



**25/00193/PPDM – PHASED HOUSING DEVELOPMENT TO ERECT 160 HOUSES WITH ASSOCIATED ROADS, INFRASTRUCTURE AND PLOT FOR FUTURE COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT AT MELBOST WEST HOUSING DEVELOPMENT SITE, SANDWICK, ISLE OF LEWIS**

Report by Chief Executive

**PURPOSE**

- 1.1 Since the planning application is classed as a 'Major development' under the Town and Country Planning (Hierarchy of Developments) (Scotland) Regulations 2009 (the Hierarchy Regulations), the application cannot be determined under delegation and in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation is referred to the Planning Applications Board for a recommendation and the Comhairle for decision.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The Report recommends approval subject to conditions of a planning application to erect 160 houses with associated roads and infrastructure, over a four-phase programme, and includes the provision of a serviced plot for future commercial development.
- 2.2 The Report sets out a description of the proposed development, the site and its context together with the advice of consultees and the contributions submitted by the public; this is followed by an assessment of the proposed development against the policies and provisions of the Development Plan and has regard to all relevant material planning considerations.
- 2.3 The key issues raised through representation; consultees and the policy assessment are the principle of the development at this location; construction traffic, transport, and changes to the highway; loss of agricultural land; housing density and tenure; service and infrastructure capacity, including schools; provision of play facilities; and surface water flooding and drainage provision.
- 2.4 The conclusion and recommendation are for approval subject to conditions that will mitigate effects. The recommendation considers that the siting of the development is acceptable. It is acknowledged that there will be traffic impacts, however these will lessen over time once the development is completed and normal car and bus transport is integrated into the existing A-class road which serves the area. Surface water drainage has been discussed in detailed with the applicant's agent and proposals are to create an adoptable-standard system for Scottish Water to then adopt and maintain.
- 2.5 Overall, the development is assessed to be in accordance with the Development Plan, and the recommendation is for approval.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 It is recommended that the application be **APPROVED** subject to the conditions set out in Appendix 1 to this Report.

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Appendix 1:	Schedule of Proposed Conditions
Appendix 2:	Selection of application plans
Appendix 3:	Responses to consultation

Appendix 4: Representations  
Background Papers: None

## IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

Resource Implications	Implications/None
Financial	None
Legal	None
Staffing	If approved, future discharge of Planning Conditions, construction stage condition compliance/post construction monitoring
Assets and Property	None
Strategic Implications	Implications/None
Risk	None
Equalities	None
Corporate Strategy	None
Environmental Impact	None corporately
Consultation	None

## BACKGROUND AND PROPOSAL

### Background

- 5.1 This detailed, major, planning permission application was registered as valid on 06 June 2025.
- 5.2 Pre-application consultation took place in December 2024 and January 2025, in relation to a proposed major housing development for 160 houses, infrastructure and the associated provision for a roundabout in the A866, at Melbost West, Sandwick, Isle of Lewis. The site is an allocated housing site within the Local Development Plan, Proposal Site 9.
- 5.3 The application has been accompanied by sufficient information to make a determination.
- 5.4 This Report sets out an assessment against the policies and provisions of the Development Plan and has regard to all relevant material planning considerations, to inform a conclusion and recommendation as to the determination.

### Description of development

- 5.5 This application seeks detailed planning permission to erect 160 mainly semi-detached houses with air source heat pumps and roof mounted solar PV panels; as well as associated roads, foot paths, pedestrian crossing, car parking, landscaping, public open space and drainage provision. The development includes the provision of a serviced plot for potential future commercial development. The development includes revising the current access into Melbost East housing sites (Mackenzie developments) with a roundabout being positioned within a realigned carriageway for the A866 to allow a singular access into both developments and facilitate the flow of traffic on the main road once the development is completed.
- 5.6 The application site is located within the mapped settlement of Stornoway. The landscape of the site and surroundings is classed as Gently Sloping Croftland Landscape Character type. The site itself is grazed farmland, though the surrounds are reflective of the suburban fringe of Stornoway with the current Melbost East housing to the east of the site and Parkend housing to the south. The site is bounded by the public road to the south, with Parkend Industrial Estate beyond; open farm ground to the north and north-west; individual housing and a small, developed area associated with the community hall and former school to the west; and housing to the east.

