



Orkney Islands Council

# The Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site

## Supplementary Planning Guidance

7 December 2010



## SECTION 1

### The Purpose of the Supplementary Planning Guidance

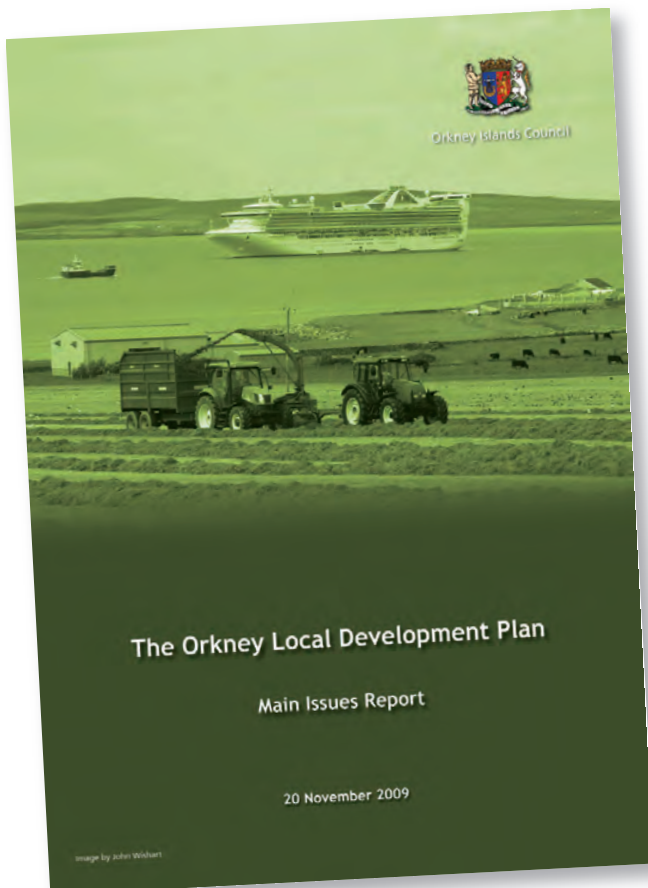
The purpose of this Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) is to establish a detailed policy context for managing the impact of land use planning decisions on the Outstanding Universal Value of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site. The scope of the SPG includes issues associated with the component sites themselves and their wider setting.

The SPG will deliver a key Aim of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site Management Plan 2008-13 in terms of updating the existing development plan policy to improve clarity at an early stage taking cognisance of the Management Plan and recent expert studies. A Main Issues Report has been published as part of the Orkney Local Development Plan Review process (20 November 2009). This notifies of the intention to establish a fresh policy within the new Local Development Plan relating to the World Heritage Site (WHS). This policy will establish a general commitment to preserving the integrity and authenticity of the WHS. It will also seek to manage the impact of development on the wider setting of the WHS, and prevent development which would have a significant adverse impact on its Outstanding Universal Value.

The Main Issues Report specifies that Supplementary Guidance will be prepared as part of the Local Development Plan to provide greater detail on the policy issues. This SPG is intended to be the first stage in this process. It is intended that this SPG will ultimately be adopted as statutory supplementary guidance and become part of the Local Development Plan in due course.

The overall objective of this SPG is twofold:

- 1) *To ensure that high quality development, which is sympathetic and appropriate to the WHS and its setting can occur.*
- 2) *To ensure that development which will have a significant adverse impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site or its setting does not occur.*





## SECTION 2

### Background

Sites are inscribed onto the World Heritage List by UNESCO following their successful nomination by a state party under the auspices of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage 1972 (World Heritage Convention), ratified by the UK Government in 1984. To be successful, a nomination dossier must demonstrate that a particular site is of Outstanding Universal Value.

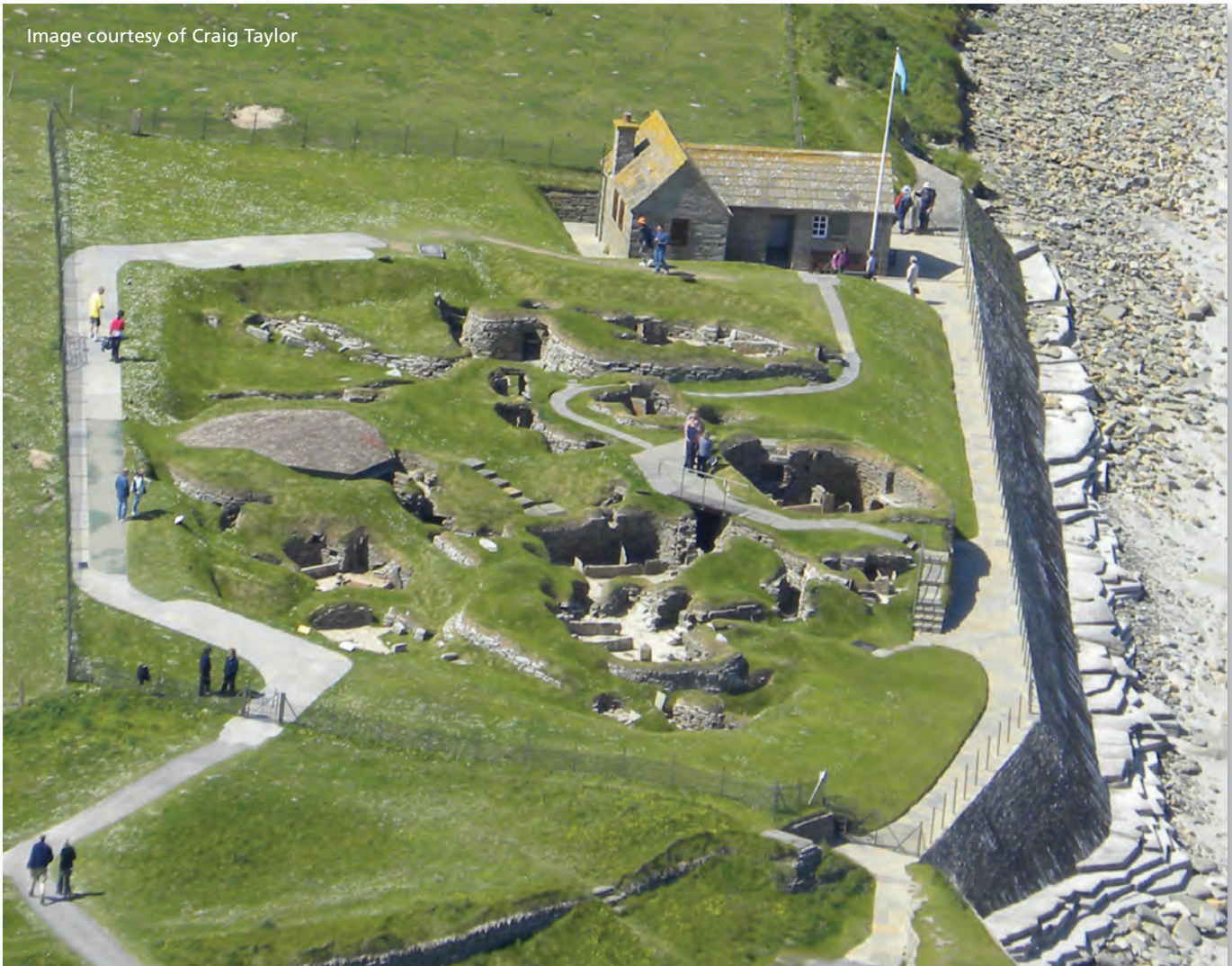


through a Local Development Plan or Supplementary Planning Guidance, should be established to assist Planning Authorities to fulfil their roll in managing development both within the sites themselves and also within the wider setting of the sites.

