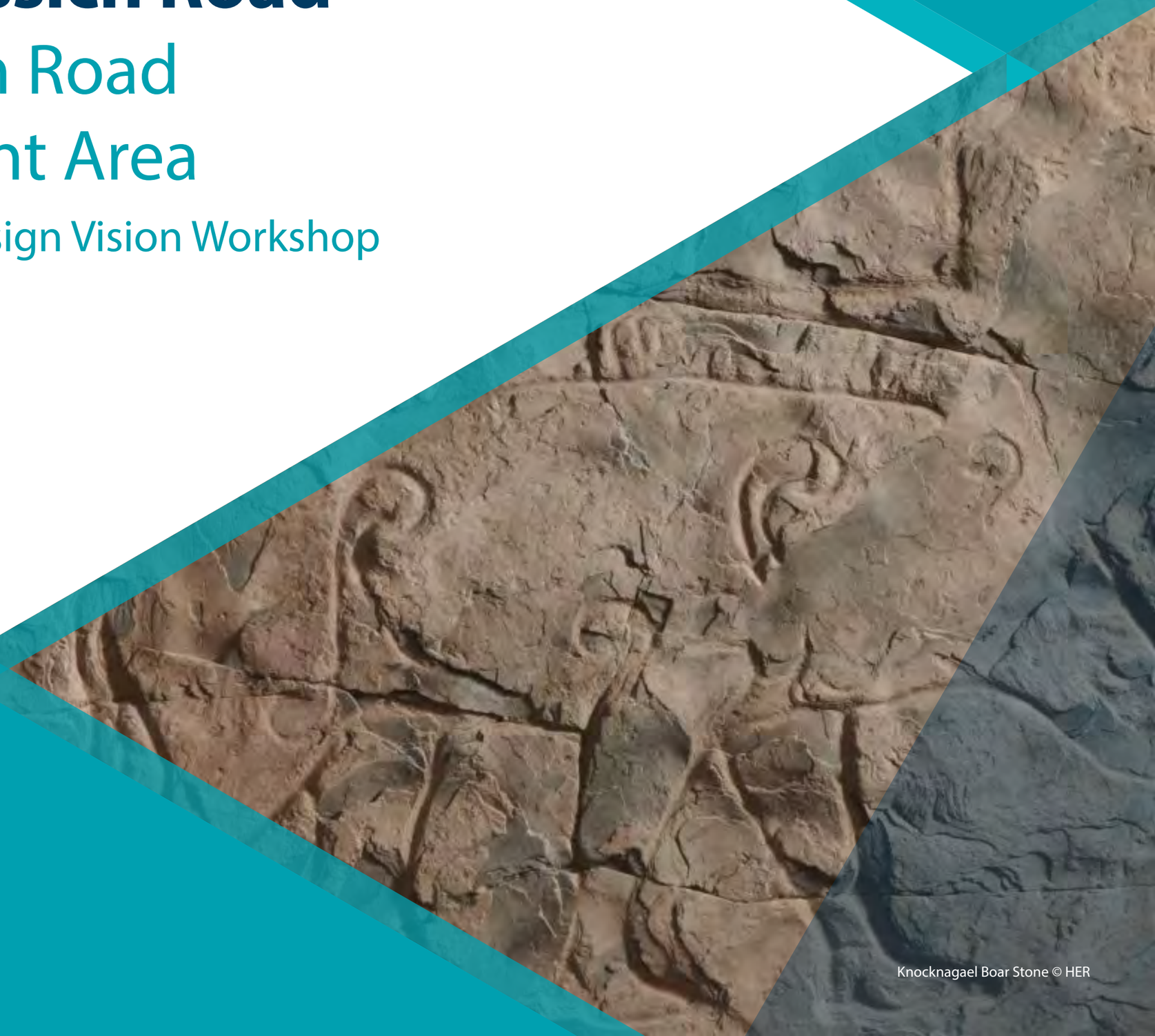
The Highland Council
Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Design Vision: Essich Road