- 5.7 The 160 houses will comprise of 156 semi-detached units and 4 detached units of 8 different house designs, varying in size from one to four bedrooms, and between single to 1.75-storeys in height. Within the proposals, 26 houses are designed to be wheelchair friendly. All 160 of the dwellings are constructed to comply with Housing for Varying Needs standards. The houses will have a mixture of finishes, but with a standard 'base' palette of white render to the walls and flat profile grey tiles to the roofs. Most properties are accented with composite weatherboard cladding in brick-red; ocean blue; sky blue; tea green; clay brown; and sand yellow. Windows and doors are uniform to each unit and are proposed as white uPVC.
- 5.8 The surface water generated from the site will be treated by a SuDS system in two positions on the site. The SuDS basins have been located in positions that provide amenity buffers and amenity space, with footpaths route around the southern basin and the northern basin located in a 'buffer' position to the rear of new housing and the footpath along the central road running between the current Melbost East housing and the development site. Each area includes planting.
- 5.9 The roundabout development within the A866 will create a replacement to the current junction access into the Melbost housing sites. The proposals include a bus layby to be provided internally in the scheme to serve bus routing, such as school buses, through both schemes. An existing layby on the north of the A866 serving Melbost East housing schemes and the associated pedestrian crossing to the south side of the A866 is to be retained and will serve the entirety of the current and new development also. Pedestrian routing is provided to Melbost East housing and the current informal link path from Melbost East to the former Sandwick School parking area is retained. The road layout allows for bus, refuse and other service vehicle routes. The development also includes related drainage provision, additional overspill parking for the area and landscaped amenity areas.
- 5.10 The site levels rise significantly from the main road edge boundary of the site to the north-west corner of the site, from 19m AoD to 27m AoD. The difference in site levels is illustrated by the finished floor levels (FFL) of the buildings with the lowest housing having an FFL of 19.2m while the highest will have an FFL of 27.2m. Sections have been provided but full details of retaining structures are outstanding.

#### **Description of site and its context**

- 5.11 The application site extends to approximately 10ha (approx. 24 acres). The site is located within Melbost Farm land, and consists of a comparatively gently sloping grazed, grass field with some small elements of farm infrastructure such as a concrete animal corral, fencing and low level stone walls. The wider area is largely the remainder of the farmland, extensive housing development, and an industrial estate. The site is sloping, with an approximate eight metre differential between the south of the site and the north.
- 5.12 The area is within the Main Settlement of Stornoway according to the LDP Development Strategy Map in terms of the spatial strategy of the Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan (OHLDP). The site is not within any areas designated for species or habitat. The site is within a consultation zone for aviation interests relating to Stornoway Airport.
- 5.13 The area is within the Main Settlement of Stornoway according to the LDP Development Strategy Map in terms of the spatial strategy of the Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan (OHLDP). The site is not within any areas designated for species or habitat. The soils are mapped in the National Soils Map for Scotland as mineral soils, with a very small area identified as potentially peaty gleys. The nature of the vegetation on site, and historical agricultural use, supports the mineral classification and there is no evidence of significant peat soils.

#### **Variations made prior to determination**

- 5.14 Variations amount to alteration to a singular house design (Plan 09A); revised landscaping plan; and minor alterations to roads details to ensure appropriate turning areas. Amendments to the Design and Access Statement were to address small inaccuracies.

#### **Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations**

- 5.15 The proposed development was considered in relation to Schedule 2 of The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (Column 1 (Category 10(b)) – Urban development projects) on account of the site being in excess of 0.5ha triggered a screening under the EIA Regulations. The result of the screening opinion assessment determined that an Environmental Impact Assessment is not required.

#### **Habitats Regulations – Appropriate Assessment**

- 5.16 Not required.