Although the UK Government is responsible for ensuring that the terms of the Convention are met, both the Scottish Government and Local Authorities have key roles to play in realising the Convention's aims. No additional statutory controls result from World Heritage designation. However, national guidance requires that specific policy, for example

Scottish Ministers have identified the historic environment as one of Scotland's greatest economic, cultural and social assets and stress the importance that they place upon this finite resource as part of the nation's identity. Whilst this SPG seeks to safeguard the Outstanding Universal Value of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site, it does not seek to stifle change or to restrict progress unnecessarily. Rather, it is the aim of this document to ensure that high quality development is delivered in a sympathetic and appropriate manner.

Image courtesy of Craig Taylor





## SECTION 3

### The Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site

The Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site comprises six individual component sites, each of which are Scheduled Monuments: the settlement of Skara Brae, Maeshowe, the Stones of Stenness, the Watch Stone, the Barnhouse Stone, and the Ring of Brodgar and its associated ritual and funerary monuments. The Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site was formally inscribed onto the World Heritage List on 2 December 1999 as a group of sites

deemed to be an outstanding testimony to the cultural achievements of the Neolithic peoples of Northern Europe, fulfilling four of the six criteria of Outstanding Universal Value for cultural sites as outlined below:

**Criterion (i): represent a masterpiece of human creative genius**

*Maeshowe is an exceptionally early architectural accomplishment, which, together with the visually interconnected Stones of Stenness and the Ring of Brodgar, represent a masterpiece of human creative genius. The major monuments that make up the World Heritage Site display the highest sophistication in conception, design and execution.*

**Criterion (ii): exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design**

*The World Heritage Site exhibits an important interchange of human values during the development of the architecture of major ceremonial complexes in the British Isles, Ireland and north-west Europe*

**Criterion (iii): bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared**

*Through the combination of ceremonial, funerary and domestic sites, the World Heritage Site bears a unique testimony to a cultural tradition which flourished between about 3000 BC and 2000 BC. The state of preservation of Skara Brae is without parallel amongst Neolithic settlement sites*





***Criterion (iv): be an outstanding example of a type of building or architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history***

*The World Heritage Site is an outstanding example of an architectural ensemble and archaeological landscape which illustrate a significant stage of human history, that is, when the first large ceremonial monuments were built.*

The Neolithic represents arguably the most fundamental period of change to occur within the history of human society, it marks the end of humanity's reliance upon solely hunting and gathering foodstuffs and sees the origins of farming. The period is characterised by the first major instances of land clearance, the demarcation of distinct territories, fixed settlements and monumental architecture.

The Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site is the smallest and most closely defined WHS in the UK. The WHS is concentrated in two distinct geographical centres with Skara Brae located on the northwest

coast of the West Mainland and the remaining monuments sited some five miles to the southeast.

The WHS does not exist in isolation and studies have shown that one of the defining aspects of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site is its topographical, archaeological, perceptual and experiential relationships with the surrounding physical and archaeological landscapes. With the exception of Skara Brae, the WHS lies within a large, open, loch basin. This landscape is one of the most sensitive in Scotland, forming part of a National Scenic Area and comprising the setting for this collection of internationally significant monuments. Further explanation of this issue can be found in Section 4 (below).

The scope of this SPG is therefore intentionally wider than the actual extent of the formal WHS boundary. It encompasses the wider setting which evidence suggests is critically significant to the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS. It is therefore a legitimate concern of the land use planning system to seek to manage the impact of new development within this wider setting/land area.





## SECTION 4

### The Setting of the World Heritage Site

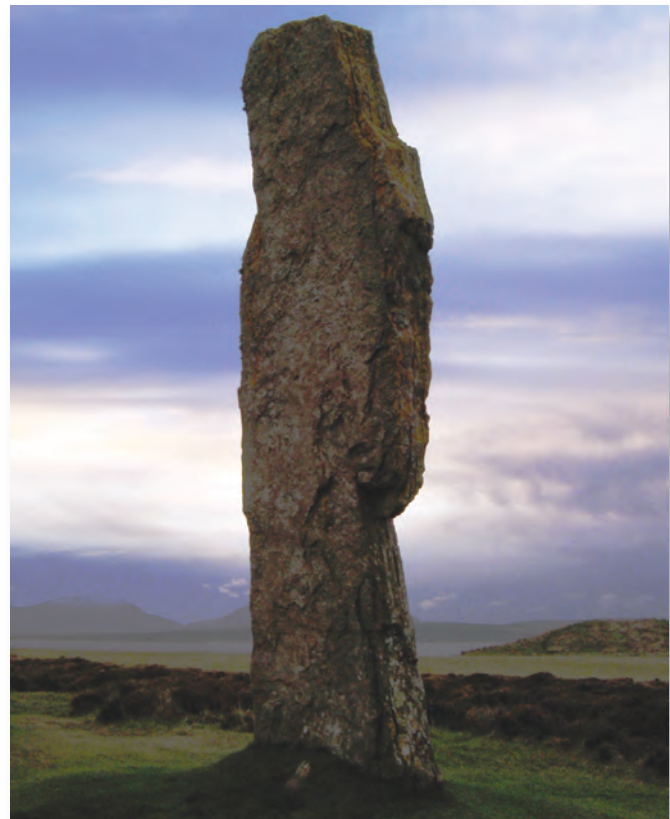
Though no additional statutory controls result from World Heritage designation, Scottish Planning Policy requires that planning authorities protect WHS and their settings from inappropriate development by including relevant policies in the Development Plan, which set out the factors that will be taken into account when deciding applications for development proposals which may impact on a WHS. These policies must ensure that the immediate setting of a WHS, important views, and other areas which are important to the site and its protection, be protected from inappropriate development. In addition to this, the setting of all scheduled monuments is a material consideration for local authorities when determining applications for planning permission and in all cases where a proposed development may impact upon the setting of a scheduled monument, Historic Scotland must be consulted.

Scottish Planning Policy and the Scottish Historic Environment Policy emphasise that setting is more than simply the immediate surroundings of a site. It can also relate to how the site was intended to fit into the landscape, the views from it and how the site is seen from the surrounding area.

