





An impression of what Blairmore Green might look like

Executive summary

This document reports on a series of community workshops that have taken place in Blairmore Village at the end of 2013 and beginning of 2014, focused on creating a plan for the future of Blairmore Village Green.

Blairmore Village Green has been subject to much discussion over the years due to its critical location in the heart of the village. The community now has the opportunity to buy the site, on the condition that it can devise a long term sustainable use for it that will have a positive impact on the village as a whole.

The Blairmore Village Trust and the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority, working in collaboration to provide these community workshops partly funded by the Scottish Government's Charrette programme, have brought in designers 7N Architects to help facilitate and move ideas forward. This creates a forum for the village to discuss this opportunity, evaluate the potential of this site for the community and begin to influence what the site might become. The outcome will be promoted as part of the emerging Local Development Plan, as well as provide the Trust with community consensus on what it wishes to do with this opportunity and the necessary information to take the next steps in the process of acquiring the site.

Context



Note: The land area available to purchase also includes the High Road and pockets of land along the waterfront. For the purposes of the workshop and this report, we have focused on the primary pieces of land in question, referred to in this document as the Shore Road site, the Blairmore Green Site and the High Road site.

Context

Blairmore village is located on the Cowal peninsula in the west of Scotland and in the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. The village is situated on the western shore of Loch Long and backed by the hills and greenery of Benmore Forest. Blairmore pier has been restored so that it can once again receive boats and the Waverley stops here during the summer.

Adjacent to the village hall, is a green area known to the village as Blairmore Village Green. It is a steeply sloping site, that is largely unkempt. The Blairmore Village Trust has been informed by the owners, the Younger (Benmore) Trust, that they wish to sell this site and other small parcels of their remaining landholdings and will give the community first refusal. This and the ability of the Trust to seek grant funding through the Scottish Land Fund has given the community a unique opportunity to consider the possibility of taking the land into community ownership. This will not only ensure that the community have control over what happens to the heart of their village, but it also poses the chance to make use to the site for the greater good of the community.

In order to be successful in seeking grant funding, the Blairmore Village Trust must demonstrate, amongst other things, that there is community support for the purchase of the site and that uses can be found for it that will contribute to the social, physical and economic wellbeing of the village.

Blairmore faces many of the same challenges as other rural villages in picturesque parts of Scotland. Issues such as affordability of local housing, an aging population, diminishing school roll and limited employment, combine with the changing habits of the visitor economy. Communities such as these are trying to figure out how to best harness their strengths and adapt and change to meet the challenges facing them, for long term economic and social stability. One way to do this is to make the most of opportunities such as this.



Blairmore Village Green Timeline



Workshop 1 - What does Blairmore need?

This question was open and people were encouraged to respond with anything. It was recognised that the site in question cannot be the answer to all of these issues, but that an understanding of the village's needs as a whole will help to influence what this site becomes.

visitor accommodation to draw and keep people here eg. youth hostel or eco-friendly huts

need a recreational area with seats, a play area, shelter and toilets

boat hire, bike hire, there has to be something to do here

affordable family housing, units need to be smaller to be affordable on open market

whatever happens has to be commercially viable

the village has to have a vision that is about a growing community

there is anxiety about the school roll

district heating

the village needs business units and opportunity for employment

there is a need for housing suitable for elderly people so that they are not forced to move away from their home

somewhere to get a coffee

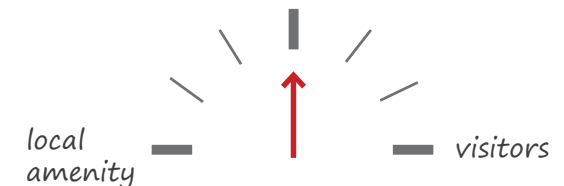
there needs to be somewhere to buy my papers

A key discussion point centred around the need for income from visitors to the area, to support local businesses.

We asked the question, why would visitors come to Blairmore, though more accurately, it is, why would people spend time and money here?

Answers included:

- Accommodation
- Activities
- Complementary attractions



Small rural communities need to balance visitor needs with local needs to best benefit from visitor income (diagram drawn on board during workshop)



Benmore Gardens

Workshop 1 - Feedback forms and Post-Its

During the workshop, feedback forms were distributed and collected, with specific questions for people to respond to. There were 23 forms collected and counted (of an overall workshop attendance estimated at 40 people). Below is a brief summary of the feedback received via this method:

1. The most popular suggestion was for a community hub. This is quite an interpretive term and not only did it receive several votes in its own right, but many of the other suggestions could be covered by this (toilets, cafe, soft play area, art/craft workshops etc).
2. A café/tea shop was second (with emphasis on evening accessibility).
3. There were several suggestions that might all be covered by the idea of a tourist venue: info boards, viewpoint, seating, bike hire, wooden tepees, viewpoint. Adding these all up put it in 3rd position.
4. Housing was the next most popular, with sheltered noted on more occasions than affordable.
5. There were equal votes for an active play area/outdoor gym and a park area with amenities
6. Art/craft workshops
7. Small business/Industrial units; a market garden; an accessible path linking the Shore & High Roads; shops (specifically a ferry shop) and a car park received the same number of votes.

Other suggestions:

- Wildflower garden;
- Dog walking area (fenced);
- Keep the tree!
- Combined shopping and transport;
- A circuit created to bring more visitors and connect communities.

Interpretation:

The feedback received reflects discussion during the workshop. There is a desire for facilities that can benefit the community as well as visitors, such as play areas, toilets, a place to get food and drink and arts and crafts workshops. There is a need to provide parking, to facilitate ease of stopping and spending time in Blairmore, for residents and visitors alike. And there is also a desire to improve what Blairmore offers visitors, in terms of orientation, activities and accommodation.



Workshop 1 - Summary of Views

There was general agreement that the Blairmore Village Green site is important to the village, and the opportunity now available for the community to take control and be instrumental in what happens to it should be taken.

There was acknowledgement that a range of uses should be found that are self-sustaining - the green cannot rely on ongoing volunteer work.

In reality, the process of transforming the village green site will be step-by-step and be developed over time. It is important therefore to have a clear idea of where it is going, so that the steps in the process all lead in the right direction.

There is a desire to use this opportunity to implement ways to breathe life into the local economy and/or to address some local needs. This is not only as a requirement for receiving grant funding in the first place, but to properly make the most of what the site can do for the village. The means in which to do this will require further discussion.

