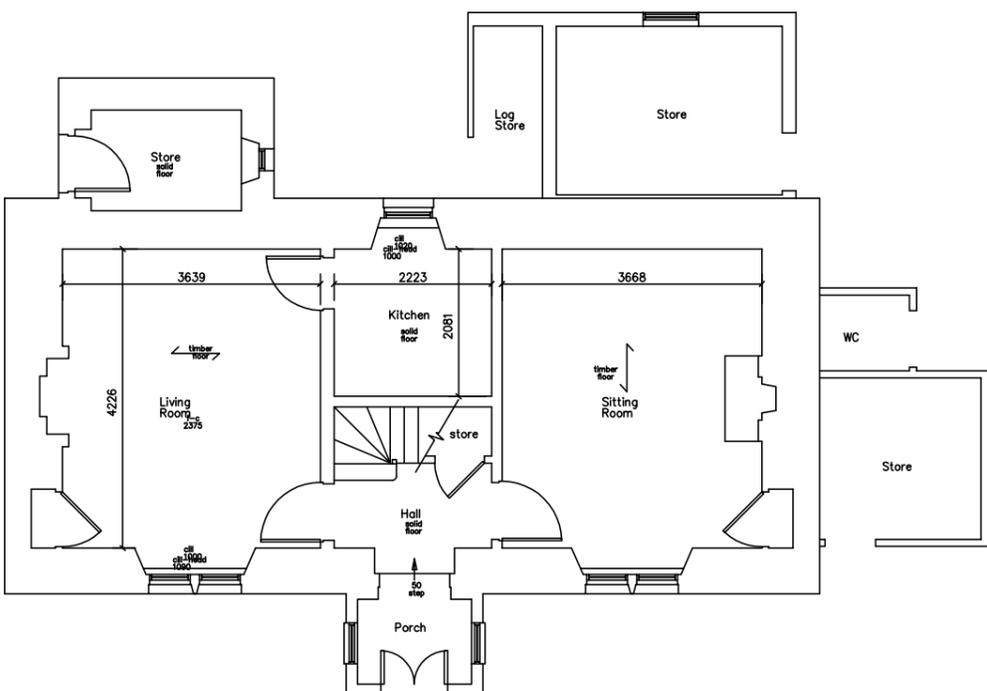
04
EAST ELEVATION 1:100



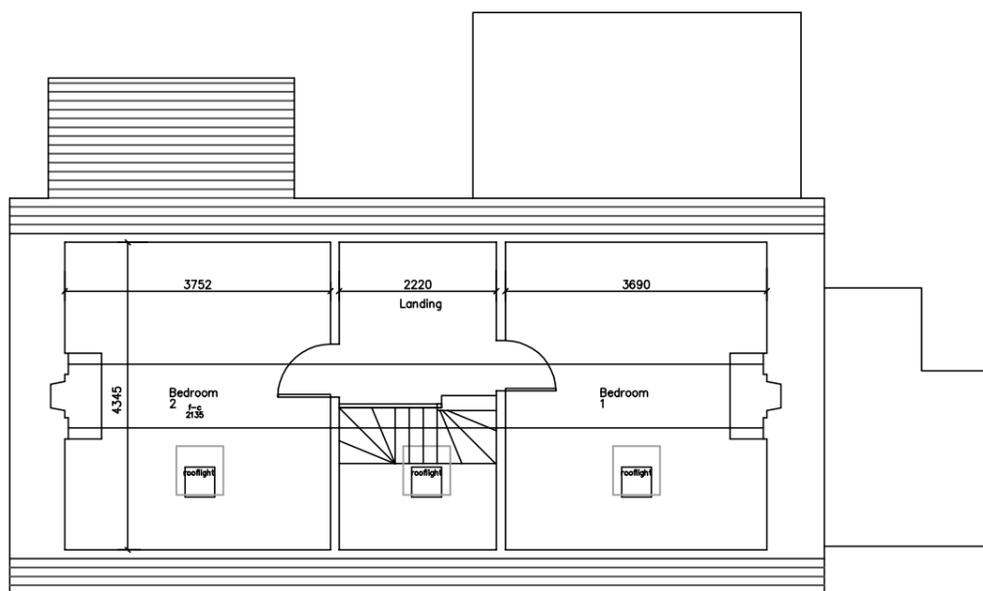
03
WEST ELEVATION 1:100



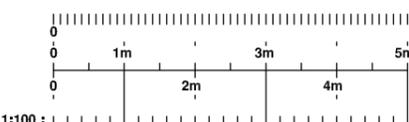
05
SOUTH ELEVATION 1:100