Prepared for Essich Road Masterplan Consent Area

Notes from Project Group Design Vision Workshop



Knocknagael Boar Stone © HER

October 2026

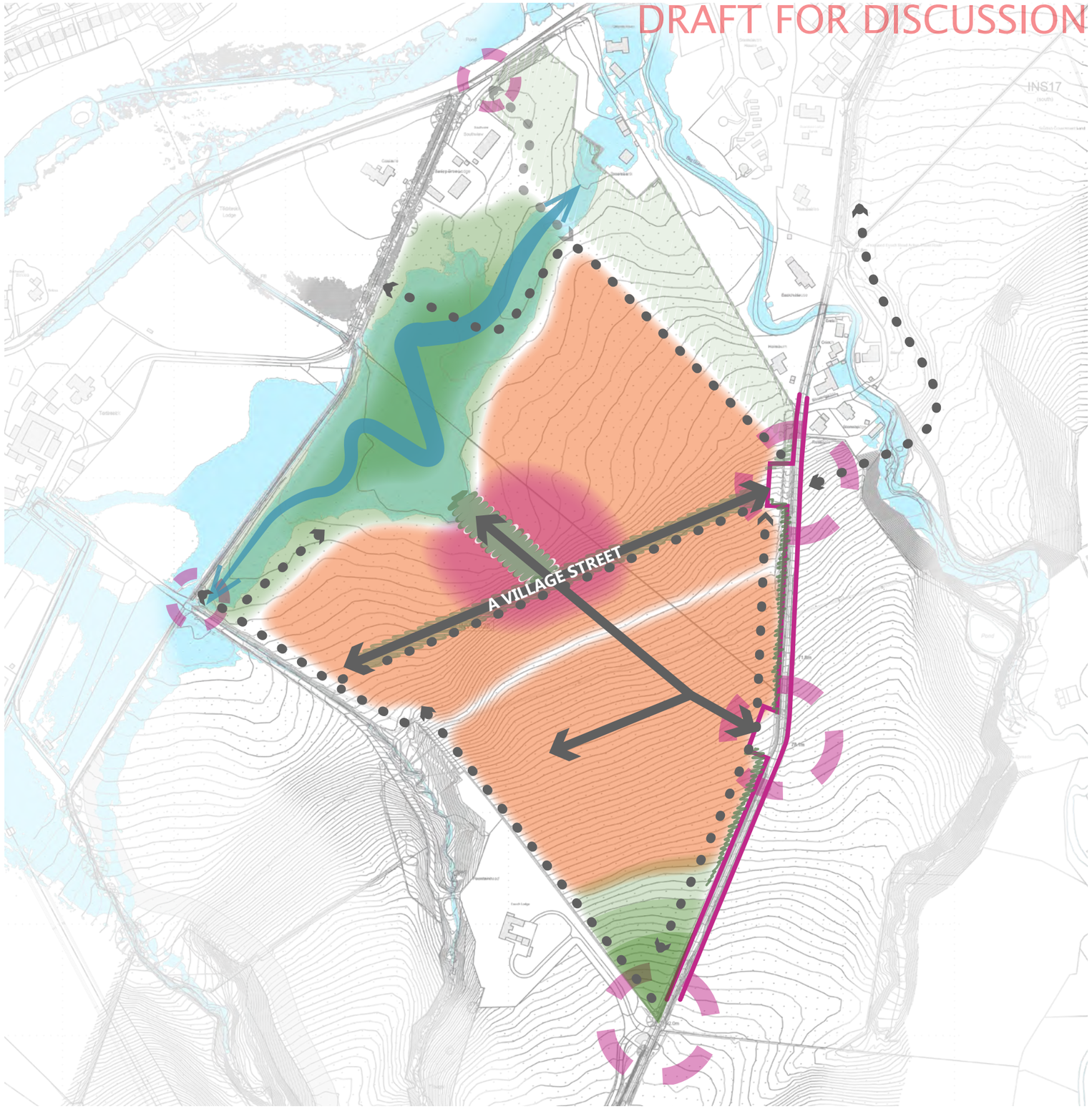
Design Vision Statement

Essich Road Masterplan Consent Area

Creating a development that has a village feel, supporting local living connected to urban Inverness and offering a range of housing choices and styles.

Creating a village that benefits from a good strategic landscape and path framework, strong gateways and interesting village streets.

This vision emerged through discussion with the Project Group, seeking a shared vision for the site.