Questions put to the room ...

1. Should the community buy the site?

Yes

- though this is dependent on finding a range of uses that is complementary to the village and what makes it a desirable place to live in.

2. Does the community support the provision of affordable housing?

Yes

- not necessarily on the village green site, but in the village.

3. Does the community support the development of employment opportunities?

Yes

4. Does the community want the high road to be brought up to adoptable standards?

Yes

(concern raised by those living on the road about personal cost implications)



Options for Community Appraisal

Workshop 1 raised a number of ideas and potential options for the site. It was clear that people wanted to see Blairmore Green used for the good of the village, and that some development might be appropriate. But how much and where should it go?

In order to progress this discussion further, 7N used the workshop report to illustrate four potential plans for the site. These demonstrated a range of development, from a light touch approach in Option 1 to testing the capacity of the site with Option 4. Each have their pros and cons. A light touch approach leaves the question of long term costs and economic sustainability. Options 3 and 4 rely on access from the High Road, which may not be appropriate at this time.

All of the options are guided by a Strategic Approach to the site, which sets up parameters for where things might go, based on access, topography and visual impact.

The Strategic Approach and Options 1-4 are illustrated over the following pages.



Workshop 1 report



Discussing the Workshop 1 report at the beginning of Workshop 2

Strategic Approach

Following on from the workshop discussions, it is clear that Blairmore Green offers the community the potential to significantly enhance the village as well help to contribute positively to some of the needs highlighted on page 6.

In terms of spatial approach to the site, Ewan of 7N Architects briefly sketched out a strategic framework during the workshop which is illustrated in more detail in the adjacent diagram. It is too early in this process to fix uses or built form, however it is important that a vision and framework is set out so that:

- The community can discuss the approach and come to a broad consensus;
- Ongoing discussions are based on a realistic appraisal of what is appropriate for the site, in terms of context, visual impact and what can potentially be supported by the planning authority;
- Next steps in the process can be made in the right direction.

This page and the next outlines a strategic approach that may be taken to Blairmore Green and the associated areas of land under discussion.





1. Village Green

Keep a village green central to the plan. This should front onto the Shore Road and act as a multi-purpose space for community gatherings, visitor picnics and everything in between.

2. Zones for potential development

Outlined are areas that could support appropriate development. Potential options are outlined over the next few pages but in principle, the following should apply:

Pink: Should support visitor income and activities, for example visitor orientation, bike/kayak hire, food/drink. Could be a community enterprise or small independent business. Scope to include publicly accessible toilets to serve the green. Can be a first step in a phased process and work with functions in the village hall. Importantly, it should address people coming in from the pier.



Cafe at Jupiter Artland, Edinburgh

Purple: Scope for some development, with appropriate uses to be discussed. Frontage onto the green will be an important consideration.

Yellow: Scope for some development, with appropriate uses to be discussed. Must not block views from existing homes and take cognisance of the overall view of the village when approaching by boat. The High Road in its current condition is viewed as a constraint on potential uses.

Orange: Scope for development, with appropriate uses to be discussed. Can be utilised for identified community needs that are less public facing, such as housing or small business units. The site may act as enabling for the main village green site.



The Gale Centre, Gairloch

3. Wildflower garden

The middle, more steeply sloping part of the site can become a wildflower garden to promote habitat diversity and in particular, provide opportunity for bee habitat conservation. Paths and steps can enable people to walk up the site and enjoy the views, with some adventure play equipment dotted amongst the trees.

4. Visitor parking

Subject to a view on safety and traffic, visitor parking, including a coach layby to be provided to encourage people to stop and spend time in Blairmore.

Blairmore Green - Option 1

Site sketch section



Summary

- minimal built development: community/visitor hub (pink), viewing platform
- could act as a first phase in a phased approach
- builds on the immediate strengths of the site: green character, proximity to village hall, the pier



Site sketch plan



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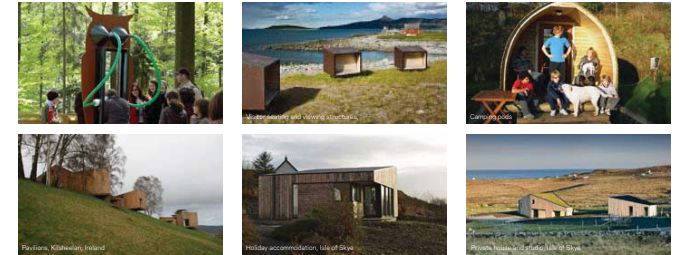
Blairmore Green - Option 2

Site sketch section



Summary

- more built development: community/visitor hub (pink), a row of houses (purple), eco-pod style holiday houses (yellow)
- could act as a further phase in a phased approach
- builds on the immediate strengths of the site: green character, proximity to village hall, the pier



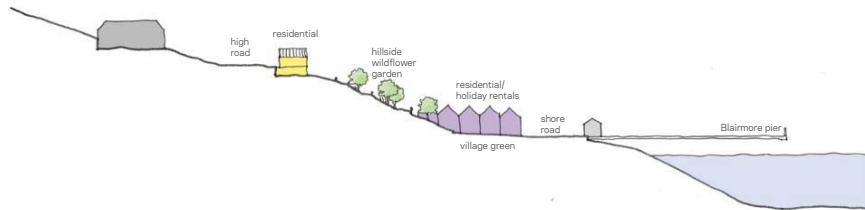
Site sketch plan



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Blairmore Green - Option 3

Site sketch section



Summary

- o focus on the provision of residential accommodation
- o opportunity for flexibility of unit sizes
- o is Blairmore Green the best place to locate housing?



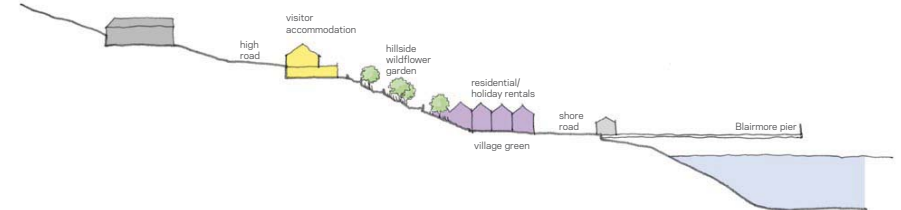
Site sketch plan



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Blairmore Green - Option 4

Site sketch section



Summary

- o similar to option 2 but suggests a different type of visitor accommodation such as a small hotel or bunk house
- o would require support with complementary development such as visitor orientation, activities and opportunities for purchasing food and drink



Site sketch plan



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Drop-In Event Comments and Feedback

Blairmore Village Trust held a drop-in event on Saturday 11th January, to allow members of the community to see the options illustrated by 7N arising from Workshop 1, discuss them and leave feedback. Fifty-six people attended. On the following pages, this feedback is summarised. This feedback helped to influence the approach taken by the 7N team during Workshop 2, raising some issues for discussion and pointing toward favoured options.