The Statement of Outstanding Universal Value set out in the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site Management Plan, as submitted to the World Heritage Committee for approval in 2008, states that:

***“The relationships between the World Heritage Site and the wider physical landscape are critical to understanding the monuments and the intentions of their builders; and hence form part of the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site.”***

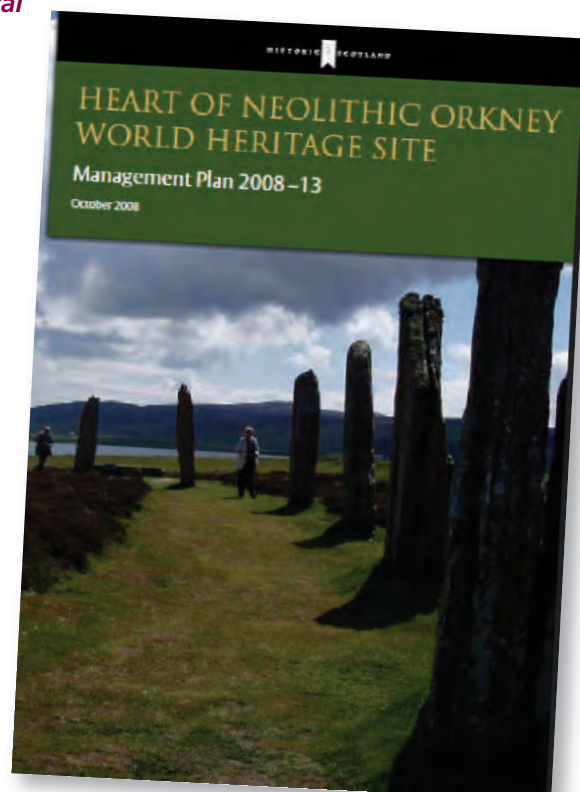
With the exception of Skara Brae, it appears to be clear that the wider setting of the monuments comprising the WHS was indeed integral to their construction, it being inconceivable that their positioning was either accidental or incidental. Henge monuments throughout the UK are often located in large natural topographical



bowls and are generally sited between rivers, lakes or lochs. Furthermore, Maeshowe is intentionally aligned in such a manner that on midwinter, the sunlight from the setting sun shines directly along the entrance passage to light the main chamber within. Not only does this phenomenon suggest that

considerable thought and planning went into the siting of the monument, the fact that the midwinter sun sets behind the imposing Hoy hills to the southwest demonstrates that the surrounding landscape was also a consideration of the architects.

Whilst it is accepted that the siting of Skara Brae and its links to the wider landscape are not as fundamentally important as at Brodgar, and that its ‘Inner Sensitive Zone’ has a differing values and characteristics than that at its counterpart, applications for planning permission will be assessed utilising the same methodology to determine whether the Outstanding Universal Value of the site will be adversely affected.





## SECTION 5

### Outstanding Universal Value

UNESCO states that cultural heritage is a priceless and irreplaceable asset, not only of a particular nation, but of humanity as a whole. Particular elements of that heritage, where it can be demonstrated that the exceptional qualities of which are of Outstanding Universal Value, are inscribed upon the World Heritage List. Outstanding Universal Value is defined by UNESCO within their Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention as:

***“Cultural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity. As such, the permanent protection of this heritage is of the highest importance to the international community as a whole.”***

The current Statement of Outstanding Universal Value can be found within the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site Management Plan 2008 -13, a copy of which can be found at Appendix 1 of this document. This SPG seeks to preserve the Outstanding Universal Value of the Heart

of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site and to ensure that any proposed developments are carried out in a sympathetic and appropriate manner.

UNESCO emphasise that the authenticity and integrity of a WHS is critical to its Outstanding Universal Value and that the values evident at the time of inscription should be maintained or enhanced in the future. In assessing whether or not a potential development will have a significant adverse impact upon the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS, as defined within the criterion detailed at Section 3 above and the most up to date Statement of Outstanding Universal Value, it must be established whether or not the proposal compromises the authenticity or integrity of the WHS or its setting.



Image courtesy of Craig Taylor



## SECTION 6

### The Policy

#### OIC World Heritage Site Planning Policy

In considering applications for planning permission, the Planning Authority will apply the following policies to ensure that developments which have the potential to have an impact upon the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS are delivered in a sympathetic and appropriate manner:

#### World Heritage Site Policy A Inner Sensitive Zones:

The immediate setting of each of the two geographical centres of the World Heritage Site will be demarked by 'Inner Sensitive Zones' (fig.1).

*All proposed development within the 'Inner Sensitive Zones', identified within figure 1, must preserve or enhance the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site.*

*In order to be granted planning permission within the 'Inner Sensitive Zones', it must be demonstrated that development will not have a significant negative impact upon either the Outstanding Universal Value or the setting of the World Heritage Site.*

#### World Heritage Site Policy B The Wider Landscape Setting:

The wider setting of the World Heritage Site contributes directly to its Outstanding Universal Value. Certain developments outwith the 'Inner Sensitive Zones' therefore have the potential to have a significant negative impact upon the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site, especially where large scale developments are proposed. Of particular significance are the ridgelines which frame the topographical landscape bowl of the West Mainland (fig.2).

*Where a proposed development either:*

- a) breaks the skyline at the sensitive ridgelines (fig.2) when viewed from any of the component parts of the World Heritage Site; or*
- b) is to be sited in any other location where, in the opinion of the Planning Authority, it has the potential to impact upon the World Heritage Site,*

*it will only be granted planning permission when it is demonstrated that the development will not have a significant negative impact upon either the Outstanding Universal Value or the setting of the World Heritage Site.*





## SECTION 7

### Design Statements

Sympathetic design is a requirement of all proposed buildings and extensions within the Inner Sensitive Zones of the WHS. Applications for new buildings which fall to be considered under 'World Heritage Site Policy A' must demonstrate through a Design Statement that they will preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area and that they will not have a significant adverse impact upon the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS. In the case of applications seeking planning permission to extend existing properties, or seeking to change the use of building or area of land, a Design Statement may also be required. The following general principles apply to the Planning Authority's consideration of development proposals throughout Orkney but are particularly pertinent within the Inner Sensitive Zones:

**Conversion/Adaptation** of an existing property which enhances the setting of the WHS is in all cases preferable to the demolition and replacement of an existing building. Traditional/vernacular buildings

*can often be successfully adapted to new uses and conversion enables the existing settlement pattern to be effectively retained;*

**New Buildings;** must have regard to the continuity of rhythm, scale, mass and outline of the existing settlement pattern and its details, materials, texture and colour. Where appropriate, development of previously developed land and buildings should be instigated before green field sites;

**Extensions/Alterations;** must in all cases complement the existing building. The extension should be subordinate in scale and in a form, which allows the identity and character of the original structure to be retained, and the impact on the WHS to remain unchanged.

The Design Statement allows applicants to explain their scheme in a structured way. It is an opportunity to demonstrate what has been done to appraise the development in the context of the 'Inner Sensitive Zones', and how the design takes account of this sensitively. For the majority of applications, the





Design Statement does not need to be unnecessarily elaborate and may be relatively short. In all cases, it should be a concise document, which sets out the principles upon which the development is based, explains how the design preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the 'Inner Sensitive Zones' and shows the consideration that has been given to any potential impact upon the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS. Irrespective of the scale of the development, the Design Statement should be supplemented by supporting graphics in the form of photographs, sketches, architectural drawings, diagrams, computer-based images, photomontages or artists impressions where appropriate.

It is likely that a visual interpretation of the proposal will be required in the case of new developments outwith established settlements in the form of an accurately scaled montage. Key viewpoints for consideration should be agreed at an early stage with the Planning Authority and particular attention should be paid to the focal points of view and visual links between the monuments which are detailed within Appendix 2 of this document. It is essential that photomontages are produced to recommended standards in terms of quality and the type of visualisations used to ensure they are appropriate to inform an assessment and the decision making process. To help ensure consistency of visualisations, the processes outlined within SNH's Good Practice Guidance on the 'Visual Representation of Windfarms' should be followed. Although this guidance relates to windfarms, the technical advice and guidance is appropriate for visualisations of other types of development. Further details can be found at Section 10 below.

