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# NETHERTON ROAD, STROMNESS

## Development Brief



The photograph above identifies the site from the seaward approach to the car ferry pier, looking South-West across Stromness.

### INTRODUCTION

The site is identified for housing development in the Stromness Local Plan, half of which Site H11 (South) has previously been developed as a continuation of and extension to the adjacent Citadel development to the South by Orkney Housing Association Ltd. It is highlighted in red in the image above, and can be seen to be located towards the south-west periphery of the town of Stromness, on higher ground above the original, lower, sea frontage development. Site H11 (North) can be seen to remain undeveloped as a separate site in its own right.

This Development Brief identifies the primary development opportunities and constraints for Site H11 (North) with due regard to both Orkney Islands Council's current Local Plan 2004, and Stromness Urban Design Framework.

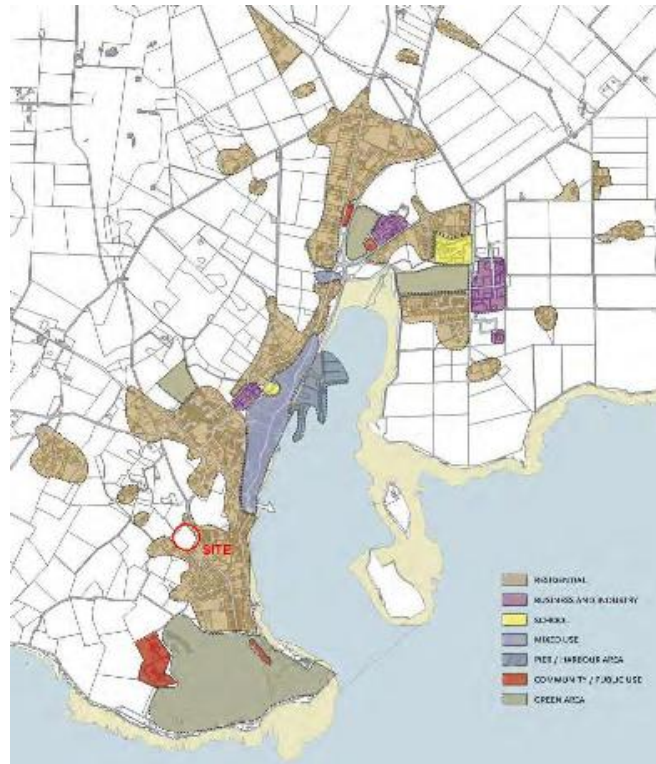
**POLICY BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

Within Orkney Islands Local Plan the site is designated for housing development under proposal ‘H11’.

This proposal also encompasses the south end of the site on which an affordable housing development has now been completed.

The image on the right is reproduced from the Stromness Urban Design Framework, and identifies existing land use areas within Stromness.

The proposed site has been identified, and can be seen to be a clear ‘pocket’ within surrounding established residential areas.



The Stromness Urban Design Framework also identifies the site as being a primary area for new housing within the established urban area.

The site is identified as a higher density housing site where the ‘third tier character area’, guidance will apply, as identified in the Stromness Urban Design Framework. It is bounded on two sides by ‘third tier character areas’, a similar density development would be a logical town progression up to the recognisably defined boundary formed by the Netherton Road junction.

Development of this site will also integrate the small skyline grouping on Netherton Road to the west of the site into the town.

Both Orkney Islands Council’s Local Plan, in which Stromness is identified within the National Scenic Area, and Stromness Urban Design Framework comment on the inappropriate general nature of recent development on the edge of Stromness, quoting that *“It is questionable whether much of the new development on the edge of Stromness respects this high quality landscape”*.