OPTION 1

Yes. With sheltered housing addition

Like playground, could viewing platform become an amphitheatre?

Most realistic option – can be funded from putting housing on P.20 High Road site. Temporary events eg Falmer's Markets are likely to be most sustainable.

Parking??

Would prefer this one BUT don't think enough options to raise revenue.

Good. With flower gardens very good idea.

Yes

Good. Keeps green field space and offers play area as well as tourist offer.

Children's play area & toilets could be an advantage to the village.

The unit next to the hall to include toilets; food/drink outlet limited to snacks and beverages. Outdoor seating needed.

Agree with the idea of minimal built development on site to begin with, Underground works eg sewage, drainage need to be in place beforehand.

In favour – more people coming to this area for walking and wild life – eg red squirrel, deer and birds – will enhance village.

Yes (with 3 ticks)

Nearer to what I imagine practical – toilets. Interpretation boards, platform, proper paths. No playground or parking (blind summit)

Like garden and viewing platform

Parking in wrong place for the hall. Liked wild flower area

Garden ground with paths – occasional child's amusement activities

Liked this best – parking should be nearer the hall (13 year old resident)

Swings and playground equipment should be incorporated

Preferred option as a first stage. Parking in wrong place – too close to brow of Hill and too far from Hall. I think this option will appeal to most residents as it is not too much change from present.

Nice option but where does self-sustainability fit in?

OPTION 2

Yes (with 2 ticks)

NO

Prefer to keep bottom part clear

I believe this option is best – but Parking!!

Prefer this option as visitor's hub – there are other sites available for affordable/sheltered housing within the area

Lower level inclusion of accommodation – good for sheltered housing (non warden). Too high density in toto – combination of 1 and 2 – while only 1 type of accommodation

Yes, to Eco Pod at top of slope; definite No to any residential build; Yes, to wildflower garden & steps/paths; Yes, to children's play area

Chalet accommodation at top of slope next to High Road for holiday rental a possibility.

No permanent building on existing lower green area

Still thinking!

Non Starter except for eco pods for wild camping, but need provision of toilets and water and bins for rubbish

Like visitor's accommodation uphill – not at road

Visitor/Residential accommodation – too much on Green, could be sited elsewhere.

Like idea of separate visitor accommodation at top of green, not bottom. This could be implemented as 2nd stage development.

Drop-In Event Comments and Feedback

Yes, but without visitor or residential units

OPTION 3

NO

Needs more parking for coaches and cars

White's Brae needs to be made accessible for more accommodation/sheltered housing.

Concerned that existing residents' views will be blocked or affected

We prefer Option 1

There are other options available for housing

Perhaps an issue if residents don't keep properties/environs in good condition.

Too much housing

No - the Green is not the place for permanent housing

No

Still thinking

Residential housing on site may compromise the eventual ownership of these dwellings (Right to Buy) etc

Non Starter

And from Scott, aged 10 - Blairmore resident: I Prefer this option as it has affordable housing - this is the most important thing needed - also a play area on the slope

Like affordable housing

Green too small for this. Affordable housing could be elsewhere in village

Not enough room for affordable housing and visitor accommodation

Affordable housing, if needed, to be elsewhere in village.

OPTION 4

No

Insufficient parking

Like sheltered housing for local people

We prefer Option 1

Parking?

Good option if care with accommodation and type of food/drink purchasing

No

No

No

Still thinking

1 Tick - visitor accommodation may have a high visual impact from loch and ferry boats

Non Starter

Not keen on hotel

Not enough parking - too many other buildings 'Green' should remain 'Green'

Not enough room

No housing development on Green

FURTHER COMMENTS

Land above the Hall for holiday rentals (Possible 2/3 small units) - Car parking at top of Green with 'viewing' areas on either side. Below this landscaped with lots of highlights to engage people of all ages. Bottom right hand create a multi use lawn handstanding. Locate affordable housing and sheltered housing on other side. Redevelop site including and around the Hall as one in an integrated way.

Bottom of green split in half - A visitor's centre and toilet located just behind the hall - leaving a large area for parking adjacent to the hall and the area on the bottom right of green for lawn with seats and tables. The top half of the Green to have a play area on the left and wild flower area occupying

perhaps 2/3rds of remaining area incorporating a view point.

- Parking - 3 yeses; Plenty of outdoor seating; Toilets - 3 yeses; Hall Trust needs to be engaged in a formal way. Hall development needs to be integrated. Use of telephone box as info point (architectural feature)

Land above the Hall to contain a largish multifunction unit which could serve as for example

a) a regular Local Produce Market (recent one in Blairmore was hugely popular and, despite appalling weather, brought in loads of people and vendors were very happy. The Cowal area has a plethora of local producers (food and craft)

b) could be rented out for special occasions - weddings, dances, film shows, art exhibitions, work shops etc.

c) Could accommodate visitors/information center; toilets, bike and kayak hire; provision of light snacks when the need arises; a meeting and get-together place for locals.

Move viewing platform perhaps half way down green (just to make it easier and more accessible for folk with walking/age difficulties) Position small children's play area close to viewing platform (for obvious safety reasons)

3 or 4 Eco pods perhaps located on the right hand side of the green with small parking areas. Also, and perhaps for a further stage, increase eco pods maybe on the plot of land opposite the green (in line almost with the current Old Ticket Office.

With the possibility of purchasing the land adjacent to the Hall - this could then become a good sized parking area - close to the hall and the green.

And then lots and lots of wild flower planting to help our environment and encourage the bumble bees to visit - great opportunity to involve our young residents.

With regard to the triangle at the top of White's Brae - could this perhaps be a further parking area which would give access to the Green from the High Road?