#### **PLANNING HISTORY**

- 6.1 The extant planning history is limited to the related Pre-Application Notice (PAN) (ref. 24/00513/PAN) and Environmental Screening opinion (ref. 25/00193/SCR\_L). Part of the site was subject to a now lapsed 'outline' application for housing and a retail unit and the associated environmental screening application (ref. 06/00576/OUT and 06/00677/SCR\_L). The site is designated as a Housing Allocation site in the current Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan (OHLDP), and in the Outer Hebrides Housing Land Audit (HLA).

#### **PLANNING HIERARCHY/PRE-APPLICATION**

- 7.1 On account of the development being classified as Major development, a report on compliance with the statutory requirements for pre-application consultation with communities was submitted with the planning application and is discussed under 'Public Participation' below.

#### **POLICY CONTEXT**

##### **The Development Plan**

- 8.1 In Scotland, the planning system is 'plan-led' and sections 25 and 37(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (the Act) require that planning decisions be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 8.2 The statutory Development Plan for the administrative area of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is comprised of [National Planning Framework 4 \(NPF4\) \(2023\)](#) and the [Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan \(LDP\) 2018](#) and its supplementary guidances. Section 24(3) of the Act provides that in the event of any incompatibility between a provision of NPF4 and a provision of the LDP that whichever of them is the later in date, is to prevail in relation to the incompatible policies.
- 8.3 The Development Plan policies with particular relevance to the application are:

##### NPF4:

- Policy 1 – Tackling the climate and nature crises
- Policy 2 – Climate mitigation and adaptation
- Policy 3 – Biodiversity
- Policy 4 – Natural places
- Policy 5 – Soils
- Policy 7 – Historic assets and places
- Policy 14 – Design, quality and place
- Policy 15 – Local Living and 20 minute neighbourhoods

- Policy 16 – Quality homes
- Policy 22 - Flood risk and water management

#### OHLDP

- Policy DS1: Development Strategy – Main Settlements
- Policy PD1: Placemaking and Design
- Policy PD2: Carparking & Roads Layout
- Policy PD3: Housing
  - Proposal site 9: Melbost Farm West
- Policy PD4: Zero and Low Carbon Buildings
- Policy EI1: Flooding
- Policy EI2: Water and Wastewater
- Policy EI05: Soils
- Policy EI 3: Water Environment
- Policy EI 4: Waste Management
- Policy EI 9: Transport Infrastructure
- Policy EI 10: Communications Infrastructure
- Policy EI 11: Safeguarding
- Policy NBH1: Landscape
- Policy NBH2: Natural Heritage
- Policy NBH5: Archaeology

#### OHLDP Additional documents

[Proposal Sites Booklet 2018](#)

#### **Other Relevant National Guidance**

[NatureScot Standing Advice](#)

[Biodiversity: draft planning guidance](#)

[Developing with Nature guidance](#)

#### **CONSULTATIONS**

- 9.1 Statutory consultation was undertaken as required by Regulations. The detailed response of statutory and other consultation bodies can be viewed at Appendix 3 to this Report but is summarised as follows.

##### **Scottish Water**

- 9.2 Scottish Water has no objection to the planning application. They note the following: there is currently sufficient capacity in the Stornoway Water Treatment Works to service the development. There is currently sufficient capacity for a foul only connection in the Stornoway Waste Water Treatment works to service the development. However, further investigations may be required to be carried out once a formal application has been submitted. For reasons of sustainability and to protect from potential future sewer flooding, Scottish Water will not accept any surface water connections into the combined sewer system. Scottish Water records indicate that there is live infrastructure in the proximity of the development area that may impact on existing Scottish Water assets. Written permission must be obtained before any works are started within the area of Scottish Water apparatus. A review of the records indicates that there are no Scottish Water drinking water catchments or water abstraction sources, which are designated as Drinking Water Protected Areas under the Water Framework Directive, in the area that may be affected by the proposed activity.

##### **NATS**

- 9.3 NATS examined the proposed development from a technical safeguarding aspect and it does not conflict with their safeguarding criteria. Accordingly, NATS (En Route) Public Limited Company ("NERL") has no safeguarding objection to the proposal.

#### **Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks**

- 9.4 Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks register no objections to the proposed works providing the High Voltage line is diverted but the applicant has started the process of the connection application which will cover this.