The required complexity and detail of the Design Statement will be reflected in the scale and location of the proposed development. Design Statements for those developments proposed within the 'Inner Sensitive Zones' of the WHS should have due regard to the relevant OIC design guidance documents and must consider the following issues:

Access, parking & circulation	Landmarks
Adjacent land uses & consents	Location of the site
Appearance – details & materials	Orientation
Archaeology	Planning history
Boundary treatments	Proximity to WHS
Cumulative impact	Scale
General description of the surroundings	• (height & massing)
Is the site within the Conservation Area?	Servicing arrangements
Key views between WHS monuments	Settlement pattern
• (including photomontage)	Topography & contours
	• (including site sections)
	Utilities
	Views to/from/over site
	Vistas

A Design Statement will also be required on all occasions where the Planning Authority identifies a proposed development, which lies outwith the 'Inner Sensitive Zones', that has the potential to impact upon the WHS and its wider setting (**World Heritage Site Policy B**). In these cases where an applicant seeks to demonstrate to the Planning Authority that a proposal will not have a significant negative impact upon the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS a more thorough and comprehensive Design Statement is likely to be required.

In all cases, early consultation with the Planning Authority will be beneficial to agree upon the scope of supporting information which it will be required to include within the Design Statement. Further detail is provided in Section 8 (below).





## SECTION 8

### Development Management Procedure

When considering applications for planning permission that have the potential to impact upon the WHS and its setting, the following procedure will be followed:

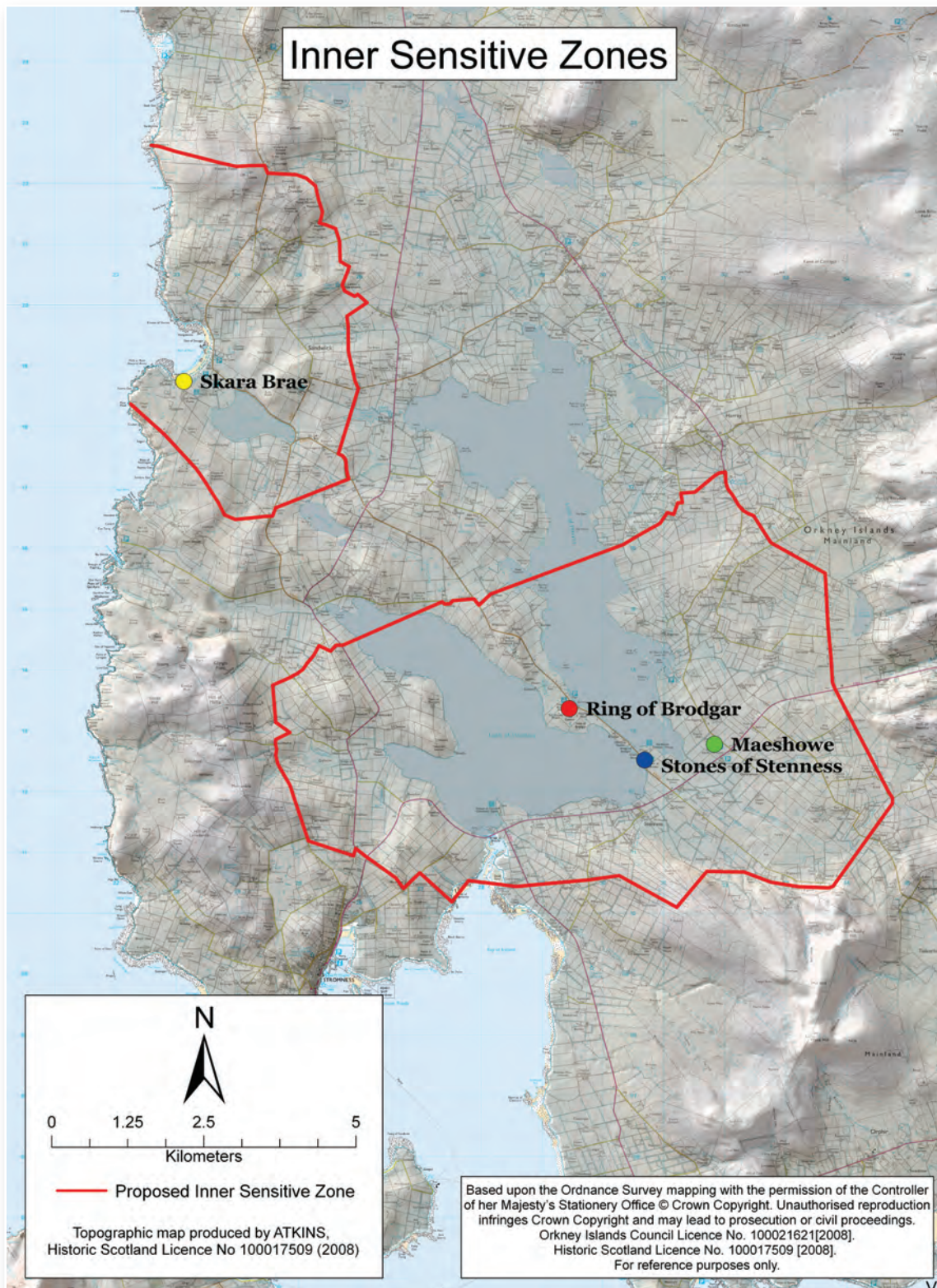
1. Applicants will be encouraged to enter into pre-application discussions with the Development Management team and to refer to this SPG at an early stage in the design and development process where it is anticipated that a proposal has the potential to impact upon the setting of the WHS. Individuals will be informed during any pre-application discussion of the need to submit a Design Statement, as outlined within Part 7 of this document, as part of any application for planning permission. Historic Scotland has advised that it would welcome inclusion within such discussions where this is considered appropriate by the Development Management Officer, the County Archaeologist or the Conservation and Heritage Planning Policy Officer.
2. In all cases where Development Management identifies an application that will have an impact on the WHS or its setting, Historic Scotland shall be formally consulted.
3. Upon receipt of a valid planning application that lies within the 'Inner Sensitive Zones' of the WHS (fig.1), Development Management will consult the County Archaeologist and the Conservation and Heritage Planning Policy Officer and, if it is judged to be a requirement of the application, a Design Statement will also be requested from the applicant. The aim of which it should be to demonstrate that the proposal will not have a negative impact upon the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS as outlined in Part 7 of this document.
4. In those cases where Development Management identifies an application outwith the 'Inner Sensitive Zones' that has the potential to impact upon the setting of the WHS, the same procedure will be followed as outlined in stage 3 above. The aides that shall be utilised by Development Management to establish those proposals that may affect the WHS and its landscape setting outwith the 'Inner Sensitive Zones', which are based upon the figures within the 2008 Atkins Setting Study and informed the production of the revised WHS Management Plan, can be found at Appendix 2 of this document.
5. Upon receipt of a consultation regarding those proposals outlined in stages 3 and 4 above, the County Archaeologist and the Conservation and Heritage Planning Policy Officer shall respond to Development Management within a period of 21 days to offer a formal comment; to request further information from the applicant; or to request that Historic Scotland be consulted (in those cases where Historic Scotland have not already been consulted due to a proposal having an impact upon the setting of a scheduled monument).
6. In order to respond effectively to the policy, the applicant must submit a Design Statement where it is requested in order to sufficiently demonstrate to Development Management that the proposal will not have a significant negative impact upon the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS. Upon receipt of a Design Statement, Development Management will strive to provide feedback within 14 days.
7. In making recommendations to the Council, the determination as to whether an application will have a significant negative impact will be based upon the professional judgement of Development Management Planning Officials in consultation with the County Archaeologist, the Conservation and Heritage Planning Policy Officer and Historic Scotland where appropriate.