Drop-In Event Comments and Feedback

GENERAL COMMENTS

Greater provision needed for resolving parking

As first stage, sell off triangular plot (P.20) to a developer for private housing – raise capital – go for Option 1 and if funds allow put holiday lets at top of site – 1 bedroom, small units.

Not enough parking on any of the options. No mention of public toilets anywhere. BVT now have the option to buy additional land between the hall and the Green which could be used for a visitor centre/toilets and parking.

Car parking near hall, slope given over to wildish garden with play equipment integrated with a viewing platform and seating areas. Visitor facilities, toilets, poss. Café/bike hire. Eventually self catering pods. Possibly affordable housing eventually at top of ground. Sheltered housing on another site – possibly Highgate Hall. Sell some ground elsewhere for housing to fund the above.

Development, especially commercial should not even be considered for the triangle on the High Road. Residential area, but problem with access and drainage. Parking is only 'safe' next to the hall due to blind summit.

REASONS: "for the greater good of the community" Social, physical and economic well-being of the village. Due to the linear distribution Blairmore does not have a "heart" like village greens in England. The majority of people do not use, but simply drive past to go elsewhere.

Walking is really the only pastime that might draw people in so provision of toilets, well built path up to High Road and a covered viewing platform. Leave rest of 'field' not unkempt as in your description but 'natural' ie there is wildlife use it, long grass for moths, etc.

It is noted that Option 1 has play area for children – this should be retained throughout (as is a popular attraction at Graham's Point). A phased development, with regular periodic community engagement, from one through to 4 (excepting 3 for reasons

stated) may be advantageous.

The village would benefit from toilets and for more car parking

Please confirm (present) ownership of proposed land purchase! Particularly like the idea of amphitheatre (thyme seating?). What is likely time schedule for say, option 1? Room for shelter? Eg for cyclists/walkers caught in rain.

The character of the green to be retained – part of Blairmore image. No building of houses on lower green. A permanent open-sided small covered area with seating – near to the unit in Opt 1, would be an asset for everybody, local and visitors alike. The upper slope developed for bushes/plants/wildlife etc, with paths/steps/terracing. At the top of slope, backing onto the High Road, a small number of chalets for holiday rental could be incorporated into the landscape mentioned above. Affordable housing for sale/rent to be confined to vacant area on High Road. More parking desirable but cannot be at bottom of green or near to top of hill – too dangerous. Apart from more use made of area by side of hall, sorry no suggestions.

To landscape the area and add seating or picnic tables together with a few light wooden buildings for administration of any visitor attractions etc would make Blairmore much more attractive to view from the sea or drive through but I feel it is not really a suitable area for major building projects. A more permanent toilet block would be an advantage – maintaining it could be a problem (look what happened to the Ardentinnys one!) The problem is of maintaining these projects long into the future and would require a great deal of thought.

Toilet please. Play area urgently needed. Wildflower garden – a good idea.

Toilets required.

Has any thought been given to enlarging the Hall? Would then accommodate more activities and be in proportion to area. No objection to building on triangle.

More parking – perhaps problems with proposed area at rise of road.

Not enough parking facilities in any of the options.

All options need provision of more parking facility and toilets

We would like to maintain as much open space for picnics, barbecues etc. Big temporary events with parking and hard standing will provide sustainable benefits.

Insufficient provision for car parking on all options

(1) Parking is an issue if we are to attract casual visitors as well as visitor accommodation. Toilets??

(2) Sheltered type accommodation needed for older people locally which would encourage them to leave larger properties if they had somewhere to go in the area.

(3) Access Roads – need for Whites Brae etc to be upgraded for any type of accommodation up the hill – become an adopted road???

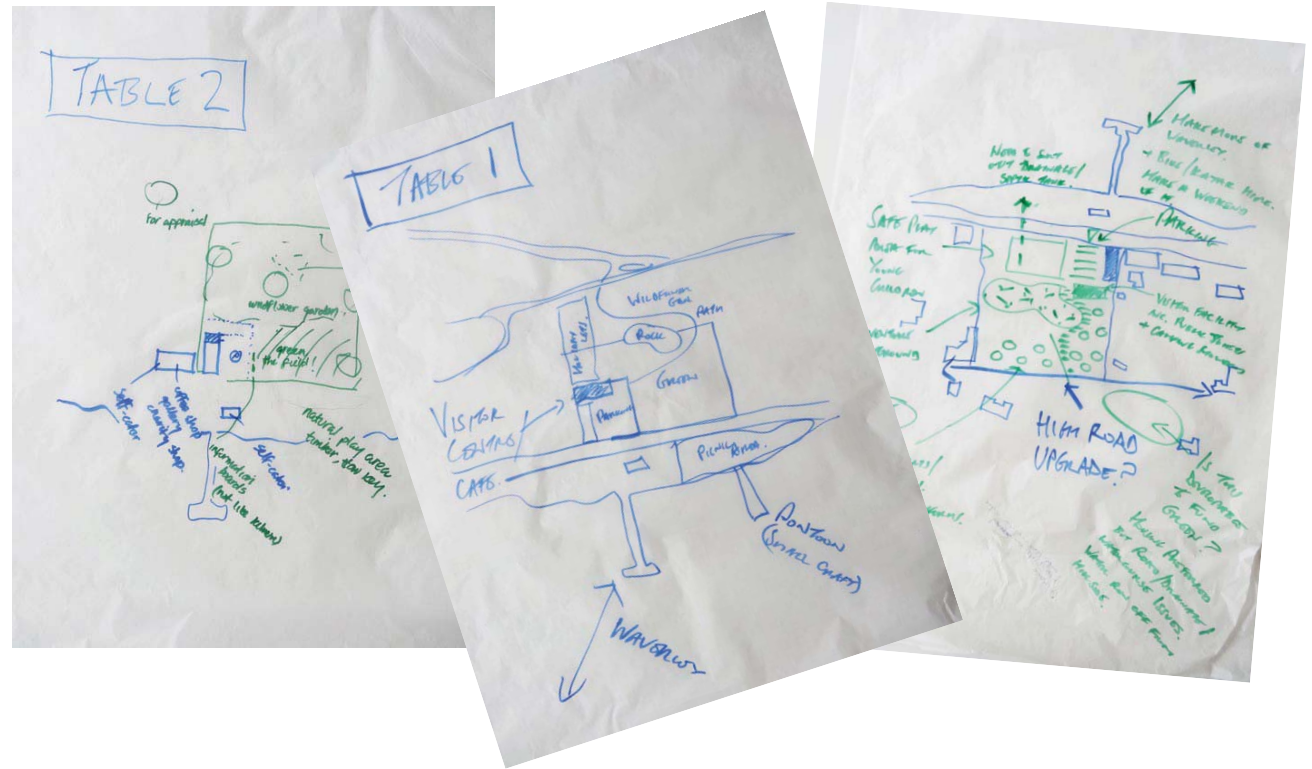
Car parking is essential. Where are the toilets necessary. Visitors going to park. Building at top of field not suitable.