01
EXISTING GROUND FLOOR PLAN 1:100

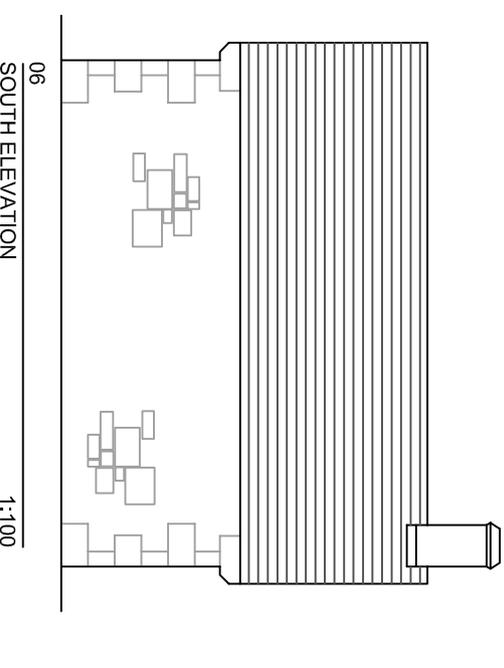
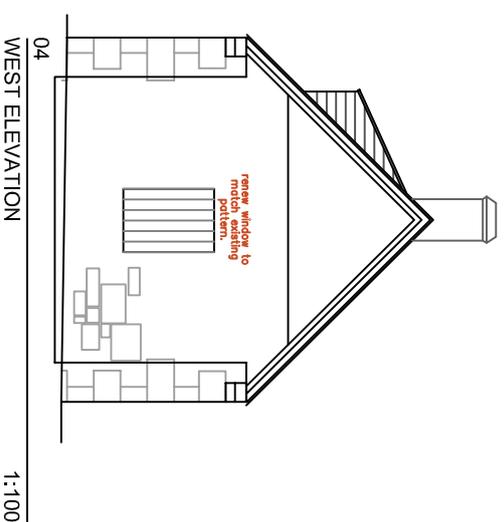
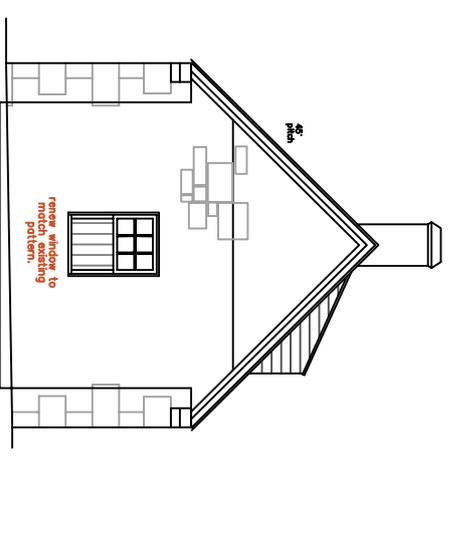
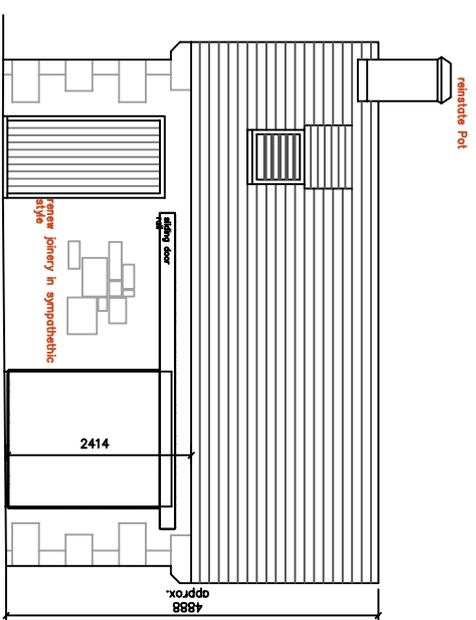