## SECTION 9

### Figures



**Figure 1 - Inner Sensitive Zones**

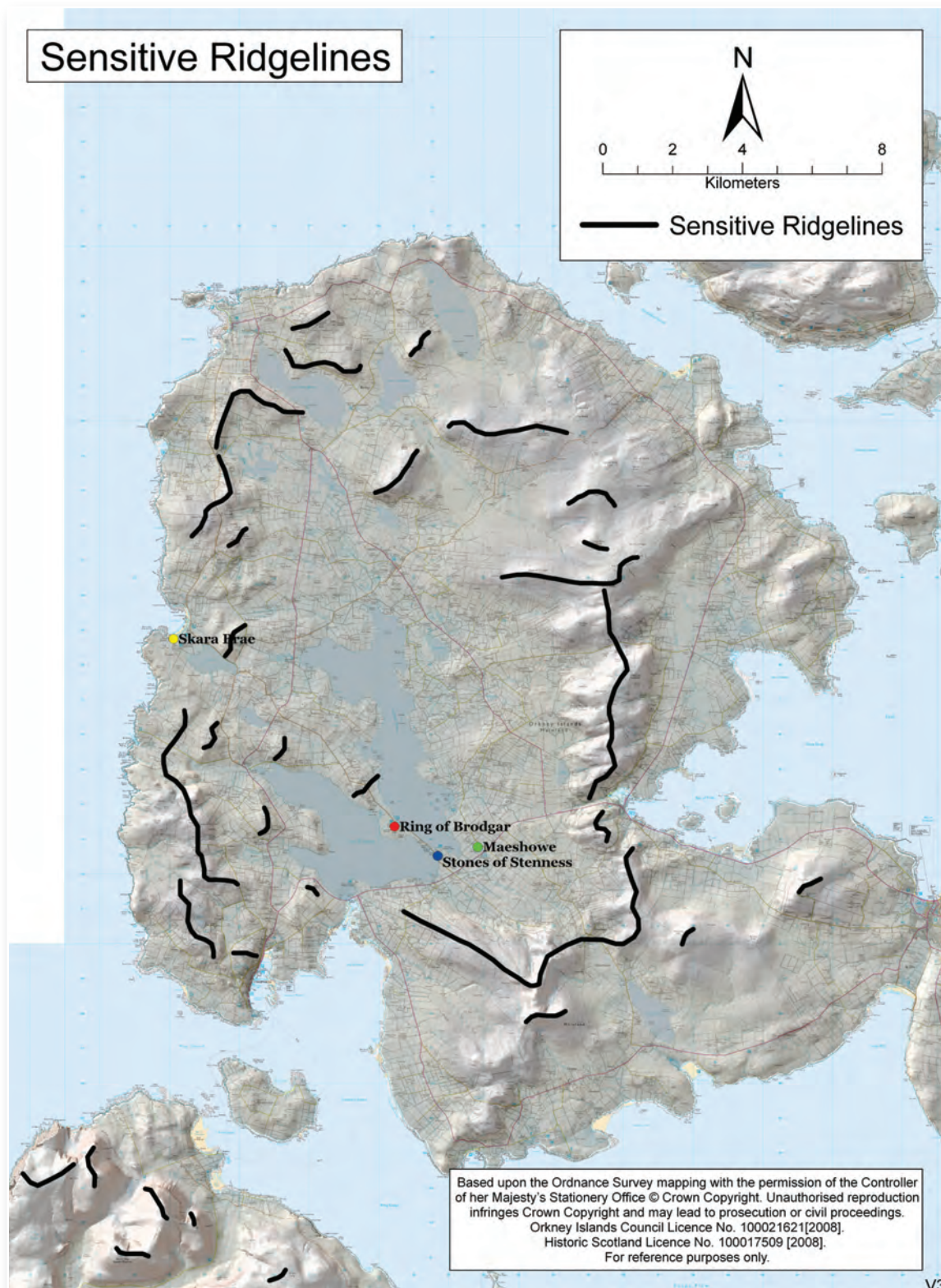


Figure 2 - Sensitive Ridgelines



## SECTION 10

### Further Information

The reports and guidance below provide further information which may assist individuals in the preparation of planning applications:

***The Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site Setting Project***

a Historic Scotland Commissioned Report. Atkins. 2008.

***Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site  
Management Plan 2008-13***

Historic Scotland. 2008.

***Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Setting***

Historic Scotland.

***Advice Note 01/04: Use of Photography and Photomontage in  
Landscape and Visual Assessment***

Landscape Institute. 2004.

***Orkney Landscape Character Assessment***

Land Use Consultants. 1998.

***Onshore Wind Energy Development***

Orkney Islands Council. 2008.

***Visual Representation of Windfarms Good Practice Guidance***

Scottish Natural Heritage. 2006.

***Landscape Studies of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney  
World Heritage Site.***

a Scottish Natural Heritage Report Number F00LA01A

Tydesley, David. 2001.

***Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World  
Heritage Convention***

UNESCO. 2008.



## APPENDIX 1

### Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

#### (Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site Management Plan 2008-13)

*The group of two major ceremonial sites, the Ring of Brodgar and the Stones of Stenness, a large chambered cairn, Maeshowe, and a sophisticated contemporary settlement, Skara Brae, serve as a paradigm of the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age cultures of north-west Europe that is without parallel.*

*The four main sites, together with the Barnhouse Stone, the Watch Stone, and thirteen mounds and a stone setting around the Ring of Brodgar, that make up the World Heritage Site are unquestionably among the most important Neolithic sites in north-west Europe. They are characteristic of the farming culture prevalent from before 4000BC. They provide exceptional evidence of the material standards, social structures and ways of life of this dynamic period of prehistory which gave rise to the World Heritage Sites of Avebury and Stonehenge (England), Bend of Boyne (Ireland) and Carnac (France).*

*The inscribed property, carefully and deliberately sited within the local topography, forms a fundamental part of a wider highly complex archaeological landscape which stretches over much of Orkney. The World Heritage Site and its immediate locality contain a notable concentration of related archaeological monuments and sites. The group constitutes a major relict cultural landscape graphically depicting life 5000 years ago in this archipelago.*

*The relationships between the World Heritage Site and the wider physical landscape are critical to understanding the monuments and the intentions of their builders; and hence form part of the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site. The monuments on the Brodgar and Stenness*