Workshop 2

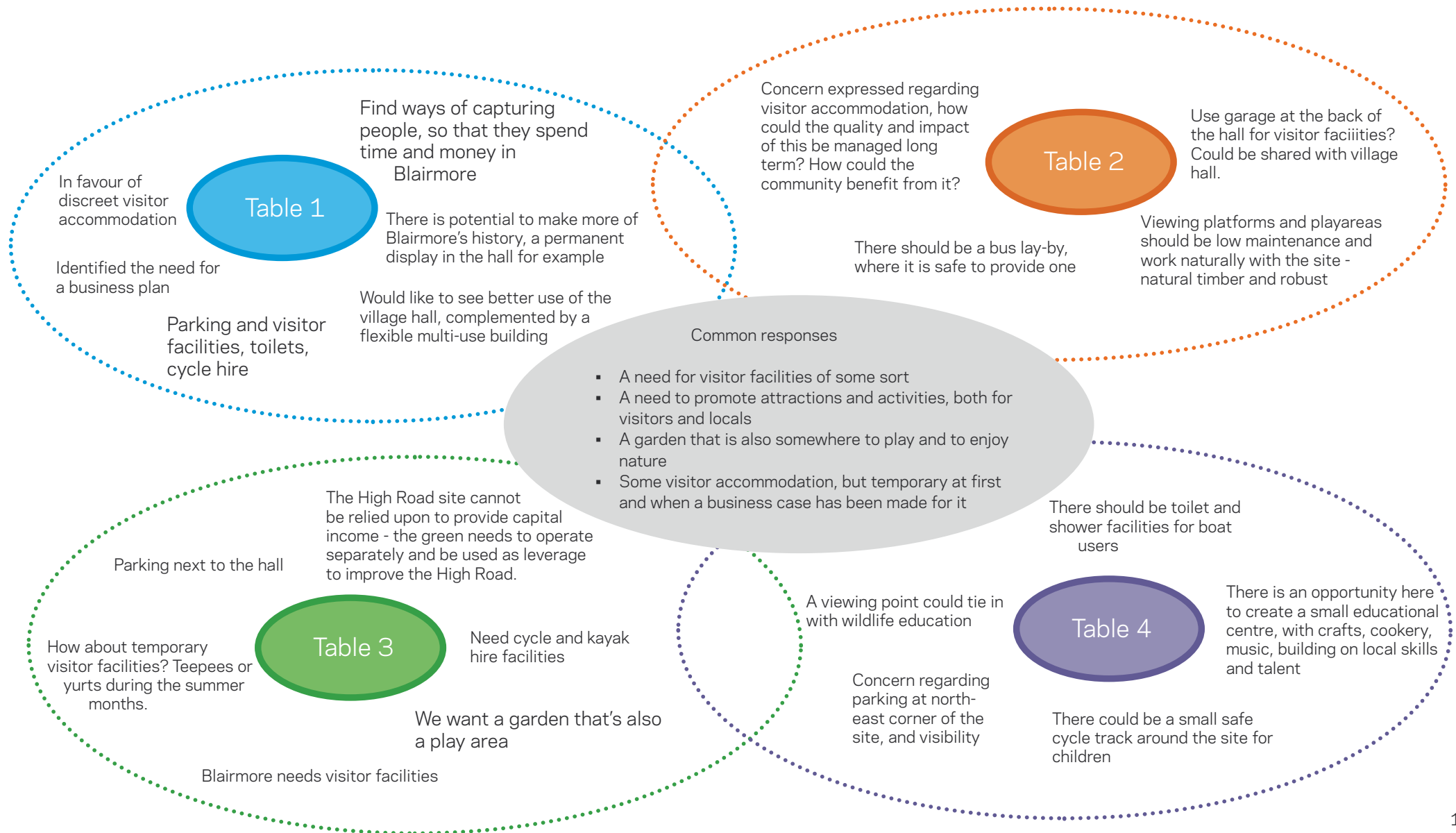
The room was split into table groups and each table tasked with identifying the option that most closely represented their views, and then using this, to come up with an improved version that the table could collectively agree was right for Blairmore.

The tables then reported back to the room. The roomwide discussion showed a number of overlaps between tables, and common feelings regarding the following:

- The need to provide facilities for visitors that would increase time spent in Blairmore, and therefore, visitor spend in local businesses
- The opportunity to improve the green amenity that would be used both by locals and visitors



Workshop 2



'Option 1 and 1/2'

When discussing the Options outlined on pages 12-13, everyone generally went for somewhere in the range of Options 1 and 2. These were then developed in light of the conversations taking place at each table. By the end of the Workshop, the room had collectively arrived at 'Option 1 and a 1/2'.

Option 1 and 1/2 is a light touch approach to the site, with the potential for later phases of development, that can build on initial projects. It aims to strike a balance between ambition and community resource; the need for some development and the desire to ensure that the site remains a green heart for the village.

The agreed approach is illustrated as a series of phases over the following pages. This does not mean it needs to happen in this way. The community need to be able to pick and choose priorities, based on appraisal of opportunities and available funds as they become available, and in some cases, based on a robust business plan. The agreed approach however is a positive step in seeking to use the site in a sensitive and enterprising way for the continued wellbeing of the village.



Strategic Approach

The revised Strategic Approach is shown here.

1. Usable and relatively flat green space that can be used as a year round picnic area and village event space.

2. Wildflower garden set onto the slope of the hill. Light touch interventions can create viewing platforms and benches, areas for children to play and places for wildlife interpretation.

3. A phased approach to providing facilities for both visitors and local people. Initially, this can be toilet and shower facilities and orientation, however this can be developed to become cafe type space; bike and kayak hire and/or multi-purpose space for local classes, clubs and courses. The village hall itself will play a key part in creating improved facilities for the community and visitors.

