

**STATEMENT IN SUPPORT  
OF PLANNING APPLICATION FOR  
DWELLINGHOUSE ON LAND AT  
LAIGH KNOCKMURRAN FARM,  
LITTLEMILL ROAD, DRONGAN, KA6 7EN  
(TO REPLACE EXISTING CARAVAN / MOBILE HOME)**

**REPORT (INCORPORATING DESIGN STATEMENT)  
PREPARED ON BEHALF OF  
MRS VALERIE PEARSON, LAIGH KNOCKMURRAN FARM**



**Report Prepared by:**

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COYLTON  
KA6 6HN**



**June 2021**

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*Farmhouse sometime in the 1950s*

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**(i) CONCLUSIONS**

- On 9 March 2020, a Certificate of Lawfulness for the existing caravan, associated garden ground and access was granted by South Ayrshire Council (Ref No 19/01062/COL)
- On 29 January 2019, South Ayrshire Local Review Body approved Planning Application Ref 18/00379/APP re proposal for the erection of a dwellinghouse on land at Highcroft Nursery, B742 – A70 Hillhead – B744 north of Annbank, Coylton, KA6 5LB
- This decision is particularly relevant in this case in that it was agreed that, in issuing a Certificate of Lawfulness, 14/01644/COL, for ‘existing siting of caravan with the associated garden ground and access road, the LRB had agreed that residential use is lawful on this site in perpetuity
- In relation to the details of the proposals, we have striven to ensure that they are compatible with:
  - (i) the characteristics of the site, its location and setting within the broader and immediately surrounding landscape/countryside
  - (ii) the characteristics of the settlement pattern in this part of the countryside
  - (iii) the requirements of the Development Plan and Supplementary Guidance, and
  - (iv) where applicable, Material Considerations
- Increasingly, Scottish Government policy has been emphasising the importance of responding to persistent problems of rural depopulation. This point was made in NPF 3
- Scotland’s Fourth National Planning Framework Position Statement, November 2020, reminds us that the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019

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requires that development planning in Scotland now contributes to increasing the population of rural Scotland

- In fact, the Position Statement makes several references to the need for a positive response to rural depopulation which is not limited to 'remote' areas. Simultaneously, effective safeguards for the natural environment and landscape should be in place
- There has been a farm/farming activity at Laigh Knockmurrnan since the 1840s. Laigh Knockmurrnan is therefore part of the historical settlement pattern. Reinforcing the connection with this pattern, the proposals are entirely within the boundary of the original farm steading, with a scale, massing and use of materials that reflect/respect the original

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**1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**Background**

This Report has been commissioned by Ms Valerie Pearson, Laigh Knockmurrnan Farm, Littlemill Road, Drongan, KA6 7EN. At the time of writing, it was understood that she was the sole owner of the application site shown in the Planning Application Drawing No 680/S1 (Site Plan) which forms part of the planning application. Drawing No 680/OP1 (Ownership Plan), which also forms part of the planning application, shows the extent of the Applicant's ownership.

**Project Team**

In August 2020, the Applicant instructed::

- **Michael S Evans, Planning Consultant, meicplan.associates**  
"Ty-Newydd", 11 Murchie Drive, Kings Meadow, Prestwick, KA9 2ND

and

- **Visuplan per Kirsty Murdoch, Architectural Design, The Elms,**  
Laighpark Road, Coylton, KA6 6HN

**The Applicant**

The Applicant purchased the area shown in Planning Application Drawing No 680/OP1 in 2005 and has occupied an on-site caravan since then. A Certificate of Lawfulness for the caravan, associated garden ground and access was granted by South Ayrshire Council on 9 March 2020, Planning Application Ref No 19/01062/COL.

During the intervening period, the Applicant has operated a small holding of 10.77 hectares and has had a Farm Code, Number 182/0013, since 2005. At

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one time, farming activities included managing 9.64 hectares grazing, with a mixture of livestock, including cattle, sheep, pigs, horses and hens.

On 28 August 2006, consent was received for the erection of a 192.99 m<sup>2</sup> agricultural shed (Notice of Intention to Develop Ref 06/00987/PNF). The shed was not built.

The red line area includes the uses shown in Fig 2, i.e. Access Road, Caravan, Storage Container, Kennels, Stable, remaining Store walls of the original dwelling, part of which is used as a covered storage area.

## **The Site**

The proposed site, the red line area, extends to 0.525 hectares as shown in Drawing No 680/S1 (Site Plan). Details are to be found in Part 2.0.

## **The Proposals**

These are described in detail in Part 5.0.

## **Scope and Purpose of this Supporting Statement (Project Brief)**

This Statement forms part of the planning application and relates to the area of ground shown in Planning Application Drawing No 680/OP1, a copy of which can be found on page 9.

The purpose of this Statement is to confirm that the proposals are:

- (i) consistent with the relevant policies of the Adopted South Ayrshire Local Development Plan, the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance, and
- (ii) consistent with Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) and
- (iii) have taken into account relevant outcomes from material considerations



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**Drawing No 680/OP1: Ownership Plan**



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## **2.0 AREA CONTEXT AND SITE ANALYSIS**

### **Area Context**

#### **Location**

The site is located 12.4 km from Ayr Town Centre and 12.7 km from Cumnock Town Centre. It is some 2 km south of Drongan in East Ayrshire. The site is approximately 200 m from the Water of Coyle which forms the boundary between South and East Ayrshire.

The policy position in relation to landscape is dealt with later. The intention here is to provide from confirmed sources as clear a picture as possible about landscape context/setting, **i.e. the baseline**.

**In relation to 'Area Context', the two key factors underlying the appropriateness of any proposals are, in our opinion, Landscape Character and Settlement Pattern.**

#### **(i) Broad Landscape Character**

The landscape policies of the adopted LDP refer to the Ayrshire Landscape Assessment published by the then SNH in 1998 as the primary source of guidance re broad landscape. This places the site in Landscape Character Type G: Ayrshire Lowlands.

In terms of its broad landscape context however, more recently the primary source of information is Scottish Landscape Character Types (LCT) Maps and Descriptions published by NatureScot in 2019. In this document, the site falls within Category LCT 66, Agricultural Lowlands – Ayrshire.

In terms of geography, the boundaries of the areas of Character Type G and LCT 66 are coterminous.

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**The 2019 document therefore provides the baseline information for assessing the potential impact of the proposals on the landscape.**

The key characteristics of LCT 66 countryside are described as:

- *Complex landform, gently increasing in height from the coastal fringe, dissected by many burns and streams draining to incised main river valleys to create an undulating lowland landscape*
- *Geology dominated by coal measures, though basalt, sandstones, limestones, millstone grit and volcanic intrusions are also present*
- *Generally small- to medium-scale landscape*
- *Landcover is predominantly pastoral, with some arable on lower and better soils*
- *Fields often regular in shape and enclosed by beech or hawthorn hedges, with mature hedgerow trees giving the landscape a surprisingly wooded character*
- *Settlement pattern historic in origin based upon larger, more self-contained farmsteads set in a hinterland of fields*
- *Dense network of often very rural minor roads*
- *Varying landscape character which ranges from very rural to more fragmented and developed landscapes on urban fringes*
- *Views tend to be dictated by the local topography and landcover*

Collectively, these are the characteristics against which the proposals might be assessed.