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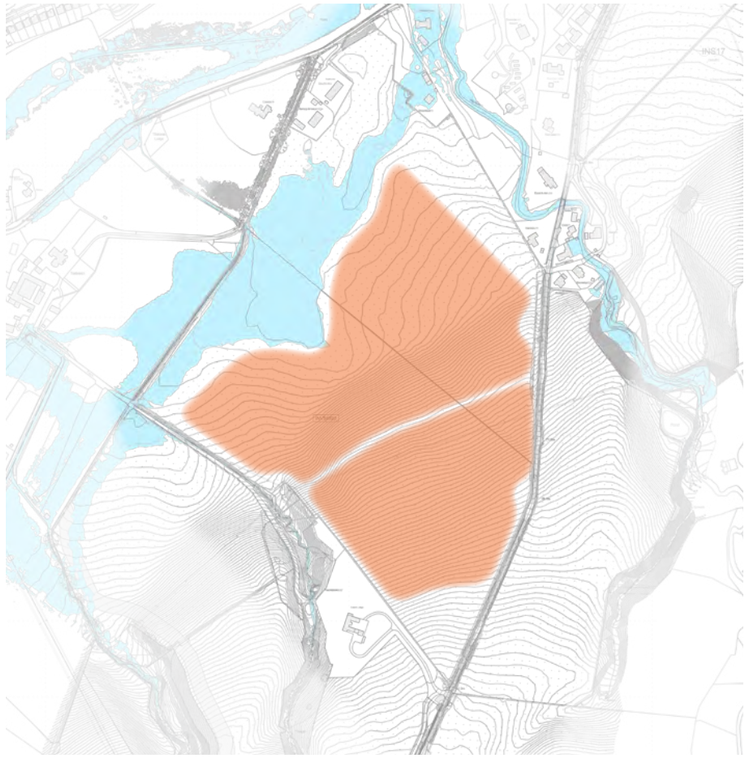
Site Vision