02
EXISTING FIRST FLOOR PLAN 1:100

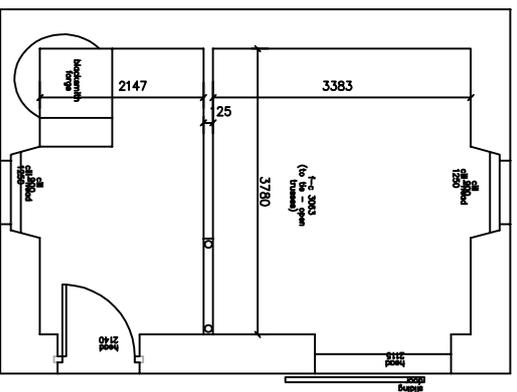


Drawing details		Revision History						
 <p>Creating prospects. Protecting places.</p>	Drawing title: Coul Links Golf Course EXISTING COTTAGE	Drawn by: MRH Checked by: Date: 01.02.2022 Scale: 1:100@ A3	Revision	Details	DR	CH	AP	Date
	Drawing Status: PLANNING ISSUE		Notes: Project Number: 2022-11 Drawing number: 22-11-MRH-201					
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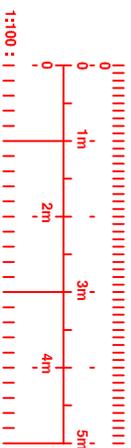
PROPOSED CADDIES HUT



- Renew/repair all internal/external construction retaining the features as far as possible.
- Incorporate new services.
- Retain exposed roof structure internally, subject to insulation requirement.



01
GROUND FLOOR PLAN
1:100



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PLANNING ISSUE

Project Number: 2022-11
Drawing number: 22-11 -MRH-305

Drawing title: Caddies Hut
PROPOSED CADDIES HUT

Client: MRH
DATE: 01.06.2022
SCALE: 1:100 @ A4

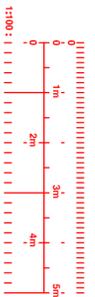
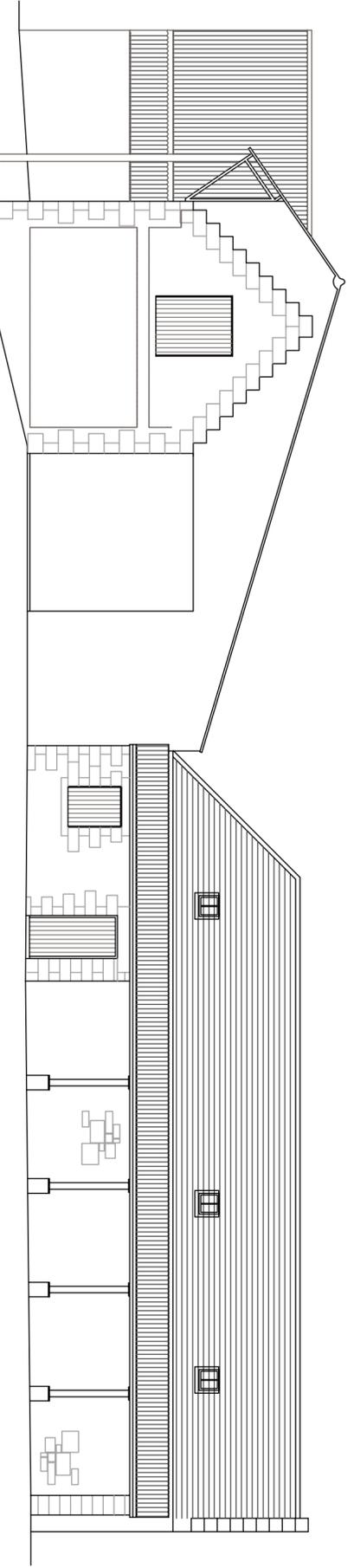
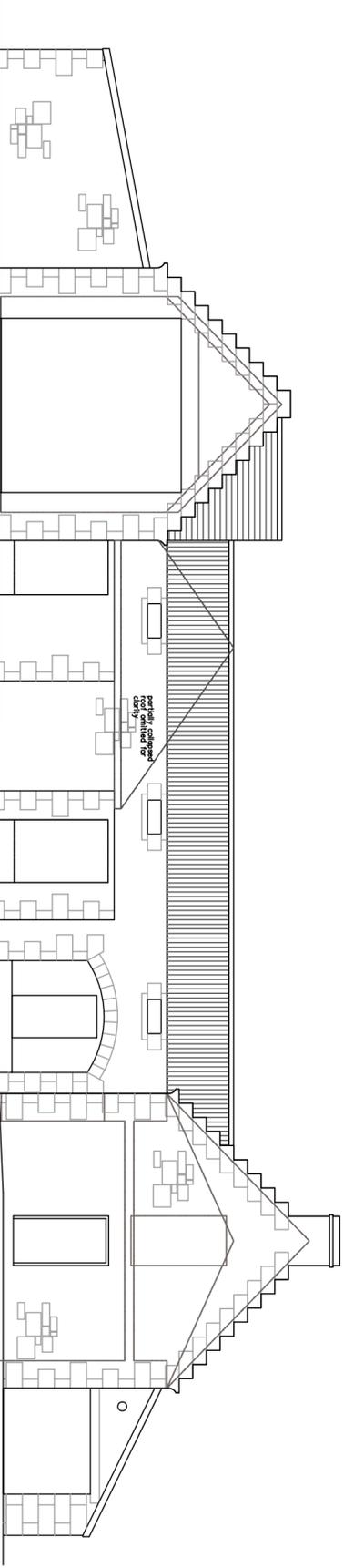
Revision history:

Rev	CH	AP	Date

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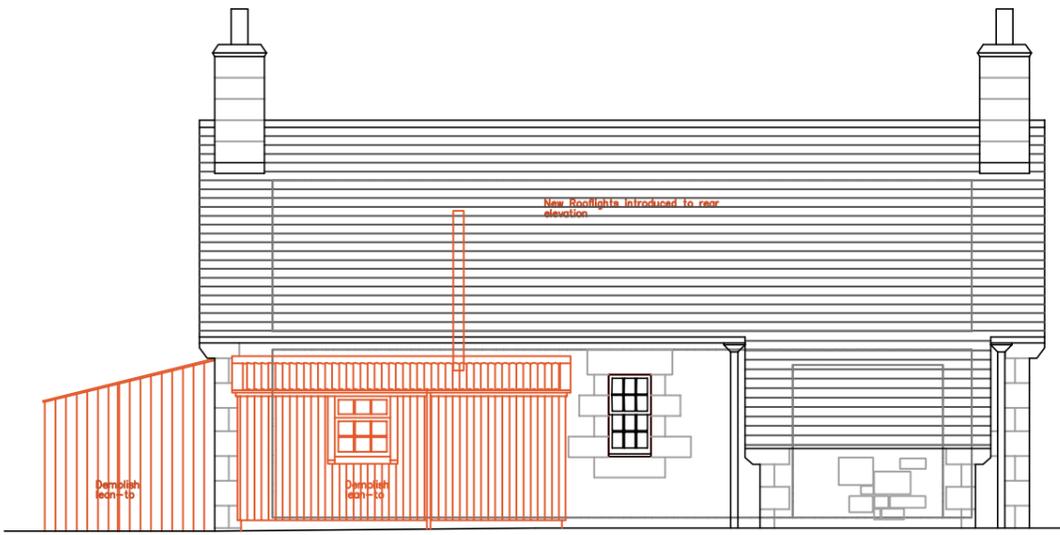
NESS planning
 PLANNING CONSULTANT
 PLANNING ISSUE

