



# LIVE PARK

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR NATIONAL PARK

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LOMOND  
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NATIONAL PARK



# Buchanan South

RURAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK AREA



Supplementary Guidance



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# 1. Purpose

This Supplementary Guidance supports the Local Development Plan policies on Housing, Economic Development and Visitor Experience by providing more detailed guidance for the southern area of Buchanan Community Council area which extends from Balmaha to Buchanan Castle Estate.

Map 1 on page 5 illustrates the area covered by this guidance. This includes Balmaha, Milton of Buchanan, Buchanan Smithy and Buchanan Castle Estate as well as the countryside area around these. The area is defined to the south by the Endrick Water and to the north by Conic Hill and the Queen Elizabeth Forest Park.<sup>1</sup>

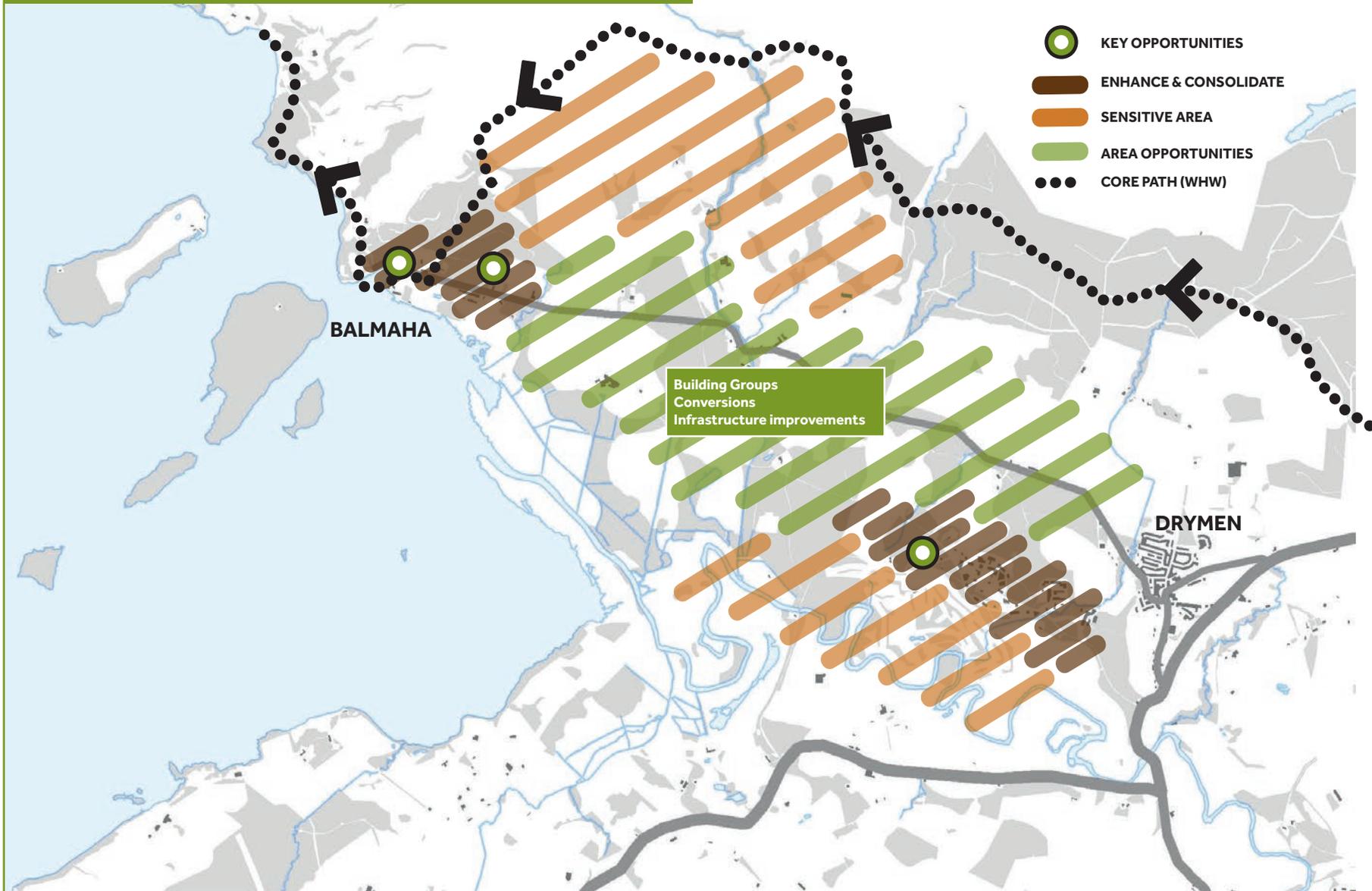
It provides guidance on the types of new development that may be supported and the general locations that are likely to be considered appropriate, as well as highlighting the special characteristics that are to be protected and/or enhanced.