**The key question to be addressed later therefore is what negative consequences and, indeed, if any, would the proposals have for these relevant characteristics?**

The Agricultural Lowlands collectively cover a large area, including most of the Ayrshire Basin, in particular to the north of Kilwinning and Irvine. They also contain the main centres of population in Ayrshire.

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The boundaries between Landscape Character Types are, of necessity, generalisations and not all of the 'characteristics' described above will feature throughout.

For example, the Agricultural Lowlands are said to lie between 10 and 150 metres OD. Laigh Knockmurrnan is at approximately 160 m OD, with the land rising to 168 m OD, just outwith the farm boundary, rising to 244 m OD at the Craigs of Kyle to the south west. In several respects therefore, the immediate area is displaying characteristics that are more representative of the Ayrshire Foothills.

For the purposes of analysis, it is maintained that the area shown in the Photomontage Key Plan on page 17 has a degree of homogeneity in terms of its landscape characteristics, providing a recognisable and relevant context for a review of the proposals.

**(ii) Settlement Pattern**

**(a) LCT 66**

Some guidance on settlement pattern is provided by the NatureScot Description **and we have therefore relied on this as providing the baseline position on this matter.** In addition to the point made above, under key characteristics LCT 66 states:

*'The area's settlement pattern is historic in origin. Unlike Highland areas where a system of joint-tenancy land holding prevailed, resulting in the creation of villages and hamlets, the typical lowland settlement system was based upon larger, more self-contained farmsteads with a hinterland of fields. Many existing farms are on historic sites, though buildings are invariably newer and old field systems lost beneath more recent enclosures.'* Ordnance Survey maps for 1856 confirm the existence of Laigh Knockmurrnan, together with other neighbouring farms at

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Bonnyton, Burnside and Laigh Elymains – although, in hectareage terms, Laigh Knockmurrnan is smaller than those others. Settlement pattern in the immediate countryside area has therefore changed little **and the proposals would do no more than restore what had been an integral part of this historic pattern.**

In fact, the 1841 Census confirms that Laigh Knockmurrnan, along with the other locations mentioned, were in existence then.

LCT 66 goes on to state:

*‘Farms are often sited on low hills and ridges [as is Laigh Knockmurrnan], typically comprising a courtyard with the farmhouse at the centre, although this was not the case here. Buildings are often limewashed [which was the case at Laigh Knockmurrnan], with slate roofs and black painted woodwork, which the photograph on page 2 suggests was the case here. More modern farm buildings, including sheds and barns, are rarely intrusive, often dark red or green in colour. It is less densely settled in the broader valleys and Craigs of Kyle than in the south-eastern part of the Ayrshire Lowlands at the transition with the more expansive simple uplands.’*

The major change which proves the exception locally has been the development of Drongan, but Drongan’s growth was linked entirely to the anticipated development of a ‘super pit’ at Killoch in the late ‘50s/early ‘60s, which was not entirely fulfilled. Drongan was effectively to be a new planned village to house mine workers.

(b) LDP/Supplementary Guidance

We would point out that, in relation to the matter of settlement pattern, the contents of these documents were also interrogated in

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order to establish whether any additional and, indeed, improved guidance could be obtained. While the Glossary of LDP1 describes a settlement as '*a town or village with a range of facilities and/or infrastructure*', there is, however, no description/definition of settlement pattern as such and therefore there is nothing specific for settlement pattern in the countryside.

Supplementary Guidance: Rural Housing contains no statement on the general pattern/distribution of housing in countryside areas.

In relation to the current proposals, Part 2, Design of New Houses in the Countryside has relevance in that it states that '*planning policies controlling the siting and design of new housing play an important role **in maintaining its character**. When considering new housing in the countryside, **it is important that cognisance is taken of the heritage of the area if the special character of South Ayrshire's countryside is to be preserved and enhanced**' which, for the reasons set out later, we maintain have been achieved by the approach taken.*

In the final analysis, we have therefore concluded that the advice provided by NatureScot's Scottish Landscape Character Types (LCT) Maps and Descriptions, which is now relied upon by the Council, is the most authoritative source re settlement pattern and therefore advice on 'character'.

- **Site Analysis**

- **Site and Topography**

Aerial view is shown on Photomontage Key Plan.

The application site extends to 5,251 m<sup>2</sup> (including the area which provides the private access driveway of approx 200 m in length) as indicated on Drawing No 680/BT1.

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The site consists largely of rough grassland with a number of small trees and areas of dense shrubbery. Structures on the site consist of the ruined stone remains of the original farmstead, the most substantially intact part of which has been roofed over to form an area of covered domestic storage. There is also sited an existing static residential caravan (which has been the subject of a recent Certificate of Lawfulness - Ref: 19/01062/COL), together with a shipping container for further domestic storage, a timber stable and an assorted collection of other timber sheds and kennel cages.

The site sits close to the top of a moderately sloping hillside. There are open aspects to the north and south but both have moderate screening from trees and shrubs within the site. The site is also screened by rising ground to the west and by an area of mature woodland on the bank of the Water of Coyle to the east.

- **Views from Outwith**

The Photomontage Key Plan showing the points from where viewpoints/photographs are taken can be found on page 17.

Photomontage boards can be found on pages 18 to 20. These show the actual views from outwith the site.

- **Its Relationship to Neighbours**

Nearest neighbours include, to the north, North Hall Farm: 555 m; to the south, High Knockmurrnan: 395 m; to the east, Craigbrae: 340 m and, to the west, Shalloch: 940 m. All are at significant distances from the proposed site and thereby the proposals would create no problems regarding the residential amenity of neighbours.

- **What Exists within the Site/Current Use**

Uses are described in Fig 2 on page 21.

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- **Services**

The existing site is serviced with mains water, electricity and telephone/Internet. Existing foul drainage provision will be assessed and a detailed proposal will be formulated for an upgraded system if deemed necessary.

Currently, drainage is by private septic tank (recently replaced with a new self-contained purpose-made septic tank) with SEPA approval and is covered by SEPA licence to discharge. The sewerage loading created by the two-bedroomed dwellinghouse proposed will be unchanged from that of the existing two-bedroomed caravan. It is therefore considered that the SEPA licence and general drainage arrangements as they exist on site will be unaffected by the proposals aside from the rerouting of pipework to the replacement fixtures.