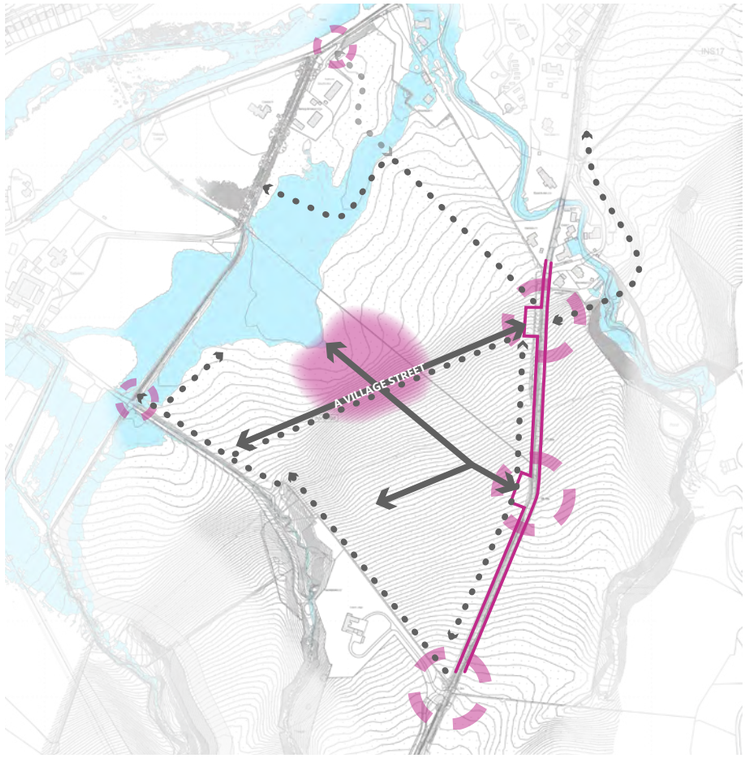
Essich Road Masterplan Consent Area

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION

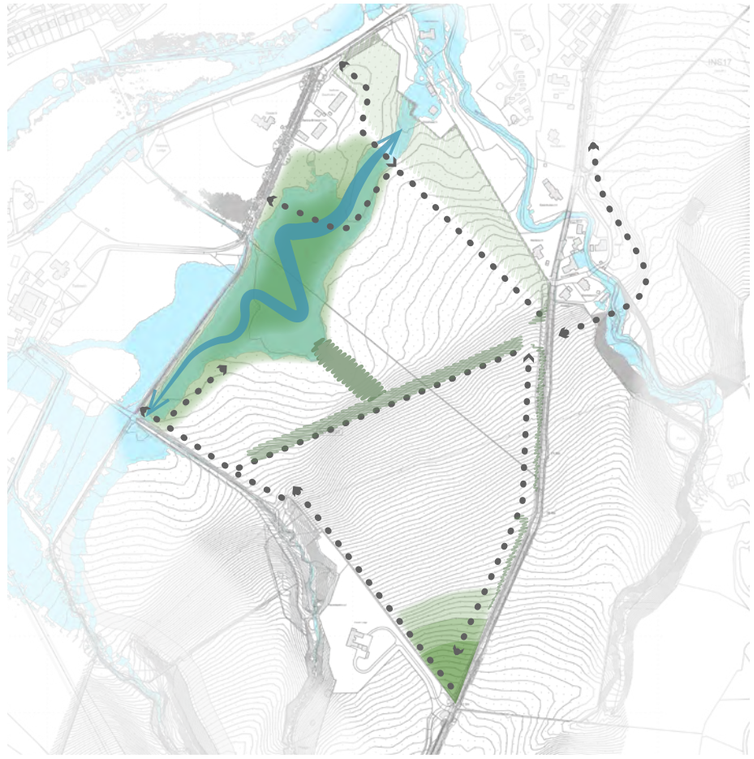
The Project Group identified that there were potentially two broad areas of development or character influenced by the site topography, suitable points of access and flooding constraints (there could well be more). Discussion considered that affordable housing tenures could be integrated throughout these areas.



The key points of entry and internal access were identified, including potential safer routes to school. Safety concerns on the Essich Road and topography are key considerations for site access and road improvements required to support any future development of the site. Active travel connections will develop over time however the Masterplan must ensure strong gateways and overlooking.



There was an enthusiasm to see a strong landscape design strategy that responds to the floodplain on site and the elevated southern portion of the site. Landscape planting and SUDS ponds or basins were discussed as a way to achieve biodiversity enhancement and amenity through flood mitigation. Recreational access pathways through this amenity area were also discussed as a possibility. Landscaping along the Essich Road boundary was discussed.



LEGEND

- Indicative Development Area
- Key Frontages
- Gateway
- Node / Focal Points of Development
- Viewpoint
- Landscape Elements
- Potential Link
- Potential Safer Route To School / Active Travel
- Blue-green Area through Functional Floodplain