Development proposals will be supported where they accord with the policies in the Local Development Plan but where a proposal represents a departure, support will be given, where the proposal demonstrates that it will fulfil the Area Strategy identified in Section 4.

1. The area stretching north from Balmaha towards and including Rowardennan is excluded from this guidance as it is not subject to the same development pressure (when compared to the rest of the Community Council area). The local development plan does not identify this area as having potential for further new tourism development on account of its road access and traffic pressures at peak times and capacity of available infrastructure. Instead, policy focuses on improvements to visitor infrastructure to better manage pressures and improve the visitor experience of the eastern side of Loch Lomond.



Map 1: Area covered by this guidance and strategy summary



## 2. Local Development Plan policy guidance for Buchanan

### Background and Context

The local development plan directs most new development to towns and villages and recognises that some development may be accommodated within the countryside.



This will help support prosperous and sustainable communities and businesses, whilst protecting and enhancing environmental quality, as required by Scottish Planning Policy (SPP), which has the overarching aim of supporting diversification and growth of rural areas.

The development plan identifies that the local countryside area contains several small rural communities, alongside numerous building groups in the countryside, and provides planning guidance for development in these locations, alongside guidance for new development within open countryside.

Balmaha and Milton of Buchanan are identified in the development plan as small rural communities. These are differentiated in the plan from settlements, such as nearby Drymen, due to their size and/or their more rural nature and

characteristics, limited development opportunities and the need to protect their development pattern, individual sense of place and special landscape qualities.

Buchanan Smithy and Buchanan Castle Estate would be considered by the development plan to be building groups in the countryside, albeit Buchanan Castle Estate is considerably large scale and is not read as a building group with identifiable character; being more aptly described as a collection of houses, generally set within large plots and within an established landscape setting.

Within the Buchanan area, the development plan supports appropriate rural development in all of these locations (including provision of affordable housing, diversification of the rural economy and small scale tourism development).

Such development is guided at present by criteria based planning policies which are used to consider and determine planning applications when they come forward.

During consultation with communities, land owners and businesses, there was a strong and shared desire to develop more of a spatial dimension to this guidance, to consider future development in the area in a more coordinated manner, rather than on a continually ad hoc basis, and to provide more detailed guidance on what appropriate development might be, as well the general locations where this might be acceptable.

Consultation around the time of the Main Issues Report stage of preparing the Proposed Plan allowed for more detailed consideration of this, and whilst it is not possible to pre-empt all development proposals, this allowed an opportunity to collectively think about the area and its future, develop a shared vision for this, take stock of what is already planned or in the pipeline, possible alternative uses for some sites and potential new sites.

This was informed by various stages of work including the community's own action planning work (2007-2010, currently being updated), consultation on LIVEPark: National Park Main Issues Report (Spring/Summer 2014), the Drymen and Balmaha Charrette (Spring 2013) and the East Loch Lomond Visitor Management Plan (Draft 2014).

### 3. South Buchanan area

The area covered by this guidance is a part of the National Park with a unique set of planning pressures, due not least to its beautiful setting on the east side of Loch Lomond and relative proximity to Glasgow and the central belt.

*Key landscape characters ranging from lowland wetlands, parkland, mixed woodland and rolling farmland, rising up to moorland and peat bogs*

There are visitor pressures at peak periods; community concerns over the scale of development and the balance between holiday accommodation and housing for the local community; aspirations for more opportunities for water and land based outdoor activities and connectivity; and ambitions for development by local landowners. Much of the area, including all the land to the south of the B837, lies within the Loch Lomond National Scenic Area.

There are a number of designated nature conservation sites that protect salmon and lamprey within the Endrick Water and the white fronted geese at the Loch Lomond National Nature Reserve. There is also a high number of listed buildings within the area and areas near to the Loch and Endrick water are identified within the 1 in 200 year flood zone near to the Loch and Endrick water. The Local Development Plan contains maps of the designations for this area (pg37) and further information on flooding including localised surface water flooding can be found on SEPA's website. The criteria of the natural and historic environment policies within the Local Development would have to be met by any development proposal.