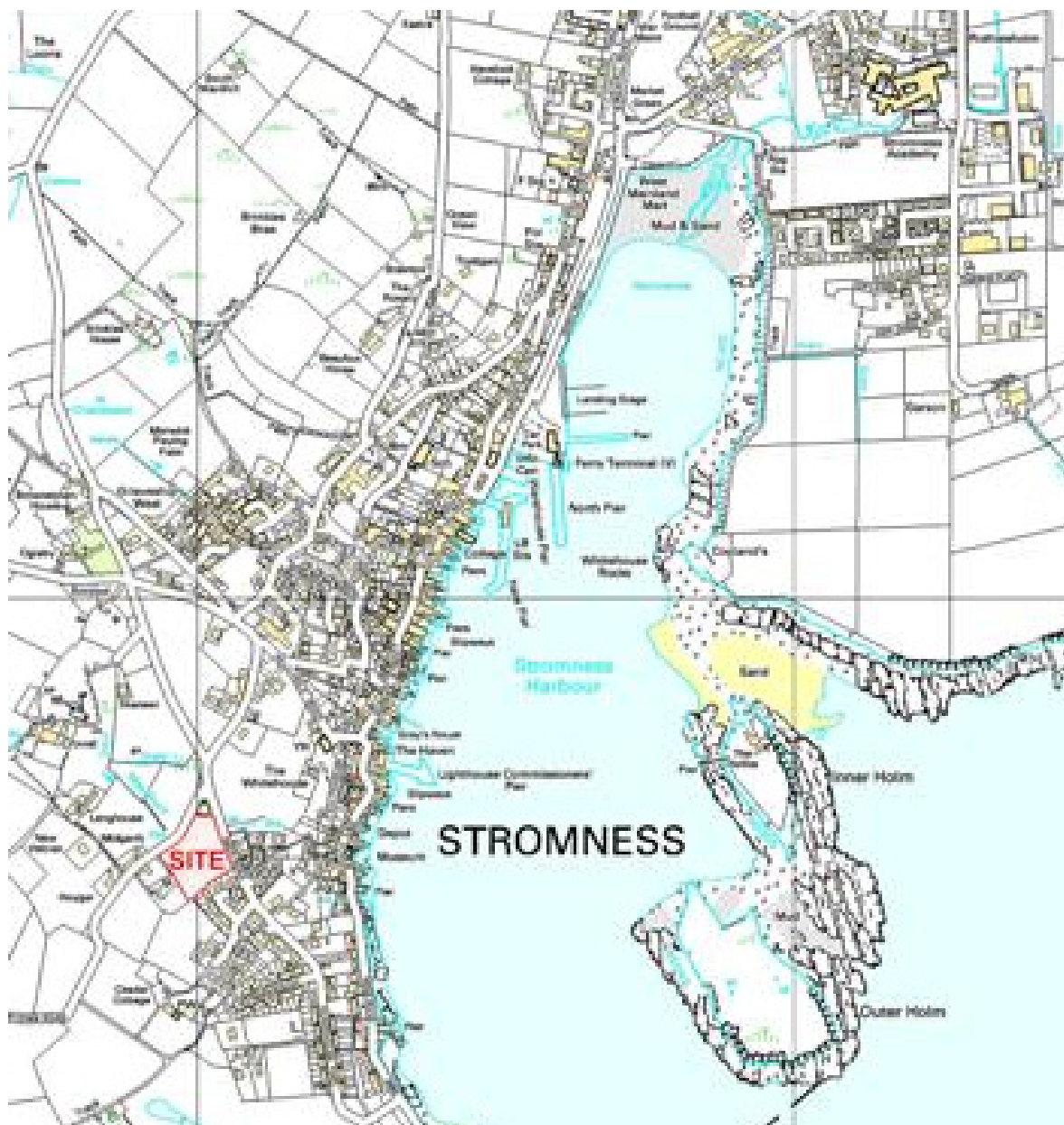
It has been identified in the Stromness UDF that the production of design statements, design guides and specific design briefs are invaluable tools in improving place awareness in the local community. The purpose of this development brief is to provide a vehicle for ensuring that new development on site H11 *“responds directly to the existing character of the area around it”*.

## GUIDANCE TO APPLICANTS

This Developments Brief sets out the planning and design principles for the Netherton Road site in Stromness. Applicants will be required to demonstrate that their proposals respond to the Development Brief Strategy and the more detailed Design Criteria set out in this Development Brief. This evidence should be presented in a design statement which will be submitted in support of a planning application. Clarification should be sought from the planning department at the pre-application stage on the level of information required in a design statement.