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Site Vision Continued

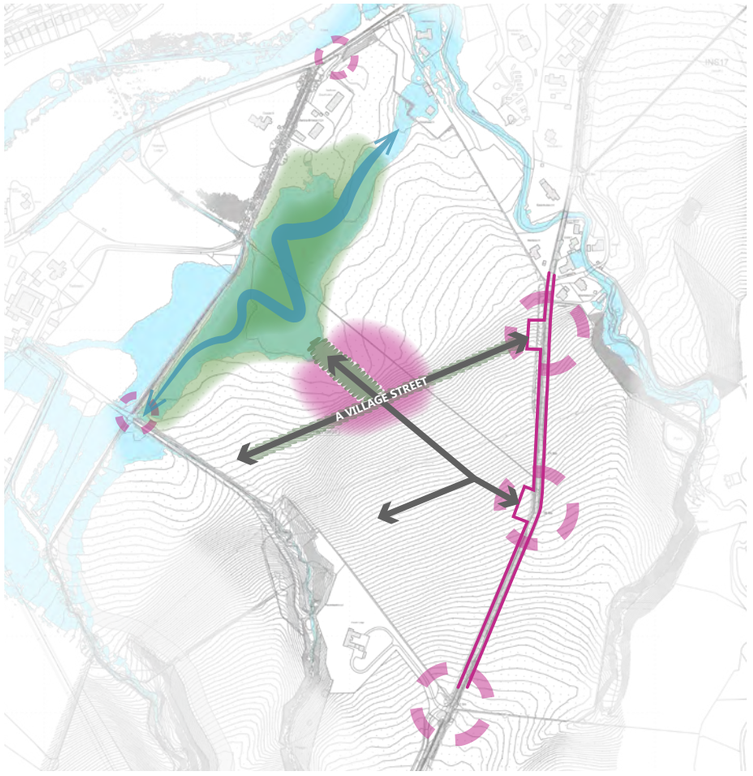
Essich Road Masterplan Consent Area

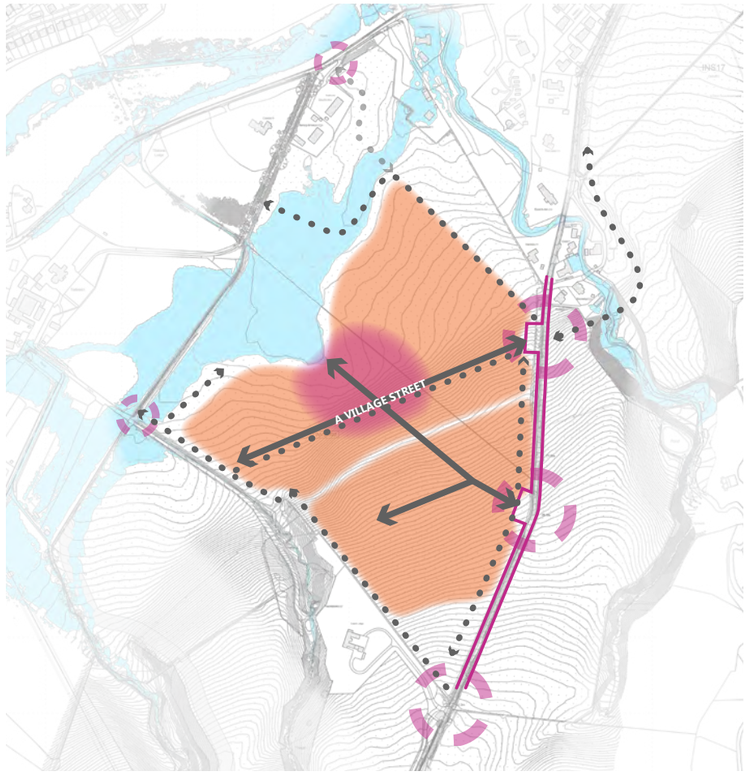
DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION

There was a recognition of several gateways for entry to the site, from the north and south of Essich Road. The road frontage character could vary for each gateway, including details like stone dyke walls and landscaping. A potential core for the development was identified, with frontage onto the blue-green amenity area and linked to a key street from Essich Road. Gateways to the strategic landscape framework were also discussed.

There was a view expressed that design character and housing types should be varied, but achieve a village-like feel. The northern sub area could be denser including cottage flats or terraced homes that have an attractive outlook to the blue-green amenity area, and, to the east, a cluster of development could reflect the style and density of existing homes around the Big Burn. Discussion considered how the area to the south will be required to respond to the steep topography, and perhaps is more suited to larger plots with detached homes, with a mixture of house sizes and tenures including affordable housing.

There was a recognition that the ideal site for any community use or shop would be at the northern most corner at Essich Road, or off-site nearby to ensure a community use is broadly accessible to more than just the development. Further discussions are needed about on-site provision or off-site provision through developer contribution. Discussion considered areas of existing amenity and functional floodplain which lie outwith the site, such as the Essich Burn woodland to the west and a portion of field to the north of the site, which will link with the site landscape strategy to create connected green corridors.