#### **Highlands and Islands Airports Limited**

- 9.5 Highlands and Islands Airports Limited required additional information to provide their final response and now advise that, at the given position and height, this development would not infringe the safeguarding criteria and operation of Stornoway Airport. Therefore, Highlands and Islands Airports Limited has no objections to the proposal.

#### **Comhairle Archaeology Service**

- 9.6 Comhairle Archaeology Service – *‘There are no Historic Environment Records within the development boundary; however, this general surrounding area was the location for Second World War accommodation and infrastructure associated with airfield of RAF Stornoway. Potentially evidence from this period of activity may be present on the site. ... The historic environment records show a scattering of evidence between Stornoway and Agnish, that suggest a moderate / high level of activity in this area during prehistory (Neolithic - Early Iron Age). These sites are characterised by burial cairns, isolated structures, and stray finds; however, settlement sites have not been identified. ... The Archaeology Service has concerns that there is a potential for unknown buried archaeological structures or deposits to be encountered during the ground works phase of this development’*. A Written Scheme of Investigation and access for the Comhairle Archaeologist is sought.

#### **Comhairle Roads Section**

- 9.7 Comhairle Roads section advises that the indicative proposals now detailed in the engineer’s drawings for the roads layout are suitable for the current planning stage. The roundabout proposal, A866 partial realignment, the proposed new road network within the site, and its integration with the Melbost East adopted road network are acceptable in principle. The developer should make an application for Roads Construction Consent (RCC) to allow for the adoption of roads and streetlighting following completion. Additional details of pedestrian crossing points with dropped kerbs and tactile paving; lane widening; splitter islands; bus shelter specification; road signage and markings; and other necessary additions can be addressed through the RCC process.

#### **Comhairle Building Standards**

- 9.8 Comhairle Building Standards highlight key elements for consideration in relation to the SuDS design, location, and discharge. The developer has provided additional written feedback on this throughout the assessment stage of the application.

#### **Comhairle Cleansing Services**

- 9.9 Comhairle Cleansing services provided advice on the provision of suitable waste receptacles and management on site, and the requirements for the access and manoeuvring for a Refuse Collection Vehicle to serve the site.

#### **Comhairle Flood Risk Section**

- 9.10 Comhairle Flood Risk section noted the potential for surface water flooding along the eastern boundary and south west corner. They advise that proposed ground levels on the eastern boundary and detention basins should deal with the risk at that location. They state confirmation of how surface water run-off will be dealt with in the south west corner of the site will be required.

#### **Comhairle Environmental Health Service**

- 9.11 Comhairle Environmental Health service advised on construction period conditions and also in relation to air source heat pump noise.

### **Comhairle Education Services**

- 9.12 Comhairle Education services advised that there are no major issues for primary capacity, but early years capacity is a significant issue. Melbost West Project is in the Stornoway Primary nursery area, which is full and is adjacent to the Sgoil an Rubha nursery area which is also full.

### **Sandwick Community Council**

- 9.13 Sandwick Community Council was consulted in a statutory capacity. They have objected to the development for the following reasons:
- Loss of Prime Agricultural Land.
  - Environmental and Drainage Concerns – waterlogging, and downstream flooding; sensitive habitat and contribution to biodiversity.
  - Inadequate Infrastructure and Road Concerns.
  - Unacceptable Road Alteration: Proposed Roundabout on A866.
  - Scale, Social Issues, and Maintenance.
  - Transparency About Housing Purpose.
  - Threat to Community Identity - Sandwick Will Be Engulfed.

### **Stornoway Community Council**

- 9.14 Stornoway Community Council was consulted in a non-statutory capacity. They provided a number of comments, which are summarised below:
- Given that the likely tenants for the Melbost West Houses seem likely to be people of working age, a very specific concern was expressed that school capacity, particularly at Stornoway Primary, may be insufficient if there is a significant increase in children of primary school age.
  - Another area of concern is bus shelters - there seems only to be one small one. It could reasonably be envisaged that once Melbost West is complete, there might be forty or fifty young people from there and Mackenzie Park waiting for buses into Stornoway for school or college at any one time. With such numbers, they will need large bus shelters while they wait during the adverse weather conditions which are so commonplace in the islands.
  - We would respectfully ask that the Comhairle make adequate play area provision subject to a planning condition for the Melbost West development.
  - Stornoway Community Council appreciates that there are a number of considerations which will come into play, and that the potential issues with primary school provision, internet and mobile signals are not under the control of HHP. We will conclude by strongly reiterating our general support for this development in principle - our community badly [need] more modern energy-efficient housing, of the kind that HHP have demonstrated they can deliver.