4. Parking should be provided, adjacent to the hall and future community/visitor hub.

5. The top of the site can be used for temporary visitor accommodation in the first instance. This should be high quality and minimal impact, such as teepees or yurts. This will allow the community to test the potential for visitor accommodation of this type in the village, before committing to anything more permanent. As a later phase, some year round accommodation might become appropriate, in the form of timber camping pods for example, but this can be appraised at a later date.

6. This area can be cleared of light vegetation (subject to appraising species that should be kept) to maximise views from the green and potentially open up space for a small pontoon, giving small craft access to the water.

7. High Road site - see page 29.



Phase 1

Temporary summer visitor accommodation

Wildflower garden with light touch timber viewing platforms, benches and play and learning equipment

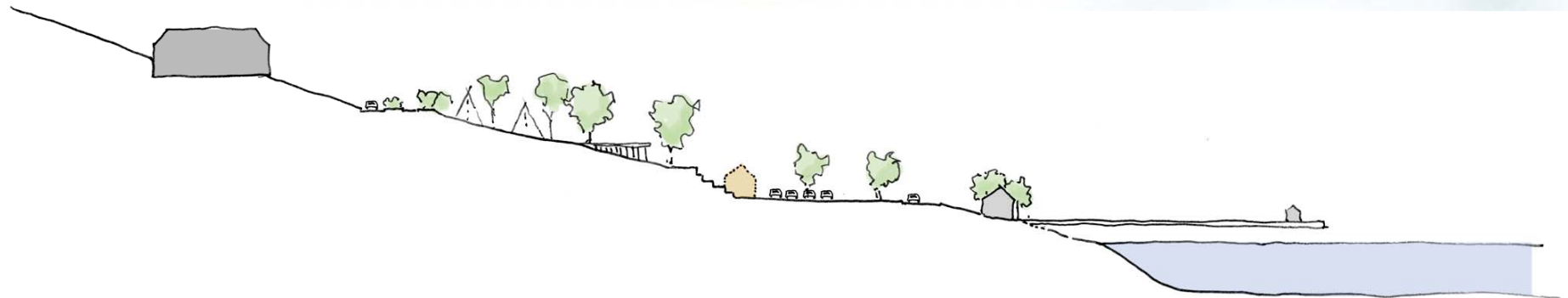
Village green with natural amphitheatre seating

Use of the rear garage of the Village Hall for visitor facilities

Potential location for temporary facilities - a pop-up cafe and cycle hire for example

Parking and bus lay-by

A strong link is created between the site and the pier



Phase 1



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www.wicksteed.co.uk



www.canopyandstars.co.uk

Phase 2



Phase 2



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www.jerseykayakadventures.co.uk