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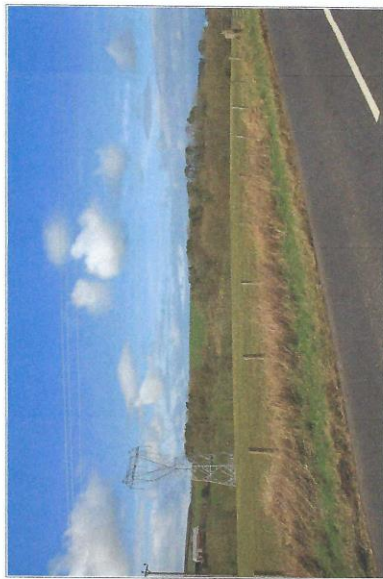




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Photomontage Key Plan 1:25000



### Photomontage 3 - Existing



### Photomontage 3 - Proposed



### Photomontage 4 - Existing



### Photomontage 4 - Proposed

**Visual**  
 01292 571105  
[www.visualplan.co.uk](http://www.visualplan.co.uk)  
[info@visualplan.co.uk](mailto:info@visualplan.co.uk)

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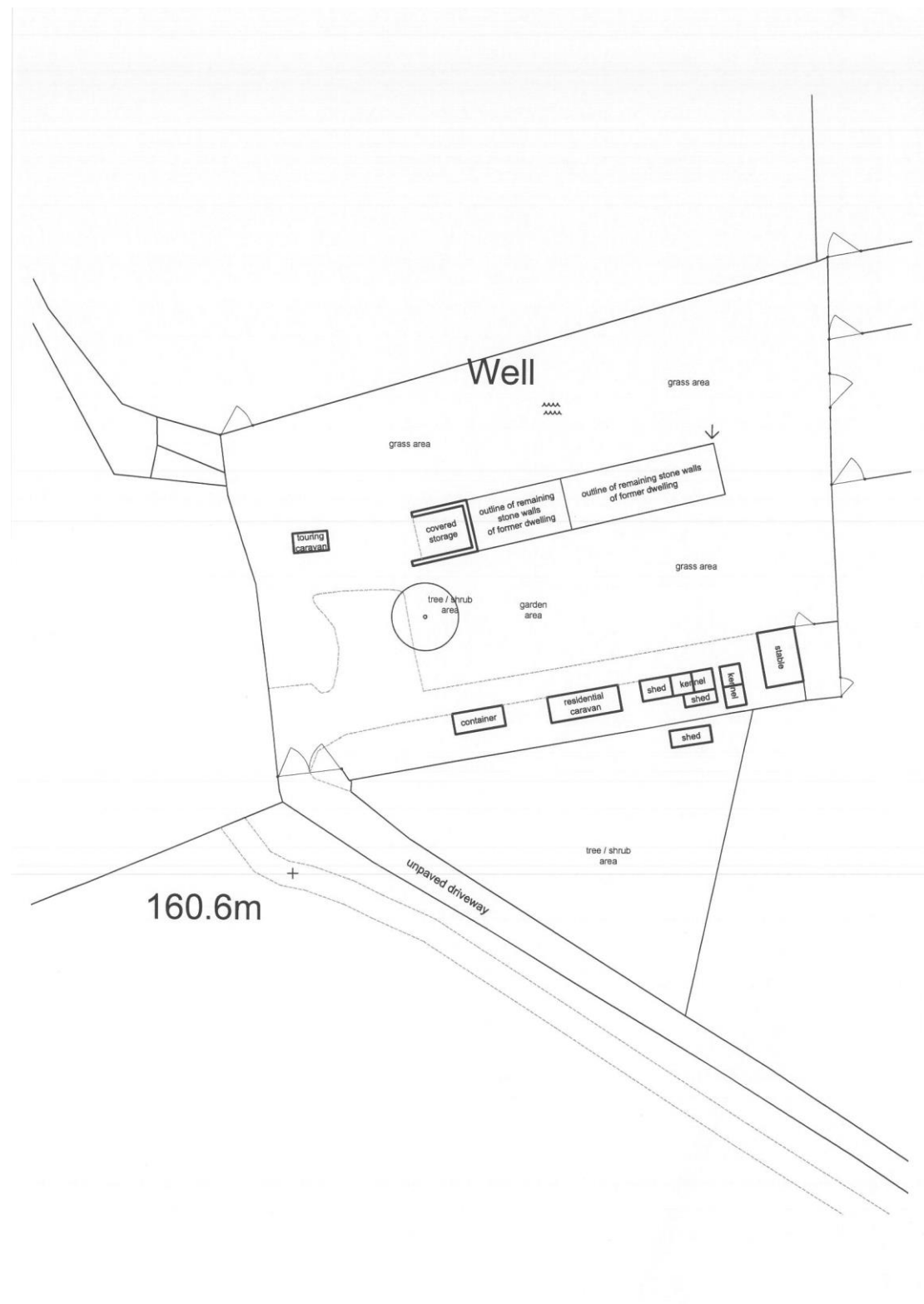


<b>VISUAL</b>	01292 571105 www.visual.co.uk info@visual.co.uk
SOC	Mrs V Pearson
PROJECT	Proposed Dwellinghouse Leigh Klockmuran, by Dronagan
ORG NO.	Photomontages (5 & 6)
APP NO.	680 / DM3
DATE	10/04/2011
SCALE	as noted
DRAWN BY	DM
CHECKED BY	DM
DATE	10/04/2011

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**Fig 2: On-site Uses**



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**3.0 PLANNING HISTORY**

- On 24 January 2006, planning consent was refused for '*... change of use, alterations and extension to existing vacant building to form dwellinghouse, garage and barn on land at Laigh Knockmurrnan, Drongan*' (Planning Application Ref 05/01029/FUL)
- On 15 November 2006, an appeal against this decision was dismissed by Scottish Ministers
- On 28 August 2006, consent was granted for the erection of a 192.99 m<sup>2</sup> agricultural shed (Notice of Intention to Develop Ref 06/00987/PNF)
- On 9 March 2020, a Certificate of Lawfulness for the caravan, associated garden ground and access was granted (Ref No 19/01062/COL)

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#### **4.0 ASSESSMENT / DESIGN PRINCIPLES**

It is generally agreed that inevitably the eventual outcome regarding any proposal is influenced/underpinned by a range of considerations.

The principal ones in this case are:-

- (v) the characteristics of the site, its location and setting within the broader and immediately surrounding landscape/countryside
- (vi) the characteristics of the settlement pattern in this part of the countryside
- (vii) the requirements of the Development Plan and Supplementary Guidance, and
- (viii) where applicable, Material Considerations

**(i) The implications of the characteristics of the site, etc, for the location of the proposals and the design outcome**

Understanding and interpreting the characteristics of the site within its setting are vitally important to the delivery of a successful outcome. Details of the local context and its assessment to establish the capacity of the site in landscape terms to absorb the proposals are described in Part 2.0. The implications of those details for an indicative outcome are dealt with in Part 5.0.

**(ii) Settlement Pattern**

A key consideration must be the settlement pattern in the immediate area which does, in fact, reflect the description for LCT 66 as a whole provided in the 2019 Assessment. The only significant guidance on the matter of settlement pattern in this part of Ayrshire is to be found in SNH's Landscape Assessment 1998 and EnviroScot's Landscape Character Assessment 2019.

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The actual pattern of development is shown in Planning Application Drawing No 680/L1 (Location Plan) and 680/PM1. Based on these guidelines, it is clear that the proposals reinforce rather than detract from the identifiable settlement pattern. Indeed, the details of the proposals, in terms of their dimensions, scale, massing and materials, quite deliberately involve the restoration of an example of the vernacular.

**(iii) Response to relevant Planning Policy, advice and guidance, source documents at national, regional and local levels has included:-**

Section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) directs that a planning application should be determinant in accordance with the adopted Development Plan unless there are other material considerations to justify otherwise.