The setting of the Buchanan landscape, at the eastern gateway to the National Park and its proximity to Loch Lomond and its world renowned landscape, gives it a strong sense of place.



The key landscape characteristics of the area and special qualities, can be summarised as follows:

- The **wider countryside** area is characterised by a range of land types, ranging from lowland wetlands, parkland, mixed woodland and rolling farmland, rising up to moorland and peat bogs. Livestock farming predominates, generally with sheep and cattle on the low ground and sheep on the high ground.

The landscape character is of distinctive open parallel ridges and moorland, rolling farmland with estates, including the Buchanan Castle designed landscape and attractive small estate planned communities and building groups. This is dominated by the iconic and distinctive visual qualities of Conic Hill and Gualann giving the Buchanan landscape an exposed landscape setting and high legibility.

This area of the National Park is visually significant due to the influence of the Highland Boundary Fault Zone where the lowland estate and designed landscape provides the pastoral setting and foreground to the imposing landscape of parallel ridges, which in turn provide the backdrop to the bigger mountains beyond. This is particularly evident at Drymen Bridge.



● **Balmaha** has a limited sense of enclosure and the landscape clearly takes precedence over the built form, giving a rural characteristic to the area. The main approach via the B837 offers views across to Loch Lomond, and is tree lined and attractive with much of the existing development screened by trees and hedges. It is a dispersed, low density collection of houses and tourism related businesses including pub, shop, hotel, cafe, visitor centre and boatyard at the village centre next to the bay. Various gap sites presently detract from the quality of the village centre and the experience of this for locals and visitors alike.

● **Buchanan Castle Estate** is a large estate of mostly mid and late 20th century houses along with a golf club, all located within part of the former policies and garden grounds of Buchanan Castle (Listed Building), now in a ruinous condition. The estate is rural in character and most properties are set with large mature garden grounds. The lack of street lighting, pavements and through traffic gives the estate a rural and quiet characteristic. Buchanan Castle Estate is a non-inventory Garden and Designed Landscape. Access is via a private road via off the A811.



● **Milton of Buchanan** contains the local primary school, church and village hall which all serve the wider Buchanan area. Located at the site of the former sawmill and meal mill, a number of piend-roofed estate cottages contribute to its distinctive character.



● **Buchanan Smithy** comprises of a linear pattern of housing lying to the north of the B837, including two distinctive rows of early nineteenth century cottages. Originally built for estate workers, it originally included a smiddy, hence its name.

# 4. Area Strategy

## BALMAHA

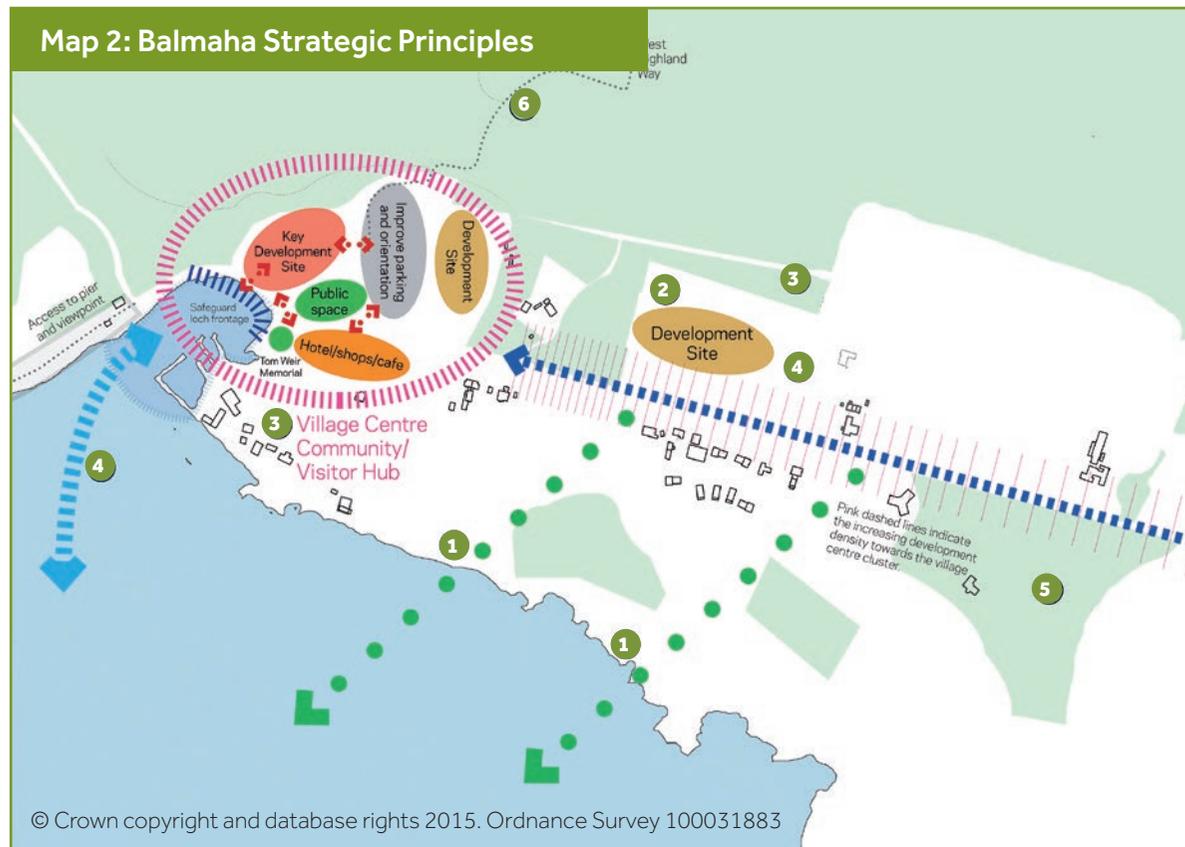
The 'Strategic Principles' plan for Balmaha illustrates the key sites and characteristics that require focussed attention over the short to medium term.