picnic area, Tarbert

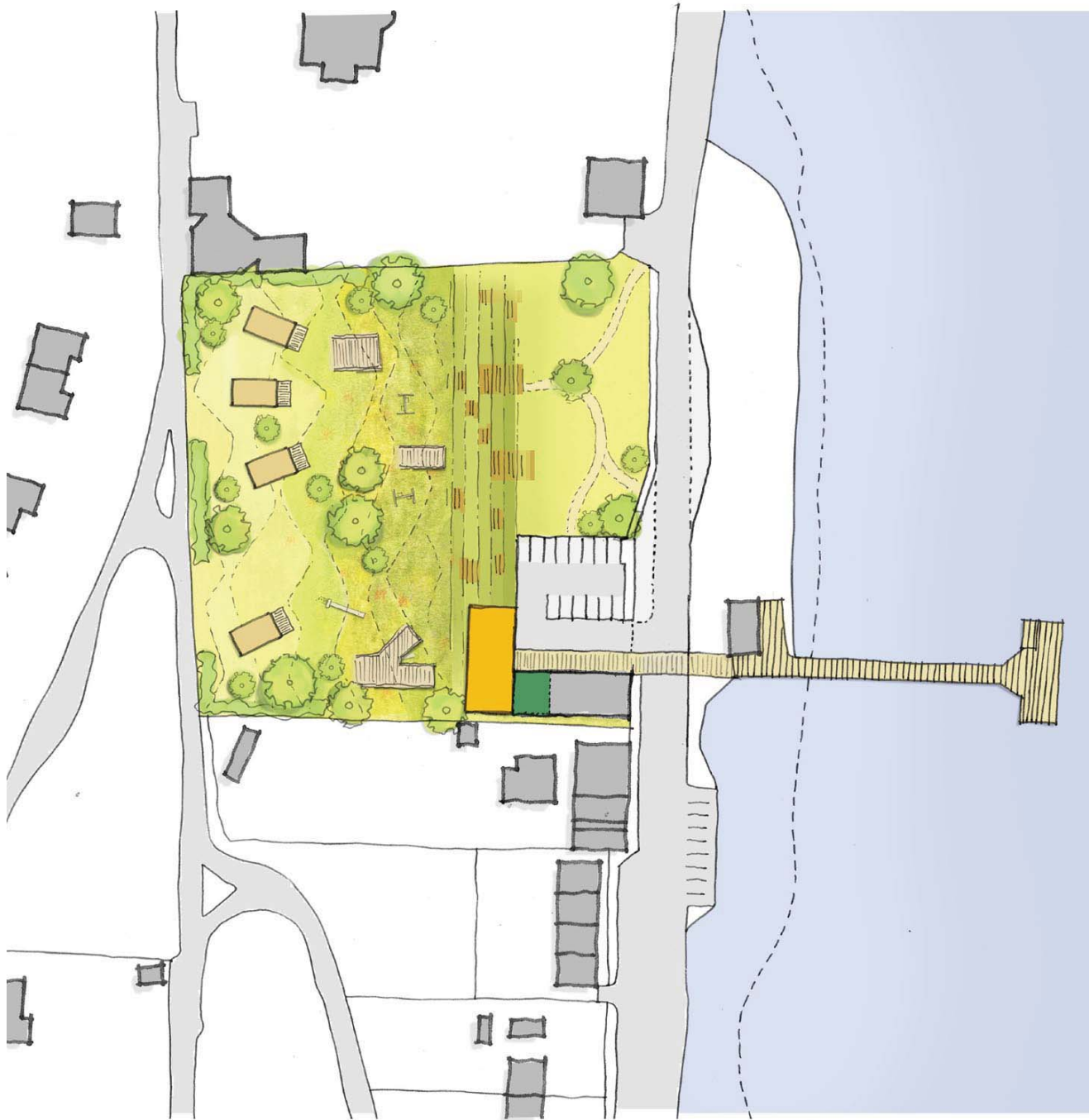


The Gale Centre, Gairloch

Phase 3



Phase 3



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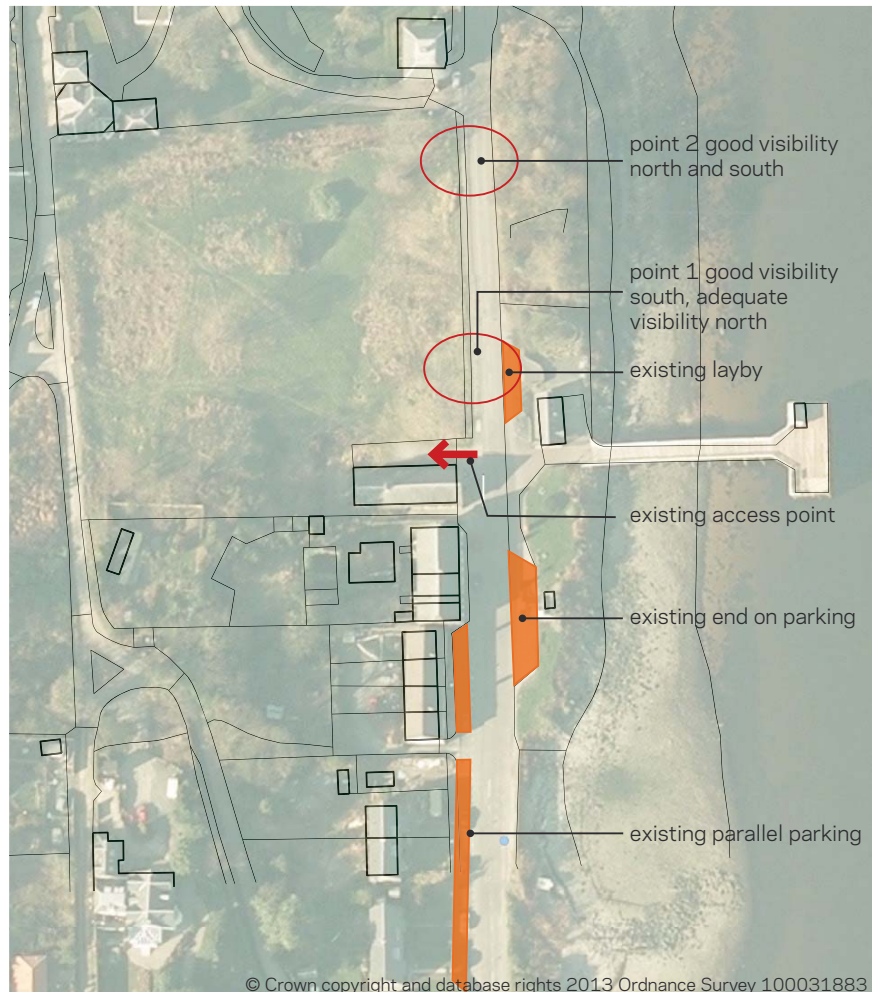
Barcombe Village Hall



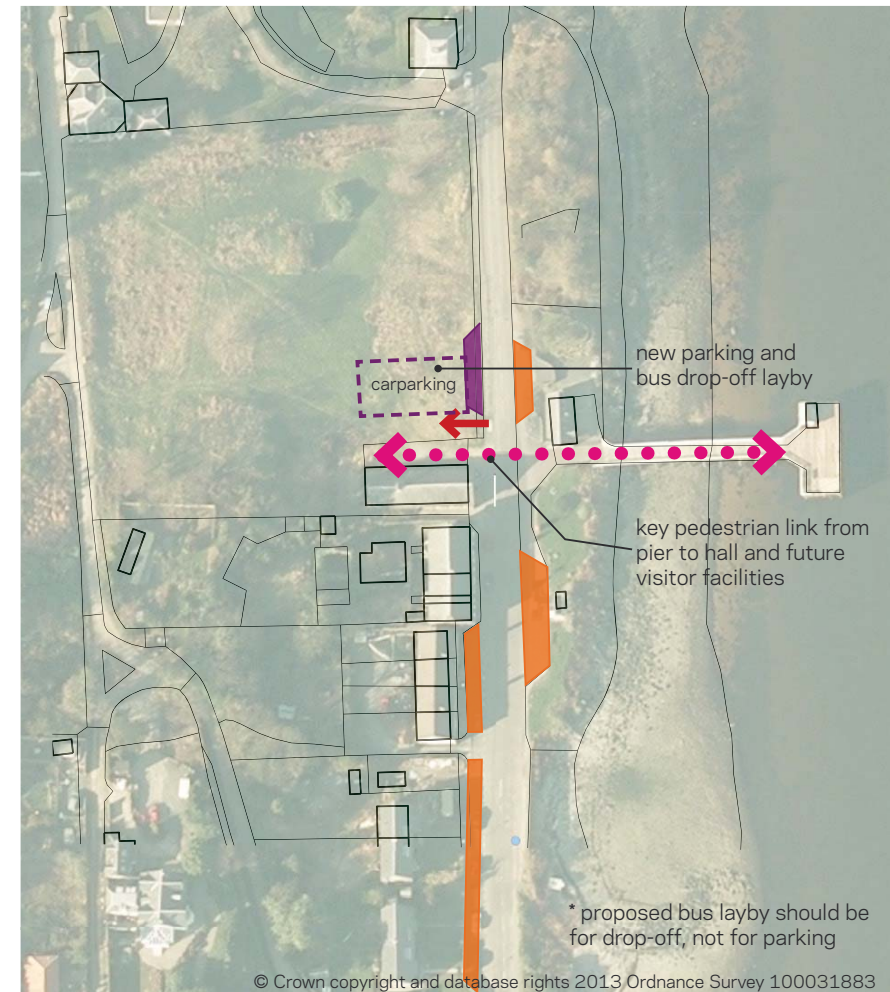
www.aggiearts.co.uk



Shore Road Access and Parking



The diagram above shows the current access and parking conditions on the Shore Road. An initial appraisal by Argyll and Bute Council's Technical Officer indicates areas where it may be appropriate to create access points from the road.