*peninsulas were deliberately situated within a vast topographic bowl formed by a series of visually interconnecting ridgelines stretching from Hoy to Greeny Hill and back. They are also visually linked to other contemporary and later monuments around the lochs. These connections all contribute to the feeling that these monuments are situated at the centre of a highly significant cultural landscape.*

*The scale of Maeshowe, the refinement of its design, and the quality of its masonry makes it one of the most outstanding architectural achievements of prehistoric northern Europe. Its passageway and the Barnhouse Stone align with the setting of the midwinter sun. It is a striking example of a solar alignment and indicates that seasonal change was significant to Neolithic builders. Maeshowe also contains rare examples of Neolithic art; its form links it to Grooved Ware pottery and thus to settlements where this has been found, such as Skara Brae.*

*The Stones of Stenness are an early expression of a ceremonial site and were erected on an elliptical plan around 3100 – 2900 BC. A specific relationship between this and the nearby settlement at Barnhouse is suggested by similarities in the layout of internal features. This is evidence of a society whose domestic architecture and ceremonial sites were inextricably linked.*

*The Ring of Brodgar is one of the best preserved and finest truly circular Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age henges known in the British Isles. It represents the architectural culmination of the dense and extended use of this part of Orkney for early prehistoric ceremonial and funerary purposes. Its construction involved considerable manpower and coherent organisation to excavate a massive rock-cut ditch, and quarry, transport and erect the, up to, sixty stones. The monument was carefully sited where it could be visible from many directions and over a considerable distance.*

*For a prehistoric settlement, the state of preservation at Skara Brae is unparalleled in northern Europe. The plans of the houses link them with contemporary tombs like Maeshowe. The outstanding preservation of the architecture and the range of domestic and ritual artefacts from Skara Brae enable us to gain a unique insight into the realities of living in a Neolithic village.*

*Together, Skara Brae, the Stones of Stenness, Maeshowe, the Ring of Brodgar and the monuments associated with them demonstrate with exceptional completeness the domestic, ceremonial, and burial practices of a now vanished 5000-year-old culture.*