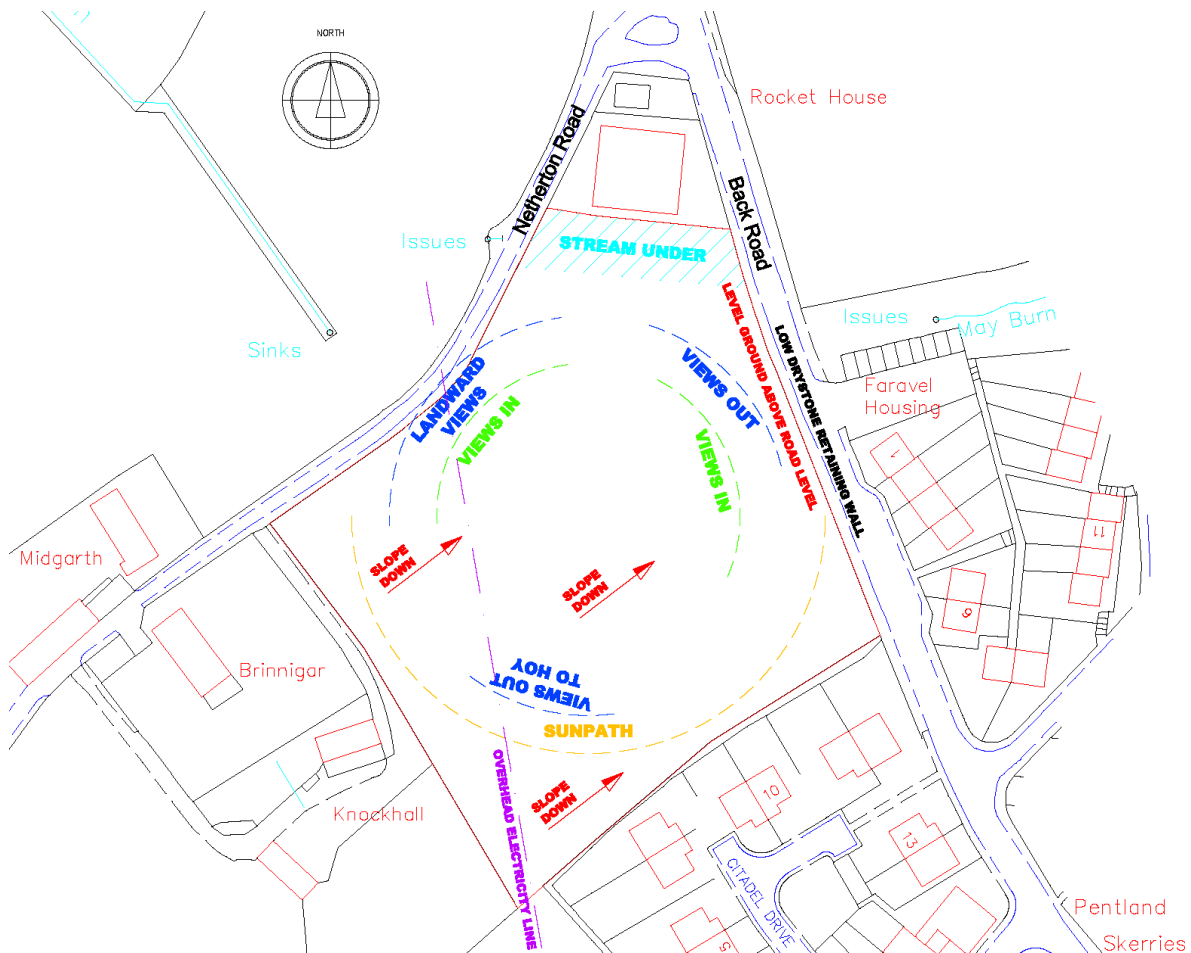
## SITE DESCRIPTION

The site is a peripheral development zone outwith Stromness historic, relatively densely developed town centre, as can be observed in the following site location plan:



Back Road, which defines the north-east site boundary, is the primary vehicular link from north to south Stromness, taking an elevated route along high ground above the main town, and bypassing the central narrow, historic streets. This provides a natural linear focus for the town development, infilling back towards the main town from the more recent schemes in the lower, flat areas to the south.

The following plan illustrates an outline analysis of the site characteristics, as described below:



**Vistas:**

The south end of the site has the potential for restricted views between the existing development on the east side of Back Road, assisted by the site being elevated slightly above the road level.

Towards the north end of the site the potential for views considerably improves over open ground to the east.



As the site rises to the west, there is opportunity for provision of framed views to the north-east through south-east.