- The Development Plan for the site is South Ayrshire Local Development Plan, adopted October 2014
- Supplementary Guidance: Rural Housing, November 2014
- Guidance: Open Space and Designing New Residential Developments, October 2010

**Other Planning Policy Guidance and Advice**

- Scottish Planning Policy (SPP), June 2014
- Local Development Plan 2, Main Issues Report
- Modified Proposed Local Development Plan 2, July 2020
- Planning Advice Note 60: Planning for Natural Heritage, January 2020 (could need a bat survey)
- Plan Advice Note 61: Sustainable Urban Drainage System, July 2001
- Planning Advice Note 72: Housing in the Countryside, February 2005



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- Planning Advice Note 77: Designing Safer Places, March 2006
- Planning Advice Note 2/2011: Planning and Archaeology, July 2011

**(iv) Other Relevant Material Considerations**

- (i) Scottish Natural Heritage, Landscape Assessment, 1998
- (ii) EnviroScot's Landscape Character Assessment, January 2019
- (iii) Decision taken by South Ayrshire Local Review Body (LRB) on 29 January 2019 in relation to Planning Application Ref No 18/00379/APP
- (iv) Scotland's Third National Planning Framework Position Statement, June 2014
- (v) Planning (Scotland) Act 2019
- (vi) Scotland's Fourth National Planning Framework Position Statement, November 2020

**(a) South Ayrshire Local Development Plan 1**

A range of policies are relevant and our comments are as follows:

**(i) South Ayrshire Local Development Plan: spatial strategy (Core Investment Area)**

The specific criteria for this policy are:

- (i) *to represent residential development of an allocated housing site (shown in the settlement maps)*
- (ii) *sustainable economic growth of Glasgow Prestwick Airport, the Enterprise Zone, other airport, other airport-related industry and infrastructure*
- (iii) *promotion of rural diversification and tourism*
- (iv) *non-residential uses of a substantially intact building which will benefit the local environment*

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(v) *the promotion and improvement of the environmental quality and range of amenities within town centres*

**Clearly, the proposals would constitute none of the above but, importantly, neither would their implementation constitute a threat to their integrity or robustness and would not undermine the effectiveness of the aforementioned criteria.**

Information obtained from the former Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan Team indicates that 95% of Ayrshire can be described as 'countryside', although, in the Core Investment Area because this is where the population density is higher, it is going to be less than this. Research undertaken for the Council's Local Development Plan 2 Main Issues Report (MIR), Issue 6 Rural Housing, states that, in 2015, there were 80 planning applications for houses in the countryside. 'Countryside' is not actually defined in MIR but, on the assumption that the former Structure Plan Team's advice holds good, then, with a total South Ayrshire surface area of 1,222 km<sup>2</sup>, 95% of this would be 1,160.9 km<sup>2</sup>.

80 applications is translated into one application per 14.51 km<sup>2</sup>. By 2015, the annual figure had fallen to 20, i.e. one application per 58.04 km<sup>2</sup>.

Although the statistics are not provided by MIR, it is highly likely that a significant number of these will have been refused (Ref PNF). While figures specifically for the Core Investment Area are not available, it is reasonable to assume that 'Countryside', even here, is not an overly threatened 'commodity'. The proposals occupying, as they would, an already developed site would, in any case, have zero impact.

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**(ii) LDP policy: sustainable development**

- ***Is appropriate in terms of its amenity impact, layout, scale, massing, design and materials in relation to its surroundings***

- **amenity impact**

The site is relatively remote and therefore too far distant from any other residential development to be causing any residential amenity issues. The proposals sit within the area occupied by the former Laigh Knockmurrnan farmstead and is surrounded by a mixture of trees and hedgerows. This means that the proposals are virtually unsighted from the adjacent countryside. This position is as confirmed by the photographs and photomontages in Drawing Nos 680/PM1, 2 and 3 on pages 18 to 20. While the building group is sited on the crest of a hill, its overall low profile will be retained by the proposals.

- **scale**

In our opinion, partly for the reasons set out above, the scale is such, i.e. it is too small to present problems, and importantly, the scale reflects that of the original steading.

- **layout, massing, design, materials**

These are described in detail in Part 5.0. These, too, take their guidance from the remains of the original farmhouse.

- ***Is designed to maximise energy efficiency through building siting, orientation and materials***

These details are dealt with in Part 5.0.

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- ***Respects the character of the landscape***

The Landscape Character Assessment published by EnviroScot in 2019 places the site within LCT 66, Agricultural Lowlands – Ayrshire.

Sitting, as it does, within the area occupied by the former farmhouse and outbuildings, which dates back to the early 19th Century, the proposals, representing as they do an example of the historic settlement pattern, have no negative consequences for, and does not threaten the character of, the broader Landscape Area.

Our conclusions set out elsewhere are that the proposals are comfortably absorbed by the landscape context as defined in the area shown in the Photomontage Key Plan on page 17.

- ***Respects, protects and, where possible, enhances natural, built and cultural heritage resources***

LDP1, Environment and Access Map, confirms that the proposed site is not in a Scenic Area and neither is it within or, indeed, close to an SSSI, Special Protection Area, Special Area of Conservation or a Wildlife Site.

While Laigh Knockmurrnan Farm Code area includes 1.13 hectares of woodland, none of this is classified as ancient.

No areas/buildings of historical significance are negatively implicated. The intention is one of restoration to a building form reminiscent of the time of original construction.

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- ***Helps mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change***

Matters regarding sustainability are dealt with in Part 5.0.

- ***Is appropriate to the local area in terms of road safety and effect on the transport network***

The site is approximately 400 metres west of the B730, from which access is gained along a track running northwards from the access road running to High Knockmurrnan Farm. The eventual access onto the B730 is acceptable.

In relation to any impact on the transport network, there will be no changes to the current situation.

- ***Contributes to an efficient use of public services, facilities and infrastructure***

The LDP, in its Glossary, does not define 'public services'. These usually however include, for example, schools, community halls and health centres.

LDP does, however, define infrastructure, roads, sewers (which are described earlier) and supplies of gas, water, electricity, i.e. the utility services, and other services needed to allow a development to take place.

Water has been available since 2005. A direct connection providing electricity was installed by SP Distribution Ltd in November 2008.

Whether public services or infrastructure, the proposal is not seen as potentially problematic.

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- ***Has sustainable urban drainage and avoids increasing and, where possible, reduces, risks of or from all forms of flooding***

SEPA Flood Risk maps confirm that the site falls neither within a flood risk area nor experiences surface water.

**SUDS**

Foul sewerage is currently dealt with by septic tank installed in 2005.

Surface water disposal will be via a sustainable urban drainage system with soakaway sized in accordance with ground condition testing and SEPA and building standards approval.

Foul sewerage disposal will be via existing septic tank system and soakaway system subject to assessment of capacity. Any required improvement measures to be sized in accordance with capacity requirements, ground condition testing and SEPA and building standards approval.

- ***Supports and, where possible, improves the Central Scotland Green Network***

Details of this have yet to emerge but it is highly likely that the site will be outwith any future designated area.

- ***Does not have a negative effect on air and water quality***

It would not.

- ***Is not within Health and Safety Executive safeguard zones if this would lead to increased risk or danger***

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The Local Development Plan does not provide any information about these zones but it is highly likely that the proposed site will not fall within any of these.

- ***Is designed in a way that helps prevent crime***

This application relates to an existing situation.

- ***Wherever possible, is in an accessible location, with opportunities for the use of public transport, and other sustainable transport modes, including cycling and walking***

The site does, in fact, fall within the Scottish Government's definition of 'accessible countryside'. It lies approximately 9.1 miles/14.7 km from Ayr Town Centre.

- ***Includes the use of micro-renewables, wherever appropriate and feasible***

This is not considered to be relevant in this case.