This diagram illustrates general approach to access. It is important to emphasise the line of the pier for pedestrians, so vehicular access should be kept off this line. Parking and pull-in space should be convenient to the village hall and shops and avoid areas where visibility is compromised.

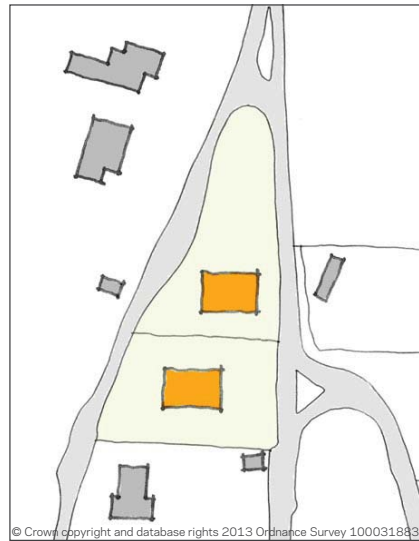
The High Road

The High Road site and the High Road itself were discussed throughout the workshops. The condition of the High Road is viewed by both the community and local authority as a constraint on development that requires vehicular access from it.

The layouts shown here were drawn following the first workshop, to simply test what might fit on a site this size. However it is acknowledged that none of these schemes can go ahead without improvement to the condition of the road.

While it was generally acknowledged that no one wants to set this important issue to one side, it was also suggested that the Blairmore Green workshops should focus on the Green itself, with the High Road pursued as a parallel process. It is clear that the viability of any option for Blairmore Green cannot rely on access from the High Road, or income generated by the High Road site. So with this in mind, the sketches are included in the report for information and the High Road remains an issue to be resolved between the relevant parties.

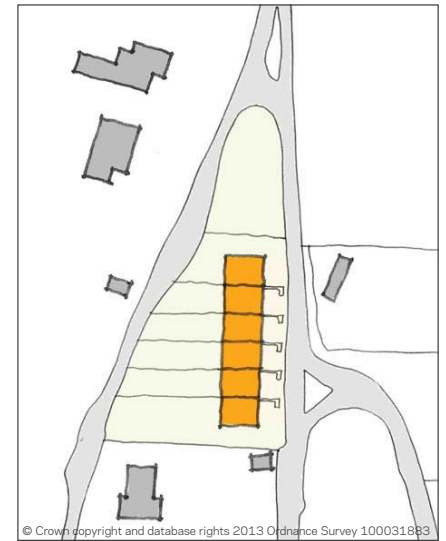
As part of the early evaluation process, it is appropriate to also consider the High Road site that will form part of the purchase. The options illustrated below suggest utilising this site for identified community need, be that the ability to sell plots to the private market as an enabler for the Blairmore Green site, or the provision of affordable housing or small business units, which may also act as an enabling project in more limited capacity.



Two private housing plots



Small business units



Residential - in the affordable spectrum, ie. small units in private ownership, shared ownership, mid-rent....

Design Considerations

The Cowal Peninsula has a character, particularly when viewed from the water, that distinguishes it from other areas of the National Park. The water and the ferries and boats in the foreground create a colour palette of blue/grey with reds and blues. A backdrop is created by hillside forest of the Argyll Forest Park. In the middle ground are the villages of Kilmin, Strone and Blairmore, dotted along the coast road and up the hill.

Local historic characteristics include Victorian standalone houses, with steeply pointed front facing gables and decorative bargeboards. Blairmore's Old Ticket Office was built with the pier in 1855 and has been restored in keeping with its Victorian heritage.

It will be important that anything that is developed for Blairmore Green, be it a temporary or a permanent building is in keeping with the character of the area.



Front facing gable, white render, decorative detail and green backdrop



Blairmore Old Ticket Office



Strone

Planning Considerations

The outcomes of the Charrette as shown in this report will be incorporated in the National Park Authority's Local Development Plan so that it is part of the planning strategy for the village. As it is an outline scheme, from which the community can develop an approach and a business case, there is obviously further detail to work out. This should be carried out with the National Park Planning Authority, to ensure that any development of the site is in keeping with what both the Park and the community want to see happen. When a scheme has been developed in sufficient detail, it will be subject to a planning application procedure, so the collaborative approach that has been evident throughout this Charrette will be of benefit.

Key considerations for the Planning Authority will be the following:

- Blairmore Green is a key site in the centre of the village. The uses proposed must be delivered in such a way, that the character of the green as a heart of the village is maintained.
- It has been agreed that some level of visitor income generating use is appropriate for the site. This must enhance and complement existing facilities in the village; the pier, the village hall and the shop frontage.
- As demonstrated on the opposite page, design proposals, either temporary or permanent, must respect the character of the area, while promoting a high quality of design approach which enhances Blairmore and helps to make it a nice place to live, visit and spend time in.



Temporary or year round accommodation considerations

- Low density clusters, set within green landscape.
- Height and setting on slope should be determined to maintain views from houses up the hill, and so that they are set against a green backdrop
- High quality design approach, respecting central location in village, rather than an edge of settlement, or rural 'campsite'.

Community/Visitor Hub considerations

- Sympathetic in scale and form to the village hall.
- Can take a contemporary approach, emphasis should be on design quality and attractiveness to visitors.
- Should acknowledge key location at the head of the pier, and the view when arriving via boat.



Conclusion

The Blairmore community have an exciting opportunity to take the future of the heart of the village into their own hands. It is important however, that there is clear idea and consensus about what the intention is to do with the site, once it is in community ownership and how this will fit in with a wider strategy for the village as a whole.

Communities such as Arrochar and Gairloch have already followed this path and much can be learned from their experiences. Community enterprise is becoming increasingly important to small rural villages, to stabilise their economic wellbeing and provide local community facilities.

These workshops have resulted in a significant step forward in the process. The consensus reached means that the community has clear next steps and priorities with which to target their efforts. The National Park will ensure that the LDP reflects the workshop outcomes and help to support the community moving forward and Argyll and Bute Council are aware of aspirations for Blairmore and can continue to work collaboratively with the National Park and the community.



visitor facilities promoting local strengths, such as the access to water, cycling and walking, and arts and crafts



create a place that the village can come together in to hold events, and where visitors can have a picnic



well designed interventions in timber create places to stop and take in the view, observe nature, play
(www.coeddinefwr.co.uk)



wildflower garden



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