## **REPRESENTATIONS**

- 10.1 One representation in support was received in relation to the development. It identified specific support for larger houses on the island (4 and 5 bedrooms).

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

- 11.1 In terms of The Town and Country Planning (Hierarchy of Developments) (Scotland) Regulations 2009, the proposed development is classed as a 'major development'. To meet statutory requirements prescribed by the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 (as amended) (the DM Regulations), 'Pre-application consultation' (PAC) with Local Communities was required. A Proposal of Application Notice was submitted to the Comhairle, Ward Councillors and Sandwick Community Council as required by the DM Regulations. Stornoway Community Council were also notified as the bounding community council whose area may also be affected by the proposals. The subsequent consultation undertaken by the developer is documented in a Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) report submitted as part of the planning application.

- 11.2 The PAC report confirms that the statutory requirement to publicise and hold at least two public events where members of the public may make comments to the prospective applicant as regards the proposed development were undertaken, the first at Sandwick Hall on 16 December 2024 with 18 attendees and the second on 17 January 2025 at Sandwick Hall with 21 attendees. The document detailed the community groups, neighbours and other relevant persons notified of the Proposal of Application Notice.
- 11.3 Various methods of feedback raised comments and queries relating to construction traffic and safe access while the build is happening; loss of agricultural land; housing density and tenure; school capacity; provision of playpark facility; concerns over impact on infrastructure; (anti)social problems; capacity of GP and dental surgery/ies.
- 11.4 The PAC has met the regulatory requirements. Feedback gathered has been partially reflected at the application stage with one public representation, stating a positive view on the development of larger affordable housing provision. The representation is contained in Appendix 4 to this Report.
- 11.5 The objection from Sandwick Community Council is dealt with through the consultee process and raised similar matters from the pre-planning stage.
- 11.6 The planning application was advertised for public comment in the public notices section of the Stornoway Gazette in the publication dated 19 June 2025 seeking comments before the expiry of 14 days, as required by regulations.
- 11.7 There were 45 notifiable neighbours, who were all notified on 09 June 2025, as required by regulations.

#### **OTHER STATEMENTS SUBMITTED**

- 12.1 Pre-Application Consultation Report  
Design and Access Statement  
Preliminary Ecological (PEA) (includes Biodiversity Enhancement proposals)

#### **PLANNING APPRAISAL**

##### **Principle of Development**

- 13.1 The site is within the Main Settlement of Stornoway, in terms of the spatial strategy for the Outer Hebrides contained within Policy DS1 of the Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan (OHLDP). The site is within the suburban fringe which is characterised by its mixed character, including croftland and farmland, residential uses, and some industrial areas.
- 13.2 The site is an allocated site for housing provision within the OHLDP, Proposal site 9 Melbost Farm West. The allocation has an indicative unit number of 167 housing units. The detail in the OHLDP notes potential constraints as airport safeguarding and potential requirements for new (or significant upgrading of) wastewater infrastructure to accommodate development of this site.
- 13.3 The principal objective of Policy DS1 for Main Settlements is to 'support and consolidate the strategic role of main settlements within their island groupings'. That objective is tested through a criteria based policy which has a focus on siting and design; appropriate density; considerations relating to commercial development; protection of functional Open Space; and seeks that new development does not adversely affect the operational use and sustainability of croftland.
- 13.4 The character of this area of the Main Settlement of Stornoway, of which Sandwick is a part, is influenced by the airfield to its east; the crofting areas of East and North Street to the west; and the denser housing of Parkend and Melbost in the south and east. The settlement pattern is varied, with a linear crofting form in the historic streets, with some modern backland development mixed in. The



character is mixed, with older croft houses and new individual house builds which have dominated new housing provision over the last 30 years in part, then the larger scale housing developments of Parkend and Melbost East cementing the edge of the Main Settlement. These developments are long established and form part of the character of the area.