**(iii) LDP policy: rural housing**

The preamble states that '*Housing outside existing settlements would generally consist of:*

- *reusing of existing buildings* – which would be the case here, and
- **replacement housing. The granting of a Certificate of Lawfulness, 19/01062/COL for the caravan and associated garden ground means that residential is lawful on this site in perpetuity (LRB decision in respect of Planning Application Ref 18/00379/APP)**

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Criterion (a) of the policy states: *‘The replacement of an existing house as long as the development is sympathetic to the scale and character of the local area.’*

Defining a ‘local area’ is always a matter of judgement. We have, however, confirmed elsewhere in this Statement that the proposals, in terms of their scale, design and massing, reflect what was there originally and which had been there since the early 19th century.

**(iv) LDP policy: protecting the landscape**

The Environment and Access Map in LDP1 confirms that the site is not in, or adjacent to, a Scenic Area.

**(v) LDP policy: landscape quality**

As stated previously, the site falls within Category LCT 66 Agricultural Lowlands as defined in Scottish Landscape Character Types (LCT) Maps and Descriptions, NatureScot, 2019.

The key characteristics are listed on page 12. The proposals, we would maintain, and as demonstrated by the evidence provided elsewhere in this Statement, have no negative consequences that would exacerbate these issues.

Guidance for LDP1 is provided by SNH’s 1998 Ayrshire Landscape Assessment. Here the site is identified as falling within Landscape Character Type G: Ayrshire Lowlands. The 1998 document provides more detailed guidance in relation to development. The key criteria for the proposals are:



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- *where development is permitted, encourage construction to consolidate existing ... groups of farm buildings*
- *discourage development in the open countryside*

**(vi) LDP policy: preserving trees**

The farm has 1.13 hectares of woodland and this is not affected by the current/proposed site. In addition, this 1.13 hectares is not classified as woodland in the LDP nor as an Ancient Woodland.

**(vii) LDP policy: flooding and development**

As previously stated, the site is not affected by riparian flooding or surface drainage issues.

**(viii) LDP policy: agricultural land**

While part of Laigh Knockmurrnan Farm, the caravan occupies part of the former farmstead.

**(ix) LDP policy: natural heritage**

The Environment and Access Map confirms that the site does not fall within a Site of Scientific Interest, Special Protection Area, Special Area of Conservation or Wildlife Site.

**(x) LDP policy: dark skies**

The site is within a Transition Area relative to the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Zonation, for which there is no specific guidance.

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**(b) Supplementary Planning Guidance: Rural Housing**

Part 1 – Guidance on Assessing Proposals for New Rural Housing states that development in the Rural Area might be acceptable if it is *‘the replacement of an existing house’*.

**As previously stated, the granting of a Certificate of Lawfulness means that residential is lawful on this site in perpetuity (this matter is dealt with later on pages 41 – 42. The existing dwelling (lawful residential use in perpetuity) is not the result of a temporary or series of temporary permissions and it has been in use as a dwelling for at least 10 (in fact, 16) years. It is therefore a matter of whether or not these proposals comply with the requirements of ‘Guidance on replacement housing’.**

**Design Policy 1: Siting of New Housing**

The introduction to the policy states that *‘the design of the new house accords with the design guidance for new houses contained within this supplementary guidance.’*

Part 2 – Design of New Houses in the Countryside states that: *‘When considering new housing in the countryside, it is important that cognisance is taken of the heritage of an area if the special character of South Ayrshire’s countryside is to be preserved and enhanced.’*

The proposals represent a consolidation of the historic settlement pattern and a restoration in keeping with what was the vernacular.

The criteria are set out in full on page 8 of the Supplementary Guidance.

- (a) The current original site is on a ridge line and the single-storey proposals would simply occupy the space/profile of what was

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there previously and therefore achieves a good fit into the landscape

(c) Sunlight, etc

This is dealt with in Part 5.0.

(d) There will be no visible changes to the topography

(e) the proposals are some distance from the nearest neighbours but, as stated elsewhere, the proposals replicate the vernacular. The development is, in our opinion, sympathetic in scale and character to the local area

**Design Policy 2: Design of New Housing**

The objective throughout has been to achieve a traditional appearance and these are described in Planning Application Drawings and 3D image. A copy of the drawings can be found in Part 5.0, and the 3D images in the Appendix.

In summary therefore, and in our opinion, the proposals are consistent with the requirements of the Council's Supplementary Guidance on Rural Housing.

**(c) Planning Guidance: 'Open Space and Designing New Residential Developments'**

Figure 2, however, confirms that there is a considerable area of ground within the red line area extending to 2,211 m<sup>2</sup> which performs the role of private garden ground, well in excess of the 100 m<sup>2</sup> basic requirement.

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**(d) Scottish Planning Policy (SPP), June 2014**

The two Principal Policies are those of Sustainability (laid out in pages 9 to 11) and Placemaking (on pages 12 to 14).

In relation to sustainability, the key phrase in para 29 is '*having regard to the principles for sustainable land use set out in the Land Use Strategy*' – of the LDP.

The proposals have been earlier assessed against the relevant policies of LDP1 and Modified Proposed LDP2 policy: sustainable development.

In our opinion, we have confirmed elsewhere in this Statement that the proposals are compatible with the requirements of these – albeit broad – guidelines.

Promoting Rural Development is dealt with on pages 19 to 24 of SPP. Para 75, Policy Principles, states:

*'The planning system should:*

- in all rural and island areas promote a pattern of development that is appropriate to the character of the particular rural area and challenges it faces'*

The proposals are clearly appropriate to the character of area. SPP does not provide any further advice on challenges but these would include climate/weather. Those seeking sites for farm steadings were especially aware of the likely rigours and selected accordingly.

The Scottish Government's Urban/Rural Classification 2016, published March 2018, places the site within an accessible rural area.

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Para 76 states that '*... it is important to protect against an unsustainable growth in car-based commuting and the suburbanisation of the countryside, particularly where there are environmental assets such as sensitive landscapes or good-quality agricultural land*'.

The careful evaluation of the circumstances pertaining to the site, as described elsewhere, confirms that the proposals would have no negative consequences for the concerns expressed in Para 76.

**It must be emphasised also that the proposals represent the replacement of an existing dwelling with another on a site with permission for housing and so that will not be contributing to a net increase in housing or consequential car-based commuting in this part of the South Ayrshire countryside.**

**(e) Proposed Local Development Plan 2, Main Issues Report**

As stated earlier, **the Main Issues Report in relation to issue 6, Rural Housing, is the only body of statistical evidence available in the public domain about the potential impact of development of new housing in the countryside/rural area. Albeit they cover a limited time period, they were useful enough to enable the robust conclusion that the South Ayrshire countryside, even in its accessible areas, is not under significant threat. There simply isn't sufficient demand.**

In the event, the countryside/rural housing policies in Modified Proposed South Ayrshire LDP2 remain substantially unaltered from those in LDP1.

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**(f) Modified Proposed Local Development Plan 2**

It is understood that the Proposed Plan is now viewed a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The Strategy Map shows the site to be in the Kyle Investment Area.

On 1 September 2020, the Council agreed to submit the Plan to the Scottish Ministers for formal Examination. MPLDP2 was submitted to the Scottish Government's Directorate of Planning and Environmental Appeals (DPEA) for Examination on 12 December 2020, with some documents being resubmitted on 19 February to meet DPEA requirements.