MRH design
 ARCHITECTURAL TECHNOLOGY

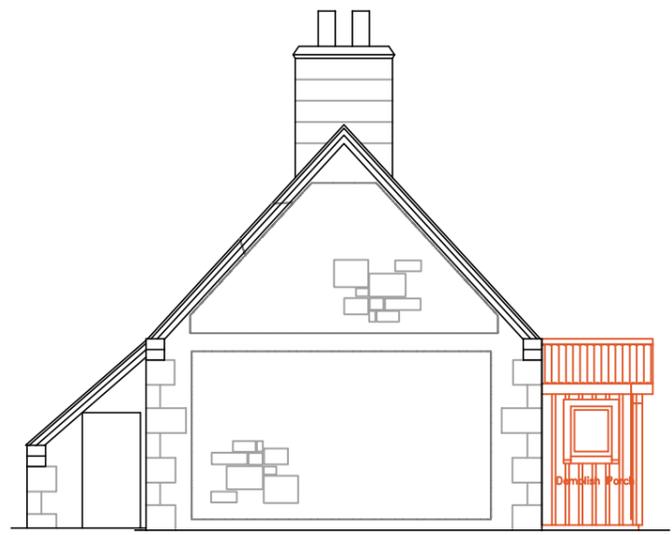
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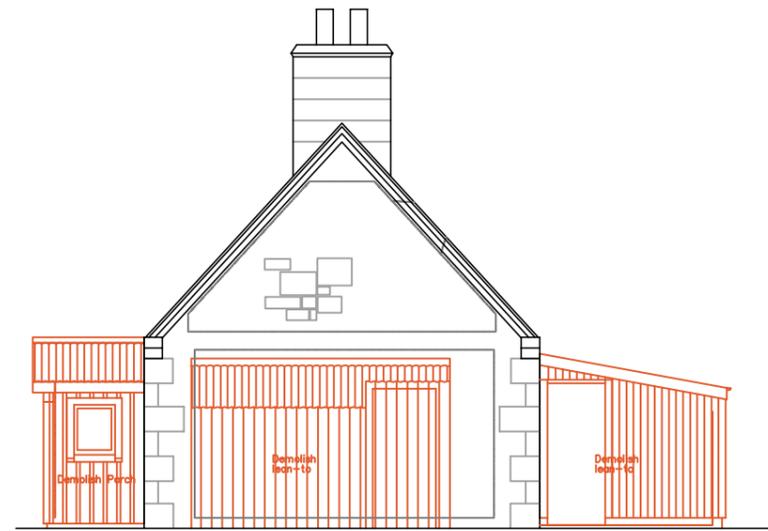
PROPOSED PRO SHOP