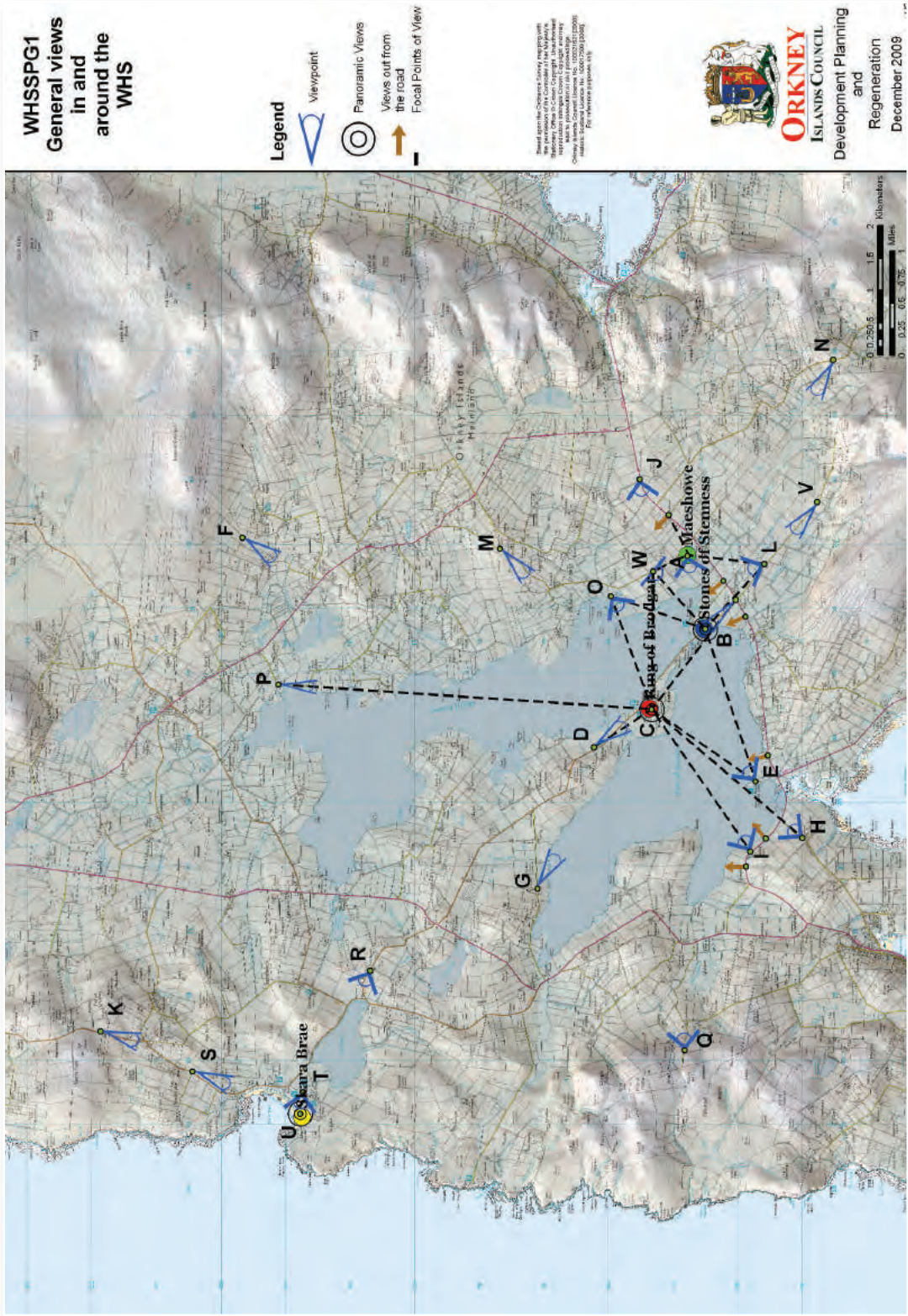
## APPENDIX 2

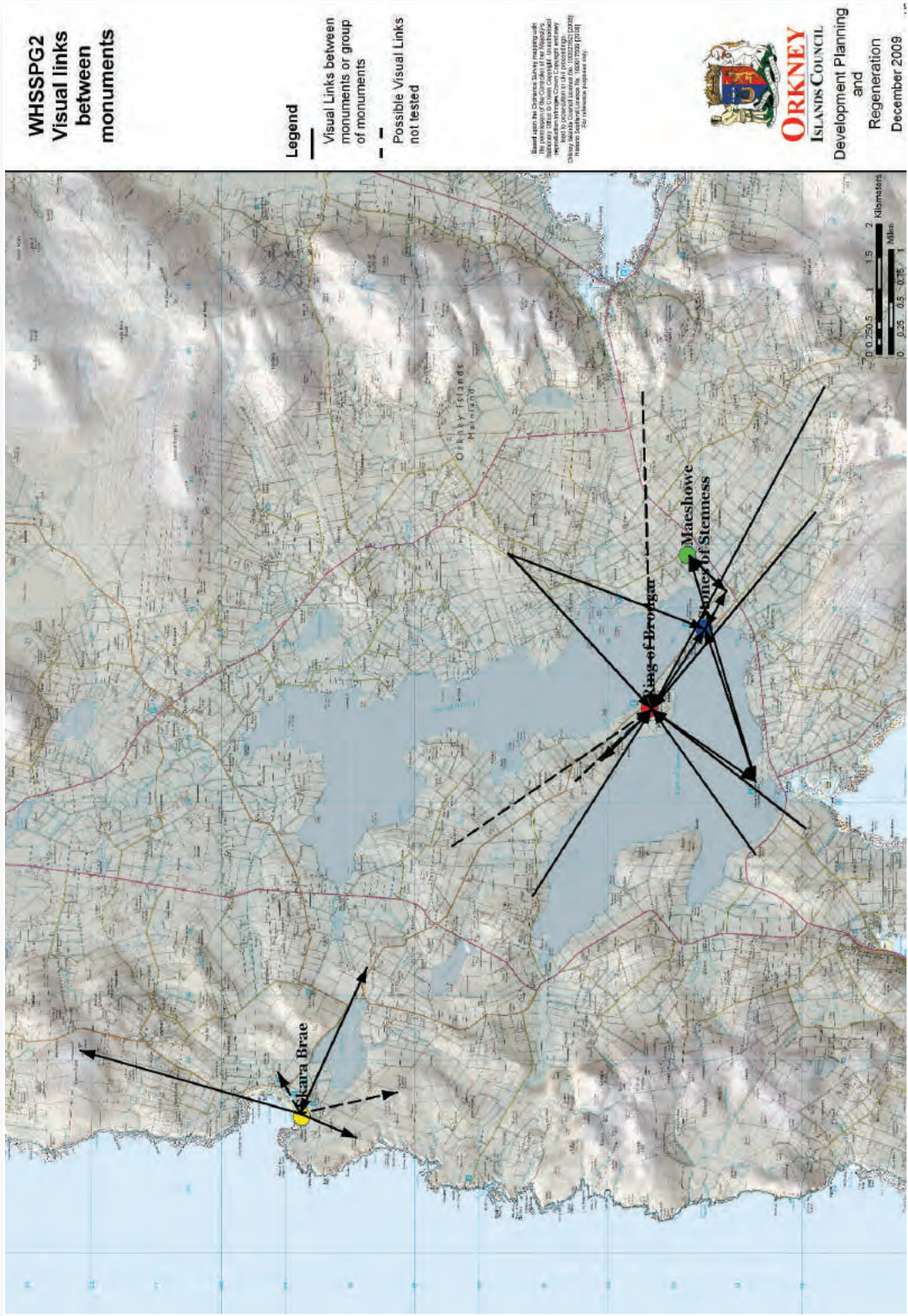
The following figures are based upon the maps and images produced within the 2008 Atkins Setting Study and will act as aides to both applicants and Planning Officials from pre-application discussions and the initial

submission of an application, through the validation and consideration phase to final determination. This list is neither definitive nor exhaustive and all available information shall be utilised.











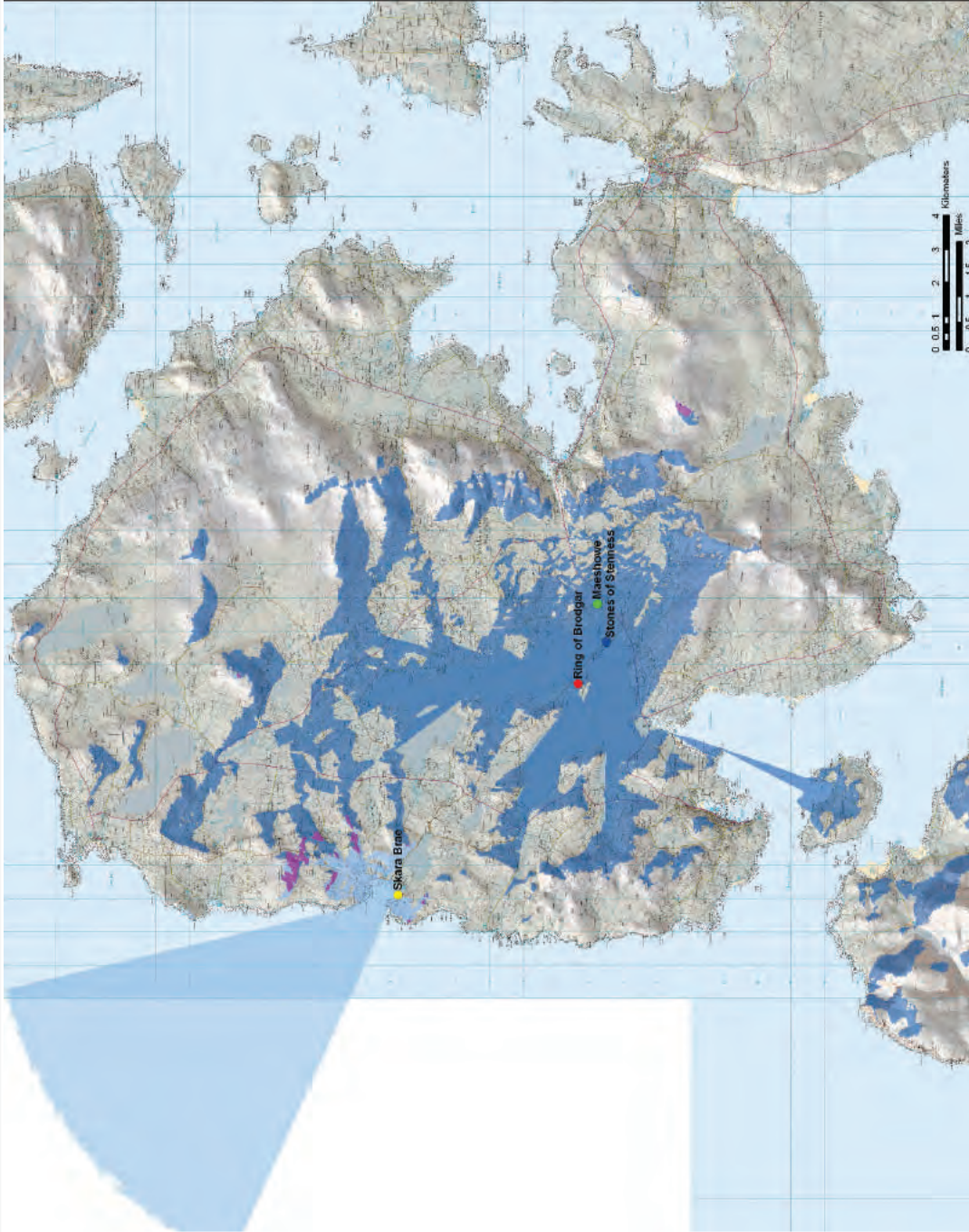
# WHSSPG3 Views from WHS Component sites