Development proposals for these sites are at various stages in the planning process and it is anticipated that work will commence on these over the short to medium term. Given the scale of development already proposed, it is not envisaged that support will be given to additional development proposals coming forward unless they help deliver the development priorities identified below or are small scale.

### Development proposals should:

- reinforce Balmaha's existing low density development pattern and retain its lochside and, particularly on the northern side of the approach into Balmaha, forested/woodland rural character.
- respect and enhance the character of Balmaha,
- assist in the creation of a central village focus for visitors and residents in the vicinity of the car park, including the creation of public open space
- be primarily low density, although gradually increasing towards the centre of the village
- contribute to:
  - Establishing improved connections to the loch, pier, viewpoints and walking/cycling routes.
  - The retention and, where possible, enhancement of views from the road to the loch.
  - Improved car parking and more opportunities for water transport.
  - Focus on the provision of affordable housing to meet the communities housing needs.

Appendix 1 on page 12 provides further advice on design principles for Balmaha.



### KEY PRINCIPLES

- 1 Balmaha is characterised by southerly views of the expanse of the loch contained by the wooded hillside to the north. The open space between the road and the loch should therefore be retained to maintain views of the loch and to safeguard the small scale low density, dispersed settlement character.
- 2 Development to the north of the road should be contained within woodland and screened from the road
- 3 The village centre cluster should be enhanced as an arrival destination and a focal point for facilities and services with improved connections to the bay and between areas ( as indicated with red arrows)
- 4 Greater water access should be encouraged to improve accessibility and activity
- 5 Improve cycle links between Balmaha and adjacent villages for local people and visitors as indicated by blue arrow
- 6 Place greater emphasis on the network of forest paths for walking and cycling



### Development Priorities

- The centre of Balmaha needs careful and focussed attention and future development should provide good connections between the various sites, helping to establish a strong sense of place and create a unified and cohesive village centre.
- Striking an appropriate balance between visitor accommodation and housing is a key issue for Balmaha. Recent development proposals have focussed on providing visitor accommodation, with no new housing being built and some existing housing now being used as holiday homes.
- A site on Forestry Commission land is formally identified for housing within the Local Development Plan, with potential also for workshop provision. This housing will be for affordable housing needs. Some open market housing will be supported where this is demonstrated as necessary to help fund the provision of affordable housing on site.
- Land behind Montrose House, which benefits from planning consent for visitor accommodation, is also considered to be a potentially suitable housing site should additional land be required to help meet affordable housing needs over the longer term (and subject to access being confirmed).



### BUCHANAN SMITHY

No extension to Buchanan Smithy is anticipated during the lifetime of the forthcoming Local Development Plan.

### MILTON OF BUCHANAN

Due both to its location and existing presence of community facilities, Milton of Buchanan offers an opportunity for limited expansion through the development of small-scale housing developments to meet local affordable housing needs. Any new development would be best located adjacent to Crietyhall Road, and would need to be of appropriate scale and design quality. A development brief should be agreed with the planning authority prior to planning consent being sought.