- 13.5 The proposed Melbost West housing development has actively reflected the positive elements of the Melbost East layouts, while endeavouring to respond to the topographical variation across the site. The proposed layout is, on balance, considered to be compatible with and would not erode the surrounding built form and character.
- 13.6 The housing design and layout is considered in detail under Policy PD1 below, but is considered suitable for the site and surroundings, in line with the aims of Policy DS1 and the Placemaking and Quality Housing aims of NPF4. The site is prominent on the approach from Stornoway Airport to the Main Settlement. The overall site layout, position, and design of housing, in relation to the view from the main A866, and the landscaping on this portion of the site, has been acceptably designed. It will be managed by condition to ensure that the development will create a positive contribution to the approach to Stornoway.
- 13.7 The site is on non-crofting agricultural land, and the development would not adversely affect the continuation of crofting. In relation to the impact on farmland, the site is not of national importance, being classed as Class 4 on the Macaulay land index – only Classes 1 - 3 are considered to be prime agricultural land on the scale. The site has been identified through the local plan allocation process for housing at the proposed scale. While the retention of quality agricultural land is always desirable, the Scottish Government's declared housing emergency is a material consideration in the planning balance on the development of new housing, even on greenfield land. The identified agricultural field for development is used for rotational grazing and is not in use for arable crops. The wider Melbost farm area, of which the field is a part, retains further grazing areas for livestock.
- 13.8 The Sandwick Community Council have objected on the basis of the loss of prime [sic] agricultural land. On balance, it is considered that this does not lend sufficient weight to merit the refusal of the application.
- 13.9 The objection also raises concern that the development will overwhelm 'Sandwick Village'. It is the Community Council view that Sandwick remains a rural, crofting settlement. However, as assessed above, the site is within the defined Main Settlement of Stornoway and, though on the peri-urban fringe, is assessed under relevant development strategy policy for Main Settlements and is considered to comply.
- 13.10 For the above reasons it is concluded that, on balance, the development as proposed, on an identified housing allocation site, complies with Policy DS1.

#### **Housing and Quality Homes**

- 13.11 OHLDP Policy PD3 – Housing states that the effective land supply to deliver a housing supply target may be delivered through sites listed in the LDP Proposal Sites. Sites for affordable housing provision will be safeguarded against uses and development that would compromise the residential function of the site. For housing proposals of 15 units or more, an appropriate tenure mix will be sought.
- 13.12 The development site constitutes the entirety of Proposal Site 9 – Melbost West (housing) from the current OHLDP, and the Housing Land Audit (HLA site ref: 6/005).
- 13.13 NPF4 Policy 16 – Quality Homes states that development proposals for new homes on land allocated for housing in LDPs will be supported. The proposals should explain their contribution to local housing requirements, including affordable homes; provision/enhancement of local infrastructure, facilities and services; and improving residential amenity of the surrounding area. Development proposals for

new homes that improve affordability and choice by being adaptable to changing and diverse needs, and which address identified gaps in provision, will be supported. This includes accessible and adaptable homes; build to rent; affordable homes; and a range of homes, including for larger families. Development proposals for new homes will be supported where they make provision for affordable homes to meet an identified need.