03
NORTH ELEVATION 1:100



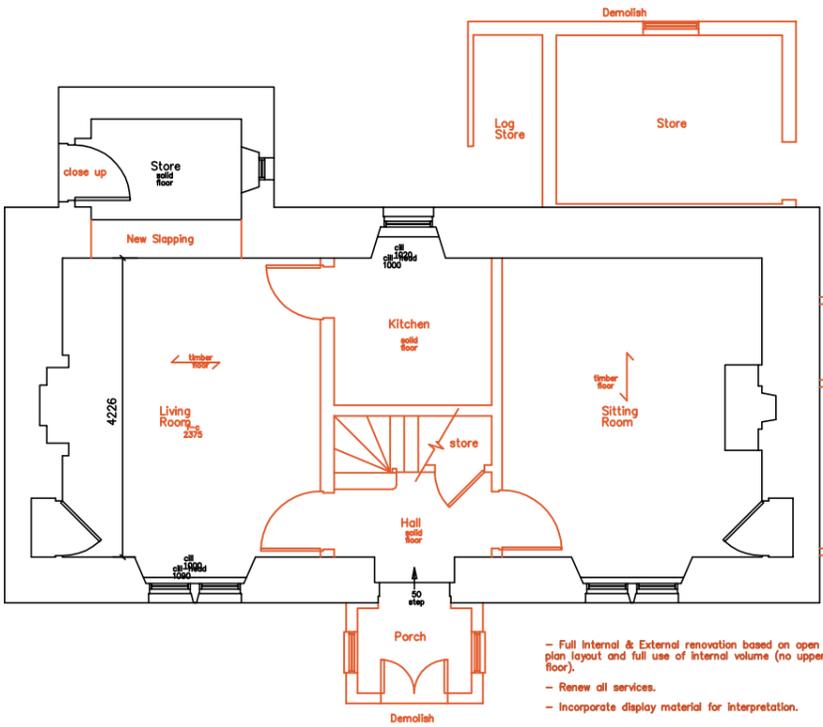
04
EAST ELEVATION 1:100



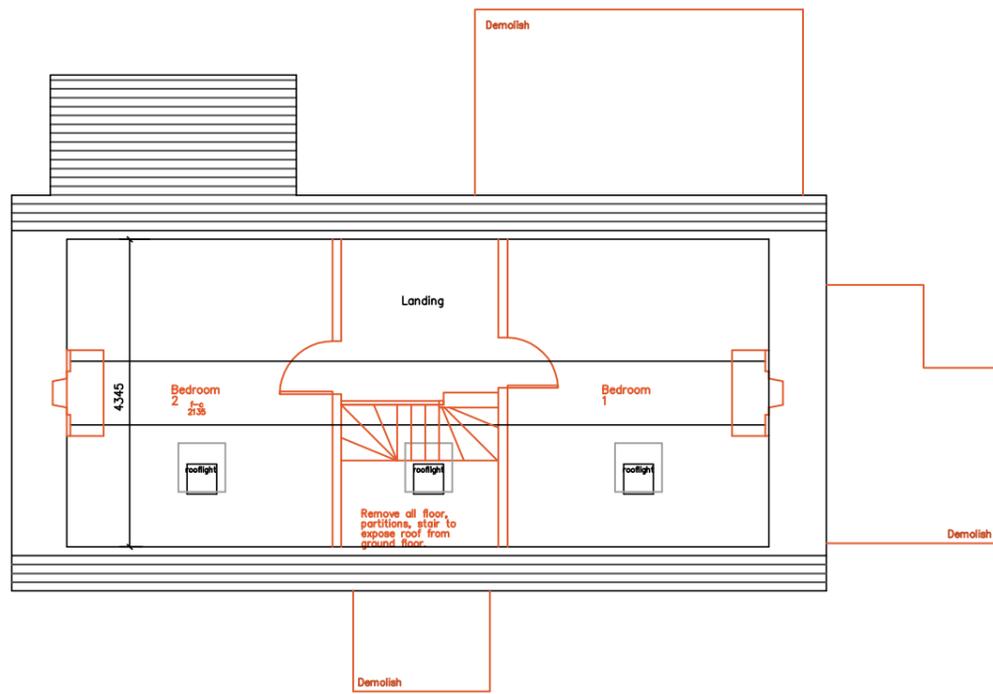
03
WEST ELEVATION 1:100



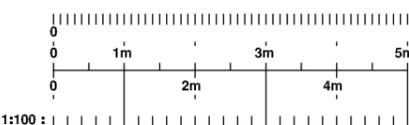
05
SOUTH ELEVATION 1:100



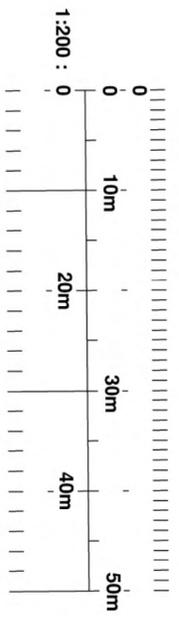
01
EXISTING GROUND FLOOR PLAN 1:100



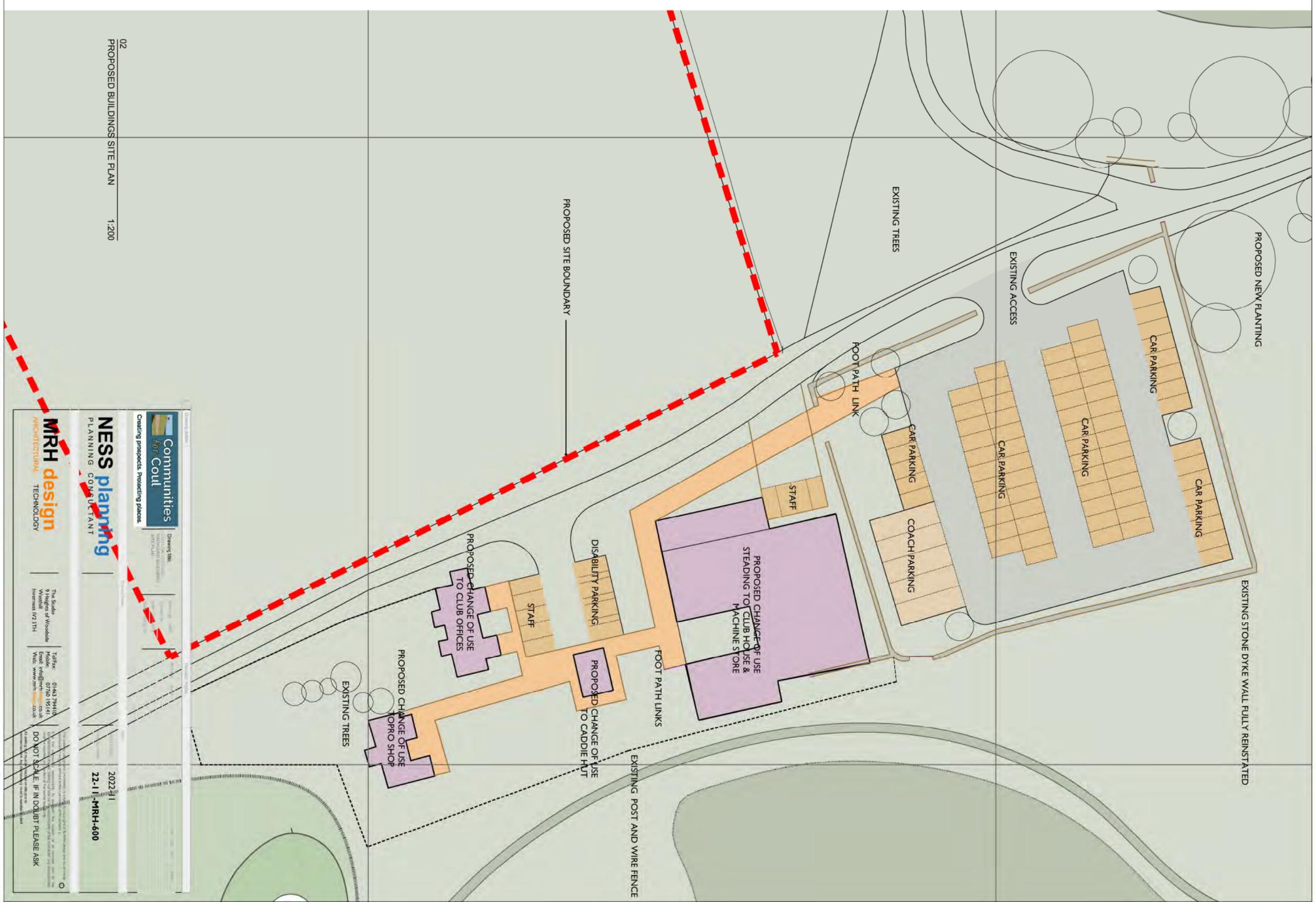
02
EXISTING FIRST FLOOR PLAN 1:100



 <p>Creating prospects. Protecting places.</p>		<p>Drawing title: Coul Links Golf Course PROPOSED PRO SHOP</p>	<p>Drawn by: MRH Checked by: Date: 01.02.2022 Scale: 1:100@ A3</p>	<p>Revision History</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Revision</th> <th>Details</th> <th>DR</th> <th>CH</th> <th>AP</th> <th>Date</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Revision	Details	DR	CH	AP	Date						
Revision	Details	DR	CH	AP	Date											
<p>NESS planning PLANNING CONSULTANT</p>		<p>PLANNING ISSUE</p>		<p>Project Number: 2022-11 Drawing number: 22-11-MRH-301</p>												
<p>MRH design ARCHITECTURAL TECHNOLOGY</p>		<p>The Studio 9 Heights of Woodside Westhill Inverness IV2 5TH</p>	<p>Tel/Fax: 01463 794410 Mobile: 07760 195141 Email: info@mrhdesign.co.uk Web: www.mrhdesign.co.uk</p>	<p>This drawing design and information is subject to copyright of the MRH design and must not be reproduced in any way without written permission of the company. It is the contractor's responsibility to ascertain the location of all services prior to the commencement of work. Siting out must be the responsibility of the contractor, any discrepancies shall be reported and clarified at the earliest opportunity. DO NOT SCALE, IF IN DOUBT PLEASE ASK All selling out must be checked on site prior to commencement. Any discrepancy must be reported to client</p>												



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NESS planning
 PLANNING CONSULTANT