### **Topography:**

Back Road forms a high route around Stromness, rising around the steeper coastal slope and effectively framing the original town. It is not at the crest of the ridge, with the land continuing to rise to the west beyond.

The site is slightly elevated above the level of Back Road, and continues to rise at a steepening gradient to its western boundary, up towards the West Mainland peninsular plateau.

### **Climate:**

The site location just on the edge of the peninsular plateau does result in the site being quite exposed to the south-west prevailing winds. This requires that the site development should where possible incorporate natural sheltering elements from the site layout, and from the form of the plot boundaries.

The natural alignment of Back Road indicates a bias towards a north-east – south-west building orientation, however the depth of the site permits a local road alignment to maximise exposure to the sun-path.

### **Services:**

#### **Water**

Records indicate that the public water supply includes a 150mm main running along Back Road, immediately adjacent to the site.

#### **Drainage**

Records indicate that the foul public drainage network runs downhill to the south-east from the existing developments to the east and the south of the site. This would require extension of the system up Back Road to serve this new development.

#### **Electricity**

There are existing overhead power lines running north - south across the site (3 x 11kV lines), which will have to be diverted to allow continuing future development of the site, but which does strongly indicate the availability of an electrical supply to the site.

### THE DEVELOPMENT BRIEF STRATEGY

In common with the other recently completed adjacent developments, the site must be designed to both address Back Road and to create its own identifiable special identity. This must be carefully considered, to maintain these special identities at all times as the development is completed in a phased progression.



Back Road is predominately a circulation route. It is therefore considered that the development should provide a suitable continuation of the route's linear edge, with the creation of the primary semi-public space for the amenity of residents, and in keeping with the overall character of the town's public to private spatial demarcations. The preceding Development Brief Strategy Diagram illustrates the key to site layout, building lines and network of routes and spaces which should be delivered through the development of this site.

In a holistic development, the complete site must relate within the town context. Stromness has varying environments, of which the dominant is the original traditional development of the town in response to its environment and culture. The older centre has consequently developed around groupings of 'tight-knit', sheltered spaces, which are largely introspective, with restricted interconnections between them and the small public focal points.

To achieve this, the following strategic points should be addressed through new development:



- There should be a consistency in the choice of materials and design approach across the development brief area.
- New houses which form an edge to Back Road or Netherton Road must not turn their back on these public roads, ensuring that there is aspect on to these streets, and the building line must follow the road line.
- New houses must all directly address the pedestrian routes and public spaces identified in the development brief.
- New development should achieve plot sizes and building lines which create sheltered spaces and a pleasant public realm. In some circumstances this will result in a layout where the minimum distances will be less than 21m between buildings and where the footprint of buildings exceeds one third of the total plot area.

## THE DESIGN CRITERIA

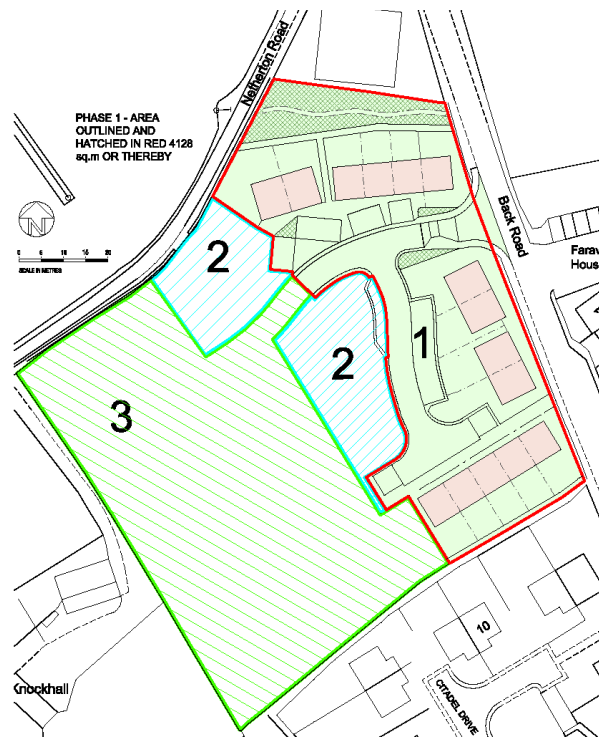
The primary design principle is to create housing that will enhance the lives of the occupants at both private and community levels, and will also positively contribute to the amenity of the local area.