The Examination process will consider unresolved issues. Where these do not apply, the Council will look upon parts of MPLDP2 as material considerations in the determination of planning applications.

In relation to the proposals, it is assumed that the following proposed policies are relevant:

**Core Principle B8**

*'support proposals for new housing in the countryside that accord with LDP policy: rural housing and Supplementary Guidance: Rural Housing'.*

We have confirmed elsewhere in this Statement that this has been achieved.

**Core Principle C1**

*'We will promote the sustainable use of natural ... heritage resources'.*

The proposals will have zero implications here for the criteria of Core Principle C1.

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**(g) Other Proposed Policies of LDP2**

**Proposed Strategic Policy 1: Sustainable Development**

Of its 16 criteria, 11 (with some modifications to the wording) have been taken from LDP policy: sustainable development in the adopted LDP which have been reviewed earlier on pages 28 – 31.

Of the new criteria, the most relevant is: *‘Embraces the principles of placemaking and the six qualities of place.’* The proposed Plan confirms that the six qualities of a successful place are set out in paras 41 to 48 of Scottish Planning Policy, SPP, June 2014. The six are:-

- Distinctive
- Safe and Pleasant
- Welcoming
- Adaptable
- Resource Efficient
- Easy to Move Around and Beyond

In this instance, the important placemaking requirements are to ensure that the proposals do not impact negatively on the landscape, neighbours and conform to the historical scale, massing and appearance of the original building and the historical settlement pattern.

This, we would maintain, has been achieved in this case.

**Proposed Strategic Policy 2: Development Management**

This is intended to ensure that proposals comply with a range of more detailed requirements. The policy contains 13 criteria, 8 of which have been ‘absorbed’ from current policies, i.e. 4 from LDP policy: sustainable development (which have been dealt with earlier) and one

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each from LDP policy: residential policy within settlements, release sites and windfall sites (not applicable), delivering infrastructure (not applicable), spatial strategy and open spaces, both of which have been dealt with earlier. Of the new criteria, the proposals do not present problems for these.

In summary therefore, the proposals comply with the relevant policies of Modified Proposed LDP2. They will not compromise the ability of LDP2 to achieve its aims (as stated), will comply with the requirements of Supplementary Guidance and will not be contrary to specific LDP Policy.

**LDP policy: rural housing**

The wording of policy has not changed since LDP1 and the responses to this can be found on 31 – 32.

**LDP policy: landscape quality**

The wording of criteria (a) to (d) has not changed since LDP1 and the responses to this can be found on page 32. Criterion (e), in relation to geodiversity, is a new addition. The Glossary describes geodiversity as '*the range of rocks, minerals, fossils, soils and landforms*'.

The proposals would not impact negatively on the aforementioned. Otherwise, in assessing the landscape context in order to provide a baseline, full account has been taken of the guidance provided by NatureScot's 2019 Assessment. The site otherwise is not in a proposed Local Landscape Area (LLA).

**LDP policy: woodland and trees**

The proposals do not impact on trees/woodland.



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**LDP policy: water environment**

The proposals do not impact adversely on water environment.

**LDP policy: air, noise and light pollution**

As stated in response to current policy, the proposals would have no measurable impact.

**LDP policy: low- and zero-carbon dwellings**

Refer to Part 5.0.

**LDP policy: Natural Heritage**

The Council's Environment and Conservation maps confirm that the site is not in a Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area, RSPB Important Bird Area, Wildlife Site, SWT Reserve, Ancient Woodland Inventory, Semi-Natural Woodland Inventory or SSSI.

**(h) Other Material Considerations**

- (i) Scottish Natural Heritage Landscape Assessment, 1998
- (ii) EnviroScot's Landscape Character Assessment, January 2019

Both have been used as source documents for underpinning current/proposed policies and are referred to elsewhere in this document.

- (iii) **SAC Local Review Body Ref No LRB/18/24 re Planning Application Ref No 18/00379/APP**

**On 29 January 2019, the LRB approved Planning Application Ref 18/00379/APP re proposal for the erection of a dwellinghouse on**

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**land at Highcroft Nursery B742 – A70 Hillhead – B744 North of Annbank, Coylton, KA6 5LB.**

**This decision is particularly relevant in this case in that it was agreed that, in issuing a Certificate of Lawfulness, 14/01644/COL, for ‘existing siting of caravan with the associated garden ground and access road’, the LRB had agreed that ‘residential use is lawful on this site in perpetuity’.**

**Another case, this time in Barr, was also used as an example.**

The LRB was comfortable with the fact that the proposed house was not in the exact position of the existing caravan, as would be the case with the current application, but this was because of the removal of the caravan.

**LRB also decided that the proposals were otherwise consistent with the requirements of Adopted LDP policies Spatial Strategy (Core Investment Area), Sustainable Development, Rural Housing, Landscape Quality, Protecting the Landscape and Natural Heritage.**

**In addition, that they were consistent with Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) and the Council’s Supplementary Guidance on Rural Housing.**

**We have confirmed elsewhere that the current proposals are similarly consistent, and consistent with the relevant proposed policies of the replacement local plan.**

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**Scotland's Third National Planning Framework Position Statement, June 2014**

NPF 3 flagged up the continuing decline of the population of rural areas.

Para 2.25 states: *'Increased population growth will be vital to sustain our rural communities.'*

Para 2.26 states: *'We do not wish to see development in our rural areas unnecessarily constrained. There will be a continuing need for new housing. We expect more people to live and work in Scotland's rural areas as digital links and opportunities for remote working and new enterprises continue to grow.'*

Working from home is very likely to become a permanent feature of a post-pandemic world.

While neither the LDP nor the replacement LDP address the matter of rural depopulation specifically, it is highly likely that this is the case in the immediate hinterland of the proposals.

**Planning (Scotland) Act 2019**

Commencement orders for this Act are in preparation, delayed by reduced time for Parliamentary scrutiny as a result of the demands of the Government's response to COVID-19.

**The Act will require that development planning in Scotland now contributes to increasing the population of rural Scotland.**

The total population of South Ayrshire has stagnated for a period. To find out what is happening in countryside areas is difficult since there are no coherent 'small areas' population statistics. For South

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Ayrshire, for example, Scottish Government Sources on Population and Household projections are not helpful. It is reasonable to assume, however, that the area within which the proposals are situated, the population is notably in decline.

**Scotland's Fourth National Planning Framework Position Statement, November 2020**

This document is relevant to the situation here because it is an important indication of the 'direction of travel' of Scottish Government thinking.

A recent report by Savills for the Scottish Land Commission, in its summary, highlighted that *'development can be inhibited because there is a presumption against new rural housing or because planning and development policy is not sympathetic to rural circumstances'*. *'... an overly protective and relatively static approach to planning for rural areas across much of rural Scotland evidenced policies that run counter to the Scottish Government's focus on rural depopulation'*.

The Position Statement confirms that rural repopulation will be a priority for addressing in NPF 4 in due course.

The National Records of Scotland, South Ayrshire Council Area Profile, Population Estimates April 2020 confirm that the population of South Ayrshire declined by 0.6% between 1998 and 2019.

The Estimates subdivide council areas into sub council areas. Laigh Knockmurrnan is in the Ayr South and Coylton sub council area.

The size of the sub area therefore precludes detailed commentary but it is reasonable to conclude that the rural hinterland has continued to lose population.