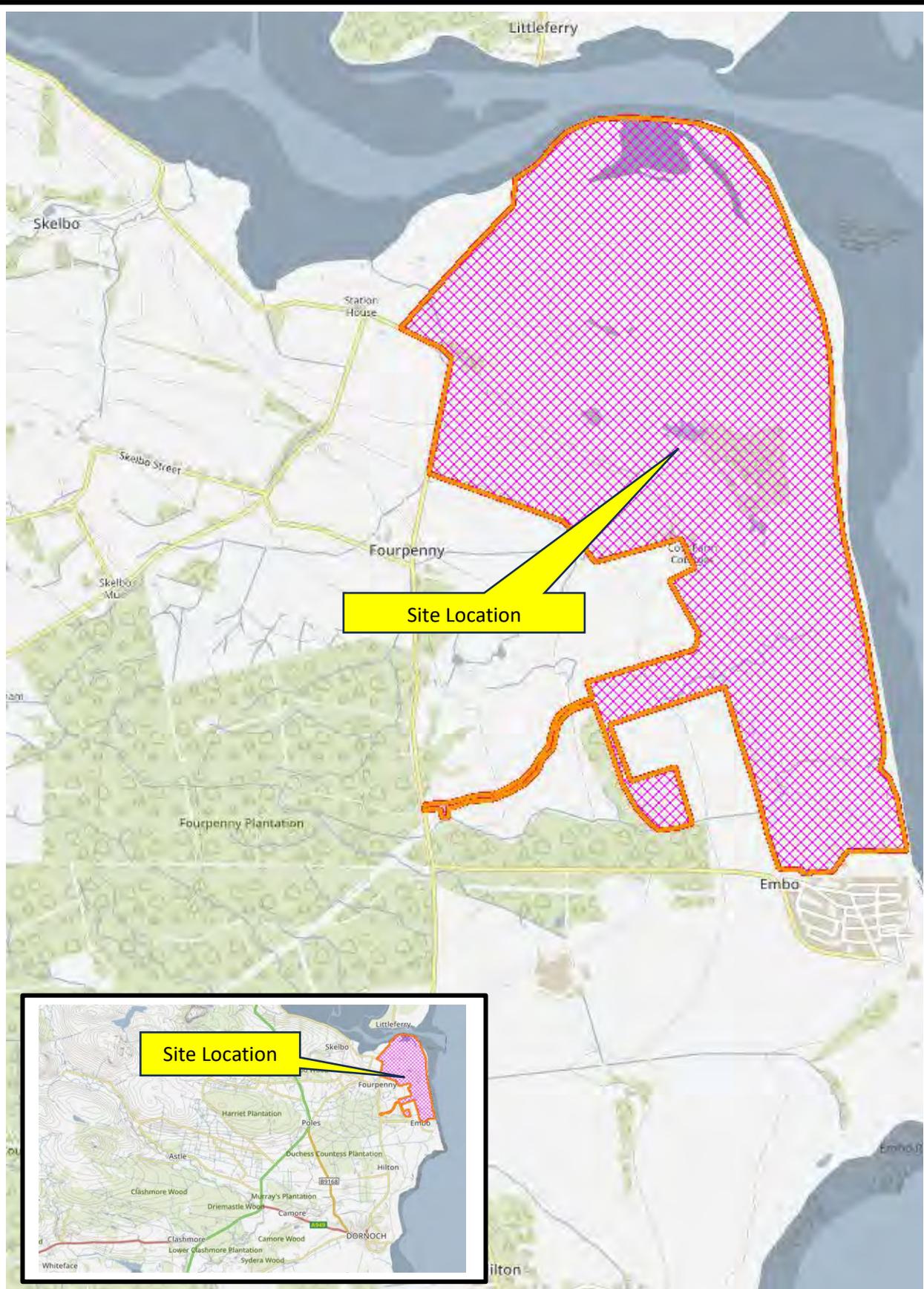
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2022/11
 22-11-MRH-600

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The Highland Council
Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd
Infrastructure and Environment Service

23/00580/FUL

Construction of an 18-hole golf course, practice area, access, parking, ancillary infrastructure and the change of use of existing buildings to form clubhouse, pro-shop, maintenance shed and ancillary facilities at Land 1700m NW of Embo Community centre. Embo