To succeed, the design must therefore be carefully considered at the levels of both the development layout, and the individual house layouts.

Unquestionably, modern space and living standards have resulted in the design of houses that are significantly larger than traditional styles. It is however still possible with care to design contemporary housing that will respect and relate to traditional form, scale and proportion, and sit easily in harmony with existing styles.

Inevitably, the development will be progressed in distinct phases as both budget and housing demand dictate. It is imperative therefore that a masterplan is developed which will ensure that at all stages the layout will provide established occupants with a clear identity and 'sense of place', and that each phase will afford both the occupants and Stromness as a whole with a cohesive and unified development.

Phase 2 surfacing must be considered at the Phase 1 design stage to avoid leaving a barren space prior to Phase 2 development. Consideration should be given to reinstating a grassed surface in the interim period.



**DESIGN CRITERIA 1 - Buildings and Placemaking**

Conceptually, the development must seek to emulate the lower town progression of intimate, private spaces opening off the more public through routes. This separation will become defined in arranging the houses linearly along Back Road, and the main access 'home-zone' surfacing, together with the addition of a footpath into the development at the south end, will provide the invitation into the more controlled spaces. A separate footpath at the north will facilitate pedestrian bypass routes from the main town, via Back Road, up to Netherston Road.

The development brief has been drafted to respond to the surrounding context of existing buildings. This comprises 2 storey development across Back Road at Faravel and 1 ½ storeys of the Citadel development which are of very similar height. The site - as existing - is identified in the Stromness UDF as a fifth tier area, but is also allocated as a higher density housing area. Dwellings should therefore be predominately two storey units at the lower, Back Road end of the site, however to minimise intrusion on the skyline above the town, should be lower, maximum 1.5 storey units towards the higher, western end.

The individual house designs must be contemporary, but developed to respect more traditional 'crisply detailed' building forms. The scale and proportions of the buildings must be carefully considered in both their individual, and in their designed groupings, to ensure a coherence and integration with the existing town forms and environment.



The site should be developed as a single, identifiable housing area, which will be further divided into smaller sub-groups that will ensure a completeness of design, and the creation of 'place', throughout all phases of development.

The main access will be directly into the site off Back Road, with the groupings following the ground contours, in response to natural site topography.

The houses must be simply massed, and designed with the relatively stark, carefully proportioned massing that will relate to a more traditional aesthetic. Eaves and verges will be cleanly constructed with minimal overhang, and simple pitched roof forms used. The phase 1 development must be used to define the site, from Back Road, and initially create an internal space which will become enclosed as further phases are developed within the site. The use of semi-detached and terraced units, as well as providing highly thermally efficient houses, will assist in providing the edge definition required for the site identity.

Whilst fully respecting and relating to more traditional aesthetic, successful contemporary design is capable, by giving due heed to careful proportioning, to incorporate larger glazing units and different materials, including timber cladding. Used correctly, these units can be positively integrated as planar elements within the overall composition of the buildings.



The use of timber cladding also allows the judicious inclusion of colour into the design, which serves both to brighten the surrounding spaces. Use of colour however must be carefully considered and controlled, to reinforce individual identity whilst maintaining a unified development aesthetic. Carefully designed colour highlights can both enliven a unified development, together with providing a necessary unique sense of identity for individual dwellings or blocks.

Robust and easily maintained materials will ensure that the designed aesthetic will remain throughout the seasons, again as can be seen in more traditional housing forms.

Houses are to be designed to follow the guidelines provided in "Housing for Varying Needs", and "Secured by Design", and to exceed the requirements of the 2010 Building Standards Regulations. They are to be designed in an efficient, straightforward layout that should accommodate the majority of needs throughout changing family and household development.

## **DESIGN CRITERIA 2 – Boundaries and Edges**

Back Road is predominately a circulation route. It is therefore considered that the development should provide a suitable continuation of the route's linear edge, with the

creation of the primary semi-public space for the amenity of residents, and in keeping with the overall character of the town’s public to private spatial demarcations.

Along the eastern, Back Road, and northern, Netherton Road boundaries the existing low, eroded drystone walls should be reinstated as an identifiable boundary. This will serve both to relate to the vernacular and to provide an element of continuity with the previous development.