LEGEND

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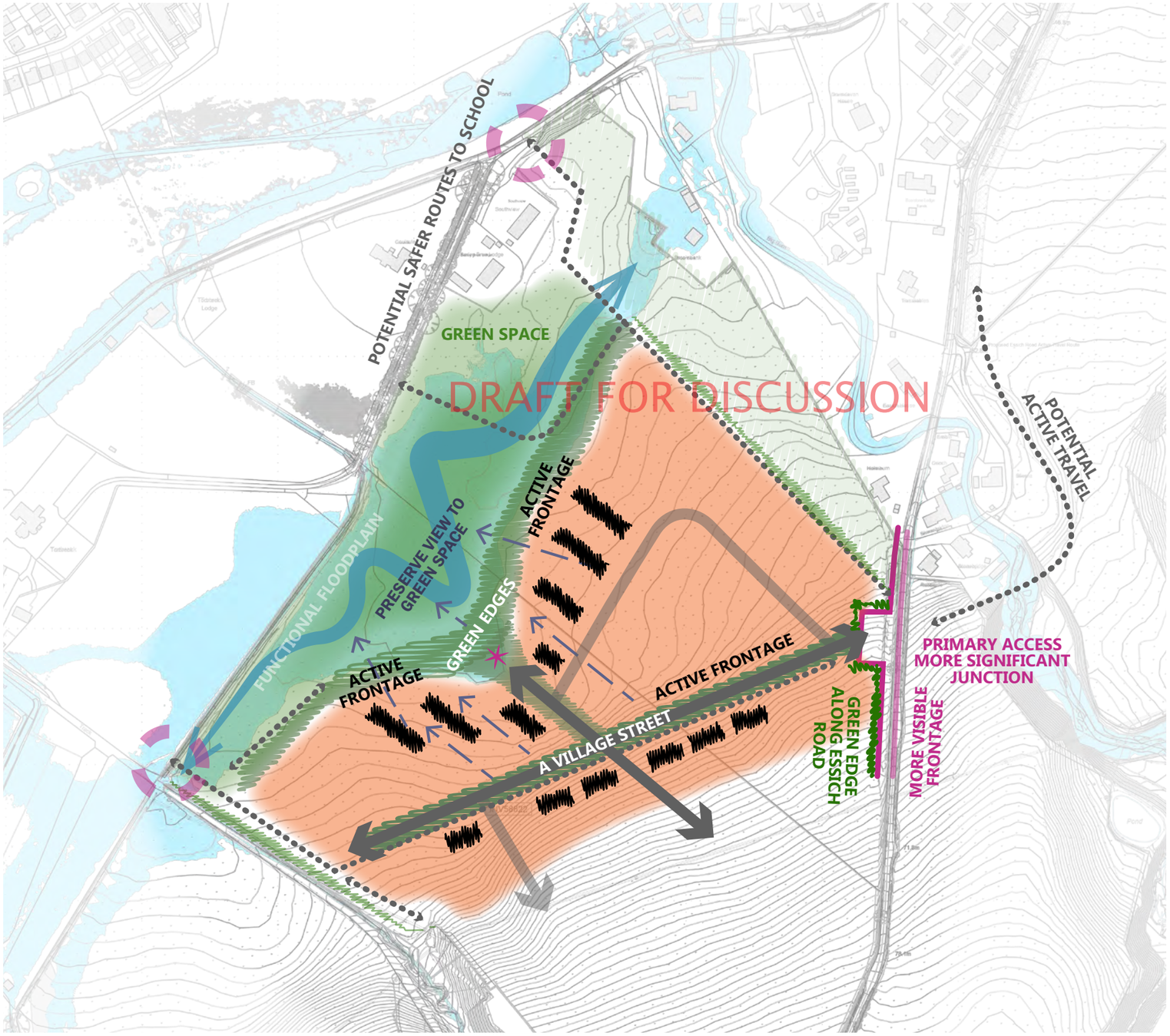
North Sub-area

Essich Road Masterplan Consent Area

The Project Group considered each area in more detail, possible ideas for development were discussed and are graphically expressed here to support further discussion.



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Of the two site access roads, the northern one has the greatest potential to act as a more formal village street.

The village street needs to be capable of being future proofed. The design needs to avoid creating a sea of parked cars by considering courtyards and rear servicing for vehicles and waste collection.

Development density was discussed around the village street: developer and Council officers considered that a mix of building heights of 1.5, 2 or 2.5 storey could help to create the desired village feel; Essich and Torbreck Community Association viewed 1.5 storey development as a maximum. There was some discussion over limited flatted development, such as cottage flats, which generally require 2 storeys, with terraces more favoured to achieve an intimate village feel. Further discussion on building heights is required.

Materiality for buildings is likely to be in keeping with the village feel.

Preserving views of the green spaces, overlooking the green space and activating that frontage is a priority.

A public space of some form with built and green edges could be established in the centre, linking the village street with the northern open spaces - to be investigated further. A link between the village street and the green amenity area was discussed, with interest in creating a green tree-lined street and considering pedestrian priority movement.

Active travel or safer routes to school were discussed. Council officers view these links as vital to integrate development with the existing urban area, to schools and support connectivity and local living. Community representatives did not support links to the north-west of the site, towards Torbreck Road. Council officers maintain consideration for as many active travel and safe route to school options as can be achieved for the development, recognising that people will use desire lines whether formalised or not. Further investigation of potential routes is required.

LEGEND

- Indicative Development Area
- Key Frontage and Gateways
- Other Gateways
- Built Form Elements
- Landscape Elements
- Potential Link
- Potential Safer Route to School / Active Travel
- Notable Views
- Frontage Treatments
- Potential Village Square / Public Space