## BUCHANAN CASTLE ESTATE

The Estate has limited opportunities for further development due its landscape setting and infrastructure constraints (particularly private road access).

### Opportunities for small-scale development potentially include:

- Small scale ancillary development related to the existing golf club such as self-catering lodges for visitors and small business units (Class 2 or 4) which do not generate significant amounts of customer or delivery traffic. Any new development should be justified in terms of supporting the long term viability of the golf club, and would need to be carefully located and designed. A development brief should be agreed with the planning authority prior to planning consent being sought.
- Sympathetic restoration or consolidation of the ruined Buchanan Castle (B-Listed) to ensure its long term viability. This may be coupled with limited enabling residential development to provide financial support for the Castle's restoration or consolidation. Any new development, which may be within the Castle site or within the nearby local vicinity, would need to be sensitively located and designed. A development brief should be agreed with the planning authority and Historic Scotland prior to planning consent being sought.
- The sub division of garden grounds and the infilling of spaces between housing plots for new development will generally be resisted, unless it is demonstrated that the proposal will conserve the residential character and low density development pattern of the Estate.
- The former quarry site benefits from planning permission for visitor accommodation however could alternatively provide for small scale housing development, in accordance local development plan policy which is supportive of new affordable housing within building groups in the countryside.  
  
This would require to be low density to reflect the characteristics of the surrounding development pattern. Consideration will be given as to whether it may be appropriate in this instance to require a commuted payment in lieu of onsite affordable housing delivery to help provide offsite affordable housing at an alternative location within the local area, such as Milton of Buchanan, where the school is located.



### WIDER COUNTRYSIDE

The outstanding landscape setting of the countryside should be conserved by focussing new development within Balmaha, Milton of Buchanan and Buchanan Castle Estate.

### Development proposals within the wider countryside will be supported where they:

- relate to the renovation, conversion or extension of existing buildings, including the establishment of a new rural business within an existing building, or
- are demonstrated as necessary in connection with operating an established rural business

New isolated development in the countryside will generally not be supported.

# Appendix 1 - Design principles for Balmaha

## • New development within Balmaha should be designed so that its character reflects its rural location

Balmaha has properties with a diverse range of architectural character, and this diversity should be retained.

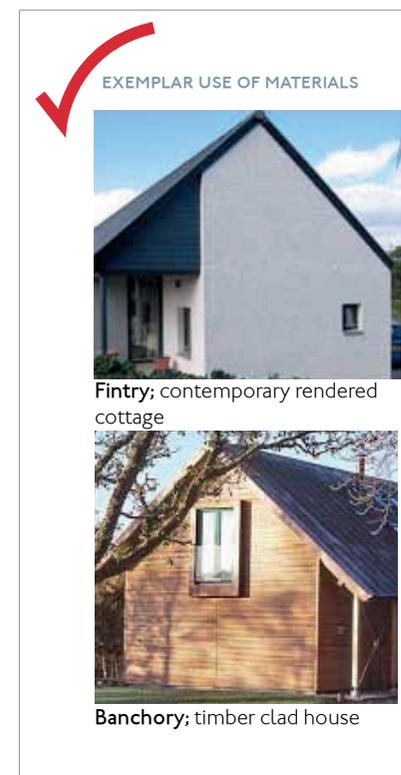
Nevertheless there are some design approaches which are inappropriate; generally those associated with buildings which are located in very different situations. Approaches or 'styles' which should not be developed are, for example-

- **'suburban' character** – overscaled semi-detached houses with a deep plan;
- **'forest' character** – although Balmaha is the location for a limited number of log cabins, in terms of its original and key character, it is not considered a specifically appropriate location for more cabins. Timber clad houses which reflect the massing, scale and siting of neighbouring buildings are considered acceptable.
- **'stately home' character** – although there are some larger properties in Balmaha, they are generally carefully designed to be appropriate in their setting. This Guidance does not seek to limit the size of newer properties, but any new large houses should be located in appropriate (generally larger) plots and should be designed to break down their scale and enhance, not dominate, their setting.
- **'standardised' character** – standard 'could be anywhere' house designs and the repetition of a limited number of very similar house types will generally look inappropriate in Balmaha

New development should aim for variety in massing and scale and should reflect Balmaha's variety of building materials and styles. Designers should use a contemporary approach to detail design, to add character rather than adopting proprietary materials and systems.

The palette of materials for use here is wide but the use of brick is not considered generally appropriate.