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In its 'A Plan for Better, Greener Places' (page 29), it states that: *'Our policies on rural development will positively encourage development that helps to repopulate and sustain rural areas'.*

*'Our strategy should set out a new agenda for rural development with flexible policies .... **careful consideration being given to further development in pressured and more accessible areas**'* (page 30).

These latter comments are highly significant in that they relate to the context for the current application.

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## **5.0 CONCEPTS AND PROPOSALS**

### **The Proposals**

- **The Vernacular**

The Glossary of Local Development Plan 1 provides no guidance as to what this should mean and there is none also for the Glossary of Proposed Modified LDP 2. Part 2 of Supplementary Guidance: Rural Housing, Design of New Houses in the Countryside states that *'When considering new housing in the countryside, it is important that cognisance is taken of the heritage of the area if the special character of South Ayrshire's countryside is to be preserved and enhanced'*.

OS Maps confirm that Laigh Knockmurrnan has existed since 1855 at least. In fact, the 1841 Census confirms that it was occupied then. In our opinion, this significant historical legacy is reflected in the proposals.

- **The Details**

The proposals are for the development of a modest dwellinghouse within the curtilage of the existing farmstead, along with attached domestic garage space.

The proposals, comprising of the dwellinghouse along with attached domestic garage space shown on Drawing Nos 680/01 and 680/02 which form part of the planning application, will provide the means to consolidate the use of (and allow replacement of) the existing elements of the steading provided by the existing caravan, container and sheds to form one coherent unit alongside and complementing the retained stable building and kennels.

**Aware of the policy context, the Applicant is keen to respect the scale and arrangement of the original farmstead and return the development to a similar character and scale to that which existed**

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**prior to the period of the farmstead falling into a state of dilapidation and eventually the ruin which remains today.**

To bring about the return to the scale and character of the original development, it is considered appropriate to build largely following the footprint of the original house and steading, incorporating traditional scale and massing in terms of height, with traditional rural finishes in terms of whitewashed rendered external walls and slated roof for the dwellinghouse and garage areas.

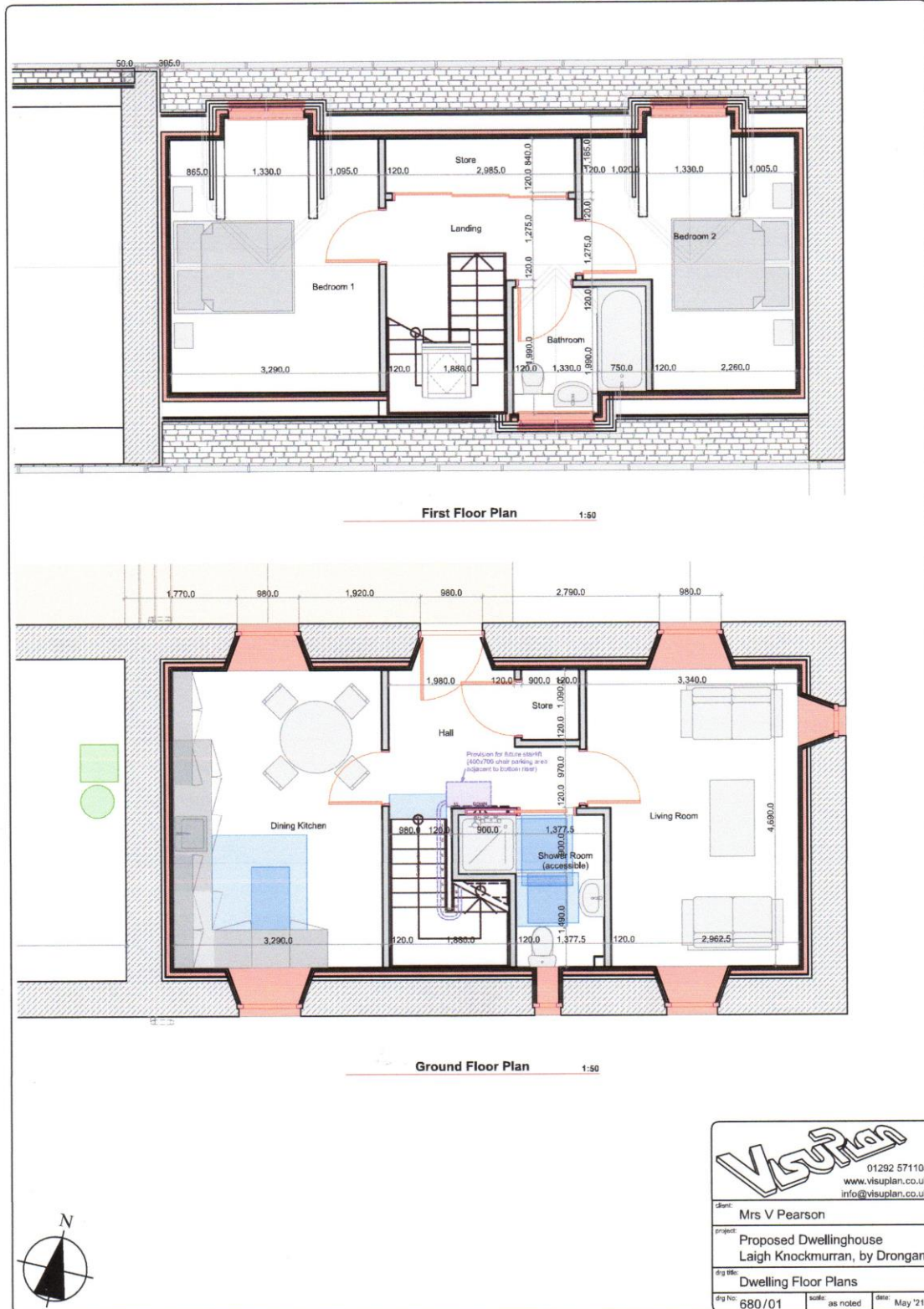
The design of dwellinghouse area of the development has been further considered, with the fenestration tailored to match that of the original dwellinghouse walls where window and door opening sizing and positions are still visible within the ruined stonework where it remains. It is proposed that the original stonework walls will be removed to make way for the new walls built to allow the layout and structure to fully comply with current building regulations, but it is anticipated that the down-takings will be done with care in order that the existing stonework features can be reused for the new garden wall and feature stone areas within the site.

Although no definitive information exists to determine roof pitch, skews or chimneys or the presence of an upper-floor level or dormer windows on the original dwellinghouse, it is considered appropriate to adopt a roof pitch capable of accommodating storey-and-a-half construction to provide an appropriate floor area of dwellinghouse suitable as a modest family home. The fenestration of the ground floor lends itself to the formation of a traditional front façade with a pair of dormer windows sized and located to line through with the windows to the ground floor frontage. It is also considered appropriate to include traditionally scaled and located skews and chimneys to complete the traditional design of the development.