The houses along the Back Road and Netherton Road boundaries must address both the roads and the newly created internal development space, which will necessitate the design of dual aspect houses to ensure the positive development of the streetscape. The roads will dictate the building line which must directly follow the road line. Vehicular parking must be within the development, from which the houses will be accessed.

Direct pedestrian access to the houses along Back Road will be required to maintain the ‘sense of place’ along Back Road, and accesses through the drystone walling should be carefully detailed to avoid the creation of ‘sterile’ public areas.



Within the development, plots are to be delineated by low open boarded fencing which by assisting to slow wind speeds will also provide an element of shelter to individual plots and to the development as a whole.

*< Open boarded fencing on ‘Citadel’ development*

Generally, boundary detailing should be kept simple, and relate back to vernacular forms of space definition.

**DESIGN CRITERIA 3 – Open Space and Landscaping**

Landscaping should be designed in a format which will serve to provide intimate semi-public spaces. The concepts laid down in ‘Designing Streets – A Policy Statement for Scotland’ issued by the Scottish Government should be implemented. This document promotes an informal system of well connected streets with natural traffic calming (building lines, shared road surfaces etc) built in and equal priority given to all modes including walking and cycling. Pedestrian links should be established in accordance with the illustrative Development Brief Strategy plan, providing a public focus onto the communal greenspace around the burn.

The elevated location of the site will result in relatively high wind exposure that is hostile to planting. Any proposed planting should be restricted to proven hardy native species, or species already established in Stromness (e.g. Sycamore).



The opportunity should be taken to open the culvert along the north site boundary to become a landscaped burn, with an adjacent foot / cycle path created alongside linking Back Road with Netherton Road. This can be designed to become a “wildlife corridor” that would significantly contribute to the amenity of the area. There will be a need to establish a mechanism to address the maintenance of public realm before the first phase of development is completed.

*< View east along line of culvert*

#### **DESIGN CRITERIA 4 – Site Access, Roads and Movement**

Back Road is the primary vehicular route from north to south Stromness, from which the site can be readily accessed. Back Road is also a key bus route, which will therefore ensure access to public transport from and to the development.

Within the development, an informal layout should be provided, promoting equal priority to walking and cycling modes of transport, together with vehicular. “People friendly” spaces are to be created, with main access ‘home-zone’ surfacing achieved by following the concepts as defined in the Scottish Government document “Designing Streets – A Policy Statement for Scotland”. The introduction of traffic attenuation at the entrance, and by the general roads layout, should ensure a self-enforcing control, together with providing a physical identifier of the entrance into a more private spatial realm.

Pedestrian routes are available along and across Back Road, from which a network of footpaths are available to the primary facilities in the town. Netherton Road does not have any formal pedestrian infrastructure and it may be necessary to provide this through the development process. Developers should discuss proposals with OIC Roads Support Team, and efforts should be made to ensure that this development respects the more rural than urban characteristics of Netherton Road.

The layout of the site must include for extension of the Stromness cycle and footpath network both into and through the development, allowing access to adjacent developments to the south and west. The Development Strategy Diagram identifies the network of routes which should be delivered through the development of this site.

The addition of the footpath into the development at the south end will provide the invitation into the more controlled spaces. The separate footpath at the north, as referred to in Design Criteria 3 above, will facilitate pedestrian bypass routes from the main town, via Back Road, up to Netherton Road.

Road construction should not be conceived in isolation but as an integrated element of the overall design of the development. The Council's standards should serve as a guide but should be flexible enough so as not to inhibit the design of an innovative, less car dominant layout which respects the landform and character of the area.

The developer may be required to provide a Traffic Assessment to identify the impact of new development on the existing road network and transport infrastructure.

### **DESIGN CRITERIA 5 – Water Resource Management**

There are no known incidences of flooding occurring within the site, as per the Addendum to the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

Surface water should be treated by a SuDS for the whole site, complying with the requirements of PAN61, Planning and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, and with good practice guidance such as the SuDS Manual and SuDS for Roads.

Individual plot attenuation systems are to remain private, therefore must be capable of being inspected and maintained by respective owners.

An existing Scottish Water adopted combined sewer lies to the east side of Back Road, and foul drainage from the site should connect to this public system. It may be necessary to upgrade the local system to accommodate this and it will be necessary to investigate these local network issues, including capacity of Bu Point Waste Water Treatment Plant at the planning application stage.

For further information, please contact:

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