- 13.14 NPF4 defines affordable homes/housing as 'Good quality homes that are affordable to people on low incomes. This can include social rented, mid-market rented, shared-ownership, shared-equity, housing sold at discount (including plots for self-build), self-build plots and low-cost housing without subsidy.'
- 13.15 The proposed social housing comprises a mix of one- and 1.75-storey semi-detached dwellings. There is a range of house sizes, with most accommodating households of 2 to 4 persons, with some larger properties to cater to households of 5 to 7 persons. Of the 160 dwellings, 26 are designed to be wheelchair-friendly to meet specific user requirements. All 160 of the dwellings are constructed to comply with Housing for Varying Needs standards. Each house has its own parking spaces, as well as front and rear gardens.
- 13.16 For context, the adjacent Melbost East site contains the same house designs, for the most part, and has a total of 131 houses. having benefited from a specific statutory development brief following the initial phase of work.
- 13.17 As the site is located within the Stornoway Main Settlement area, the housing density is set by area to a maximum of 30 units/ha and a minimum of 15 units/ha, with an average of around 22 units/ha. This is based on the housing density policy set out in the OHLDP. It should be noted that at least 25% of the site area is to be allocated to the provision of amenity space, drainage systems and utility infrastructure. This density is in line with the policy requirements and the indicative unit number (circa 167) in the proposals site information.
- 13.18 The housing is identified in the developer's supporting information as being entirely for affordable housing units. This is an acceptable tenure proposal.
- 13.19 The proposals should explain their contribution to local housing requirements, including affordable homes; provision/enhancement of local infrastructure, facilities and services; and improving residential amenity of the surrounding area. The accompanying Design and Access Statement indicates the aims of the proposal to 'effectively address the local housing demand', which is reflected by the intention for all the housing to be affordable. The developer is Hebridean Housing Partnership (HHP), the only local Registered Social Landlord currently developing new volume build homes in Lewis, and it is considered the development of these properties will provide community benefit. The proposals also include the provision of a plot for a future commercial development, to further support the provision of additional facilities and services in the area for a new concentration of population, and contribute to local living principles. The cumulative scale of development necessitates works to the main A866 to ensure the continued flow of traffic, as the new access point into the housing developments will serve a total of 291 houses. While the current use of grazing land has a minimal impact on neighbouring amenity, the new housing will – on balance, once constructed – have a neutral impact on neighbouring amenity long-term, with the potential to improve amenity through the newly developed amenity spaces and landscaping, enhancing publicly accessible walking routes in green spaces, and potential for enhanced local living aspects.
- 13.20 The matter of demonstrating housing need was raised in Sandwick Community Council's objection to the application in their consultation response. Having engaged with the Comhairle Housing Services section, it has been established that there are currently 582 applicants on HHP's waiting list, 325 of whom wish to be housed in the Stornoway area - 92 of these are transfer applicants, which means they want a home that is more suitable for their needs. Despite the recent addition of homes in the Stornoway area via the Affordable Housing Supply Programme, the number of applications for this

area remains consistently high. Further, in terms of the Comhairle's statutory duty towards homeless clients, 52 applicants (72%) wish to be housed in the Stornoway area where they have access to support and services.

- 13.21 The Sandwich Community Council's objection also queried whether the housing was for local need or workers being brought into the area. The specificity of tenancy is not within the purview of the determination of the planning application, and there are no planning policies in this regard other than the provision for 25% affordable housing to be provided as a minimum in a scheme of this size.
- 13.22 Having considered the development in relation to the above policy intentions and the supporting information submitted with the application, it is assessed that the development as proposed is in compliance with the aims of the OHLDP and NPF4 developments for a housing development of this nature and scale.
- 13.23 The development will provide 160 houses and will be conditioned to ensure a minimum 25% of these are affordable houses in line with the local and national aims.