Gardens, boundaries, parking areas, drives and access ways should be designed in a similar non standardised way avoiding standard suburban development styles and layouts.





**Retain rural character of access road and boundary treatments;**

definition between road and plots is strong; boundary to road is softened by landscaping; continuity of stone walls and planting unify disparate house types



**Individual plots;** pattern of single plots off of main road



**Hipped roofs;** sit well within landscape



**Contemporary solutions;** located behind existing property

- new development within Balmaha should reinforce its existing development pattern and be of appropriate (generally small) scale

New development should retain Balmaha's rural, lochside character by ensuring that the character of settlement and that of the B837 does not change.

To achieve this on the B837 approach, new development should maintain the existing verge, trees and stone boundary walls and should retain the current successful development pattern which is based on the development of single plots addressing the road. Parking areas, drives and access ways which sit in front of properties should be avoided and the density and relationship to neighbouring properties retained.

In the 'centre' of Balmaha there is scope for new development to be more dense and adhoc in layout and character. This will re-enforce the existing eclectic nature of this part of the village. Such proposals should be based on a robust analysis of the particular site and take account of any impact on the key views and the loch setting.

All new development should be of appropriate scale. It will be site dependant but generally groupings of 3-8 dwellings should be the most easy to set comfortably in more open landscape. Small groupings should be based on existing development patterns where one (generally larger) property faces onto the road, with other smaller properties behind. If there is a need for larger development (i.e. more than 5 houses) it should be divided by robust landscaping and areas of open land to reduce the impact of development.



**SINGLE PROPERTY – ON THE APPROACHES TO BALMAHA**  
 in this example properties follow the existing development pattern and integrate into the existing setting. They have:-

- consistent boundary walls
- consistent setbacks
- planting retained and new planting
- consistent spacing between houses
- new property is orientated in a similar way to existing houses
- existing building typology, massing and scale informs new building design

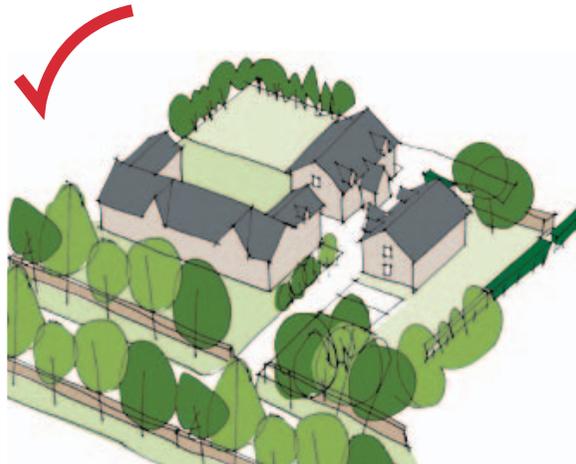
**PRECEDENT**



Dunkeld; contemporary timber cottage



Balmaha; typical single property



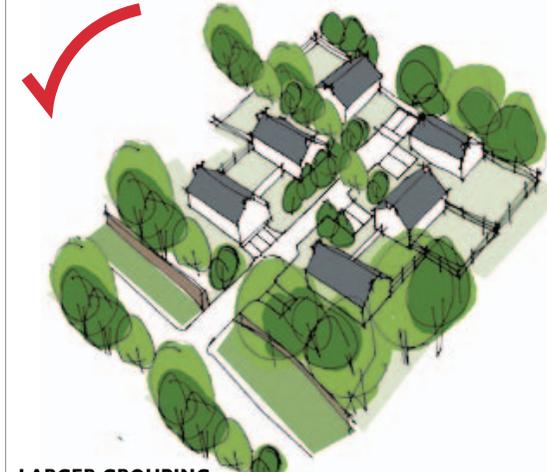
**SMALLER GROUP**  
 A limited number of units (2-4) can be grouped together informally to form a rural courtyard type space

- new development is built behind existing property
- consistent setback and boundary is retained at street frontage
- original access is retained
- planting is retained
- characterful shared space is created

**PRECEDENT**



Balmaha; new backland development



**LARGER GROUPING**  
 A limited number of units (4-8) can be developed whilst still retaining the rural character of Balmaha

- new development maintains existing setbacks, landscaping and boundary treatment of the area
- massing and density is similar to existing development
- alternate orientation of properties allows for rural courtyard arrangement
- parking is well integrated
- good quality boundary treatment between properties defines shared central space and private garden areas

**PRECEDENT**



Applecross; contemporary courtyard development







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