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**Drawing No 680/01: Dwelling Floor Plans**

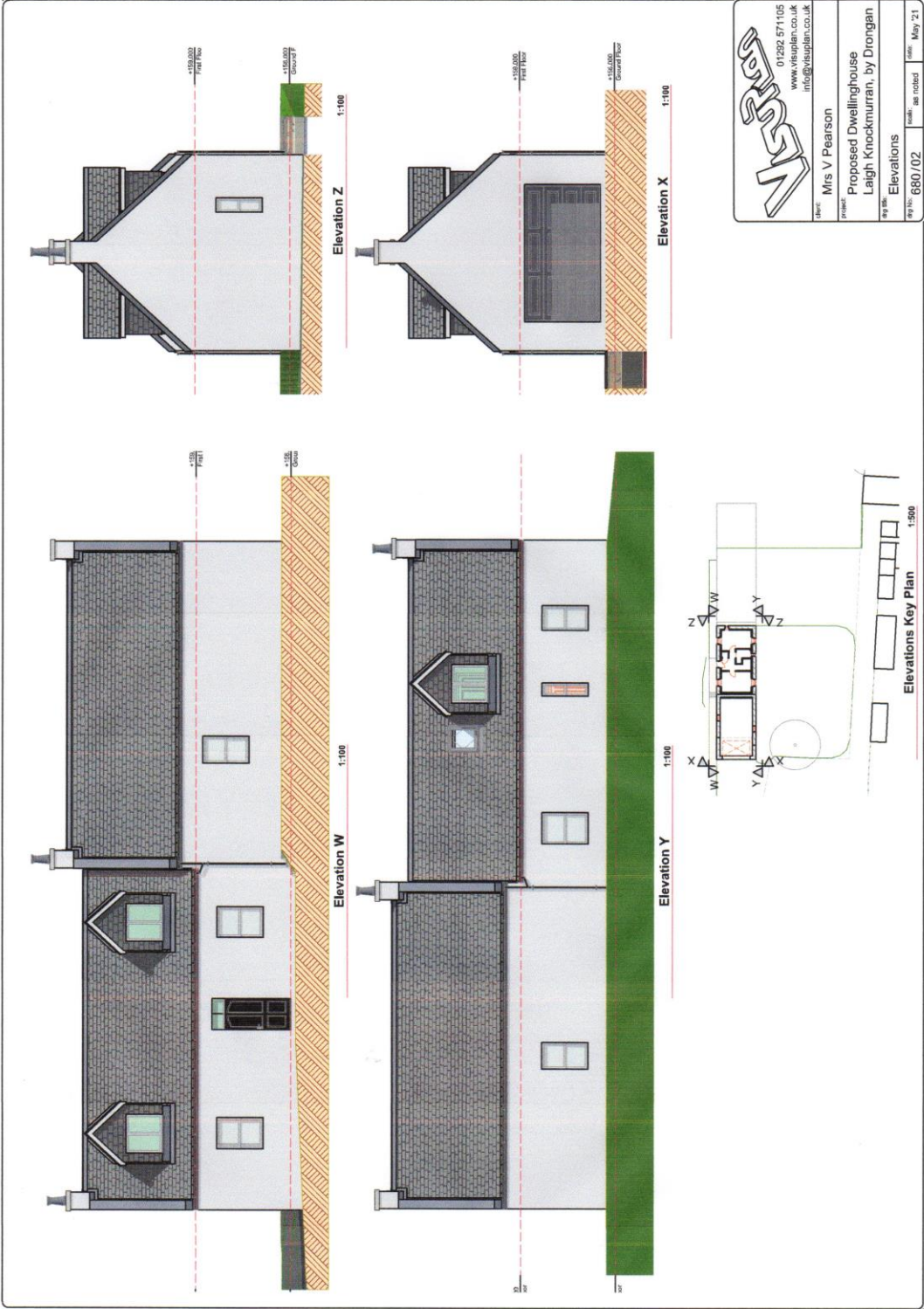




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Drawing No 680/02: Elevations



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It is considered that, overall, the fenestration, finishes, roof profile and dormer arrangement of the dwellinghouse complies with the Council's guidance for rural development.

3D images of the proposals can be found in the Appendix.

- **Garden Ground**

There will be 2,211 m<sup>2</sup> of private garden ground, as shown in Drawing No 680/S2: Proposed Site Plan, which significantly exceeds the minimum amount required by policy, i.e. 100 m<sup>2</sup>.

- **Crime Prevention**

Due to the secluded and well screened nature of the site, the Applicant already has the precaution of having guard dogs on the site to deter crime. It is anticipated that this form of protection will continue and that additional intruder detection and alarm cover, appropriate for the proposals, will be installed.

In addition, it is noted that the building is proposed to be of robust construction to resist forced entry, and doors, windows and glazing will comply by meeting the recommendations for physical security in Section 2 of 'Secured by Design' (ACPO, 2009) or an equivalent standard.

- **Sustainability Features**

**Micro-renewables**

High levels of insulation and renewable technologies, including solar collectors, air-source heat pump, a wood-burning stove and energy-efficient lighting throughout are to be incorporated into the detailed design and specification at Building Warrant stage to minimise carbon footprint of the overall proposals.

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**Drawing No 680/S2: Proposed Site Plan**



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**Sunlight**

Due to the traditional fenestration of the building's elevations, there is limited potential for incorporating passive solar gain in reduction of the overall energy use for the dwelling. Each apartment will comply with the minimum requirements for natural daylighting provision as defined in the current Scottish Building Domestic Technical Standards. The rear elevation of both the dwelling and the garage roofs are south facing and have been kept largely clear of openings to maximise the potential optimum areas for roof-mounted PV and water-heating solar collectors.

- **Landscaping/Boundary Treatment**

These are described on Drawing No 680/BT1, 'Boundary Treatment Key Plan' on the following page.

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**Drawing No 680/BT1: Boundary Treatment Key Plan**



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## **6.0 CONCLUSIONS**

- On 9 March 2020, a Certificate of Lawfulness for the existing caravan, associated garden ground and access was granted by South Ayrshire Council (Ref No 19/01062/COL)
- On 29 January 2019, South Ayrshire Local Review Body approved Planning Application Ref 18/00379/APP re proposal for the erection of a dwellinghouse on land at Highcroft Nursery, B742 – A70 Hillhead – B744 north of Annbank, Coylton, KA6 5LB
- This decision is particularly relevant in this case in that it was agreed that, in issuing a Certificate of Lawfulness, 14/01644/COL, for ‘existing siting of caravan with the associated garden ground and access road, the LRB had agreed that residential use is lawful on this site in perpetuity
- In relation to the details of the proposals, we have striven to ensure that they are compatible with:
  - (i) the characteristics of the site, its location and setting within the broader and immediately surrounding landscape/countryside
  - (ii) the characteristics of the settlement pattern in this part of the countryside
  - (iii) the requirements of the Development Plan and Supplementary Guidance, and
  - (iv) where applicable, Material Considerations
- Increasingly, Scottish Government policy has been emphasising the importance of responding to persistent problems of rural depopulation. This point was made in NPF 3
- Scotland’s Fourth National Planning Framework Position Statement, November 2020, reminds us that the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019

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requires that development planning in Scotland now contributes to increasing the population of rural Scotland

- In fact, the Position Statement makes several references to the need for a positive response to rural depopulation which is not limited to 'remote' areas. Simultaneously, effective safeguards for the natural environment and landscape should be in place
- There has been a farm/farming activity at Laigh Knockmurrnan since the 1840s. Laigh Knockmurrnan is therefore part of the historical settlement pattern. Reinforcing the connection with this pattern, the proposals are entirely within the boundary of the original farm steading, with a scale, massing and use of materials that reflect/respect the original

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***APPENDIX***

**3D Images of the Proposals**



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