South Sub-area

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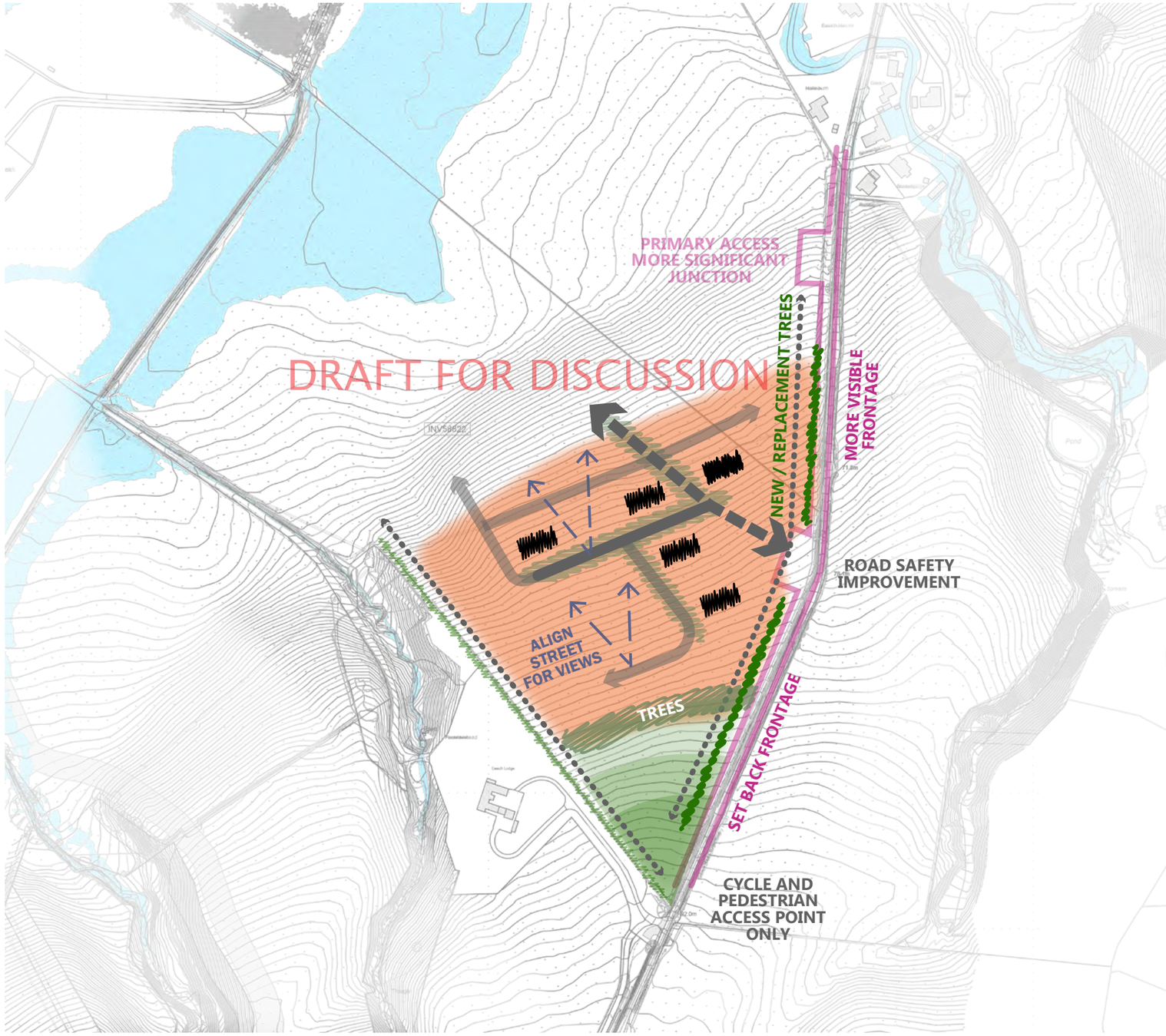

The south area is suited to less dense development, predominantly 1.5 storeys, avoiding flats but still with a mixture of house types, and tenures including affordable homes.

Variation in external material treatment is supported in this area, with the aim to avoid a repetitive or identical housing and neighbourhood character.

The use of trees as backdrop and in streets is to be considered.

Along Essich Road to the north, a more visible frontage is considered towards the primary access point with the village street. Details such as trees and stone dyke walls were discussed, and the opportunity to replace dead elm trees, to strengthen edge character and support traffic calming. An Essich Road cycle and footpath could potentially be brought into the site at this point.

Along Essich Road to the south, the frontage could potentially have a greater setback and rural feel with a stronger landscaped edge.

The edge between park land and Essich Road needs to encourage pedestrians and cycles to stop, not cars. The green space should be easily accessible to residents also.

The layout and alignments of streets in this area have potential to celebrate views to the north.

LEGEND

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Prepared by Development Plans Team