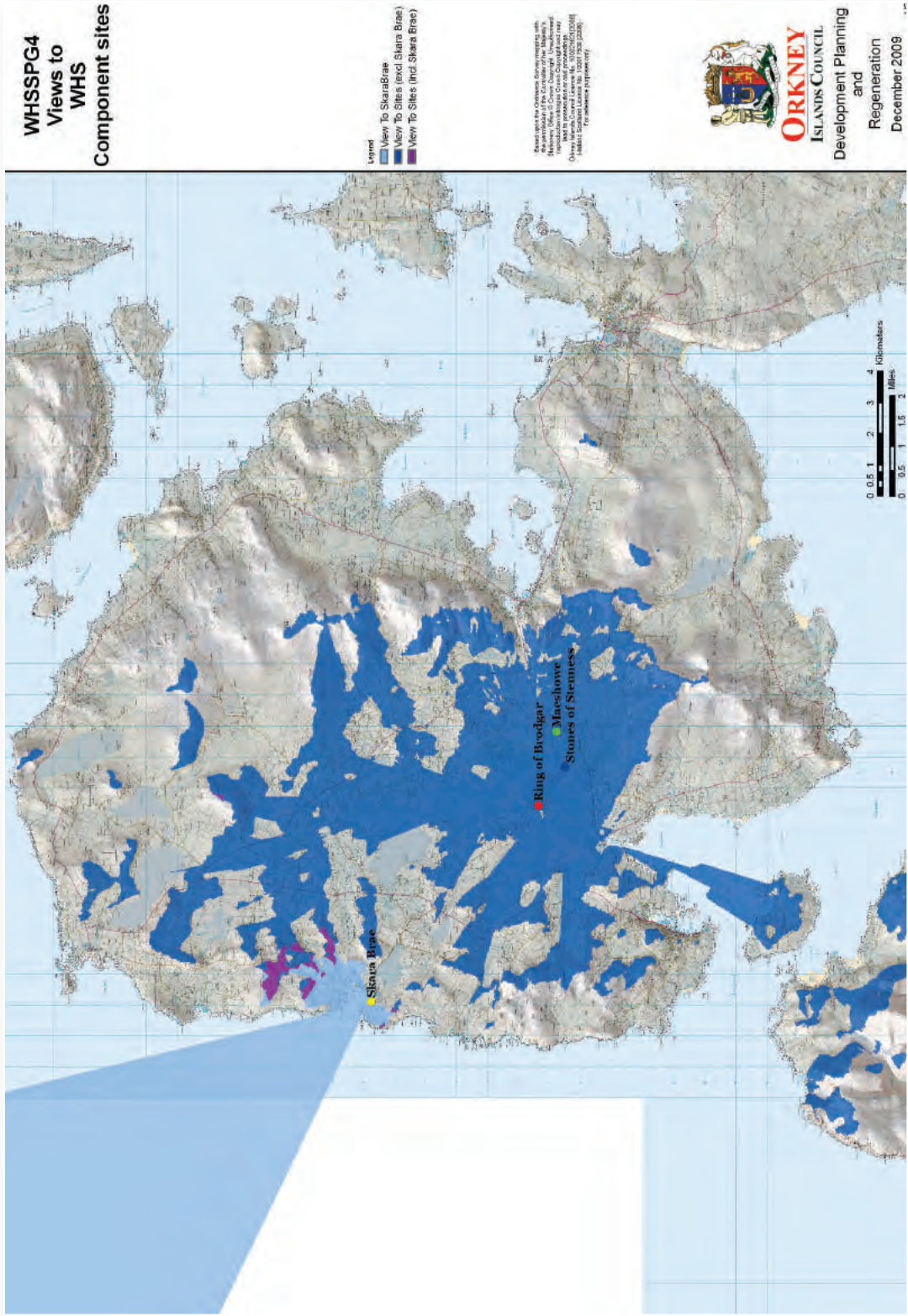
- Legend**
- View From Skara Brae
  - View from Skies (and Skara Brae)
  - View from Skies (incl Skara Brae)

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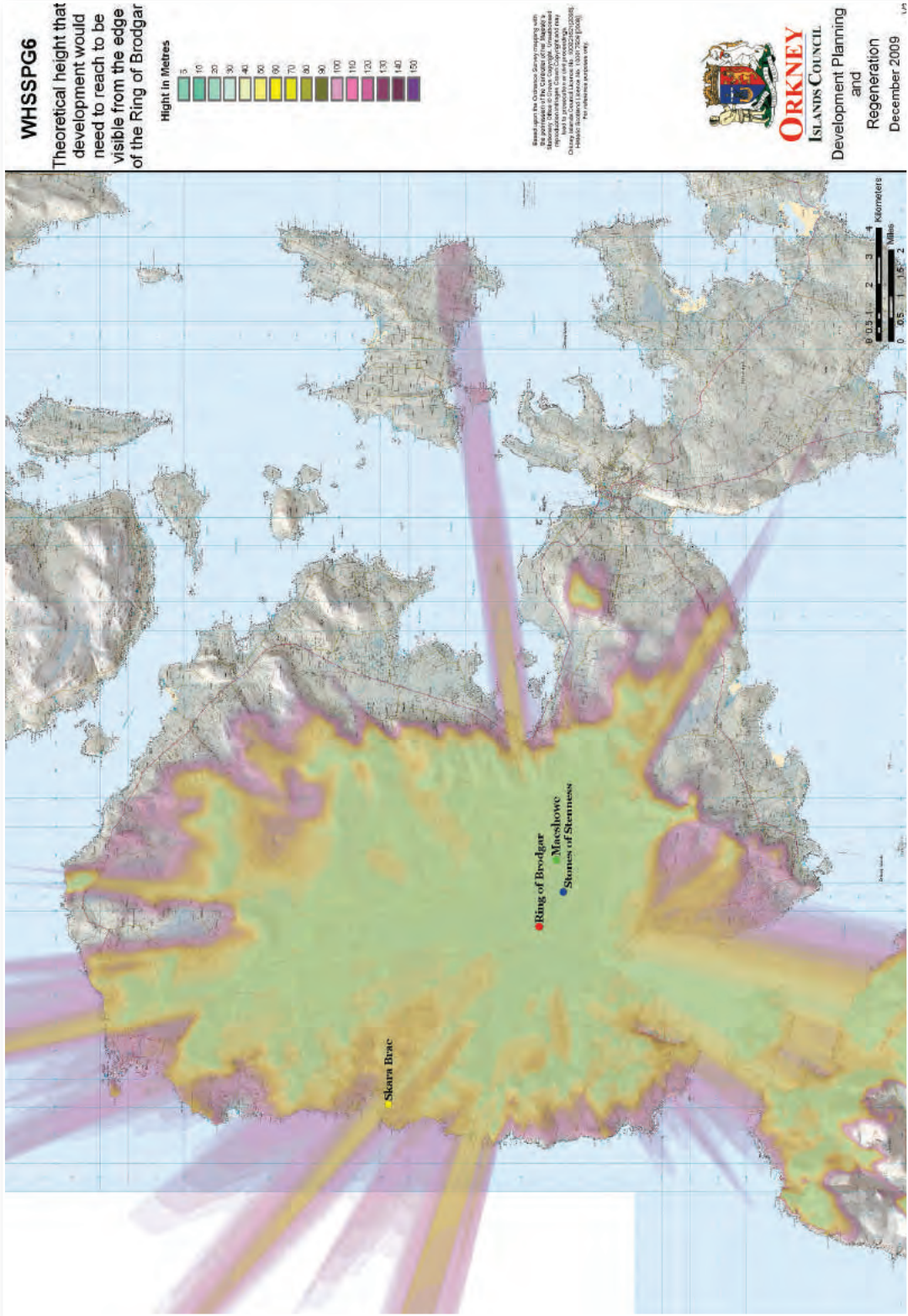


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December 2009











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