#### **Placemaking and Design**

- 13.24 The detailed considerations on the siting and design of development are addressed by OHLDP Policy PD1. The policy seeks that developments demonstrate a satisfactory quality of placemaking, siting, scale and design that reflect positive local characteristics.
- 13.25 NPF4 Policy 14 on design, quality and place seeks that development proposals will be designed to improve the quality of an area whether in urban or rural locations and regardless of scale. Development proposals should be consistent with the six qualities of successful places – healthy, pleasant, connected, distinctive, sustainable and adaptable.
- 13.26 The surrounding areas are predominately residential, with a mixture of traditional and modern single to 1.75-storey houses, with some 2-storey houses to the south in Parkend. It would not be out of character to develop this site for housing. The development of 160 houses between single and 1.75-storey in height is reflective of the newest Melbost East developments and in keeping with the built scale of the surroundings.
- 13.27 The proposed housing site is presented as a four-phase development. The proposed scheme will implement the access roads, houses, SuDs scheme, open space and landscaping for each phase that allows it to be developed and used prior to the implementation of the next phase. As demonstrated in accompanying cross-sections (see Appendix 2) the housing is 'tiered' appropriately utilising the natural slope of the site, though there are some steep areas where the site approaches the current access route serving the north of Melbost East. Details on managing any necessary retaining structures and/or terracing will be necessary and will be secured through condition. The sweeping nature of the street layout helps the larger scale development be less visually intrusive when viewed in the context of Melbost East and the smaller scale linear nature of East Street. The frontage to the A866 includes stone walls of a traditional design, reflecting those originally there as part of the farm. It creates a visual cohesion for the new proposed entry to the Melbost East and West developments, and keeps a rural edge to this peri-urban site.
- 13.28 The orientation of the houses is well considered, with dual-frontage details included in properties visible in more than one direction from the public realm. It is assessed that the siting relates to the wider streetscape and landform and will not dominate the skyline. The orientation of the buildings where possible takes advantage of passive solar gain, while still relating to the dominant building orientation for the surrounding area.
- 13.29 Design – The design of the proposed buildings is a good mix of single and 1.75-storey designs. There is a set colour pallet for the development which provides continuity but without mundane uniformity.

Minor changes were made to the original submission to amend one of the house designs to address an uncharacteristic roof form which had a multi-level ridge. The roof finishes are all to be flat, grey tile. The development proposes the use of fibre-cement weatherboard cladding in various colours. This will provide tonal and textured contrast with the main white render used throughout the development. The windows and doors are white. While this could have created a flat or dull appearance in some contexts, given the interest of the wide colour range in the composite cladding boards across the site and the varied house designs, it is considered in this context that the overall design will still have a positive contribution to the area. The overall design reflects elements of the Melbost East housing and creates a legible continuity between the existing and proposed housing. The fencing in the site, where proposed, is post and rylock wire, and a traditional stone wall boundary is proposed along the southern development edge. It is considered that both boundary treatments suitably reflect the location of the site on the edge of Stornoway.

- 13.30 Topography – With a drop of 8 metres across the depth of the site, there is a requirement for areas of engineered ground levels to achieve the development as shown in the site layout plan. A number of cross-sections have been provided to demonstrate this. Overall, the approach has demonstrated a well-considered balance between ensuring functional garden space for the properties on the more sloping sites while minimising the visual impact of the engineered groundworks. Stepped ridges are used where semi-detached blocks traverse sloping areas of the site and this not only minimises the need for more heavily engineered ground works but provides visual interest to the development scheme. A key element not yet provided in full detail relates to the provision of any retaining structures and, to ensure a suitable outcome in terms of visual and amenity impacts, the details of any such structures will be required to be agreed by condition.
- 13.31 Amenity Space – There is proposed public open space in the form of multiple interconnected green spaces, including two large, suitably planted SuDS basins; a greened seating area; areas of meadow planted grassland; and an imaginative play area. The areas of open space should include public realm features such as seating and paths and finalised details will be required by condition. There is also a play area shown centrally in the site. The full detail of this has not yet been provided and as such would be required by condition. The connectivity throughout the site permeates between the proposed phases and all leads back to the central route between the existing Melbost East and the proposal site, allowing interconnectivity between the new and existing streets. The existing informal access from Melbost East to the former Sandwich School parking area is to be retained/reinstated to retain a footpath set back from the A866.
- 13.32 Each house has allocated front and rear garden space, with curtilages generally being proportionate to the occupancy capacity of the house. The Developer will be encouraged to ensure this provision is accurately achieved on-site by means of an informative on any permission.
- 13.33 Neighbour Amenity – The nearest adjacent housing is the existing Melbost East housing, with the closest wall-to-wall distance being over 25m at each closest point. The properties would be separated by the main road serving the developments. It is considered that there is sufficient distance and intervening ground between the properties and that the development would not result in an unacceptable impact on neighbouring amenity.
- 13.34 In terms of amenity internally to the site, the overall layout and house design serves to minimise the potential for house-to-house overlooking. The new housing appears well designed and oriented to minimise direct overlooking. The majority of houses have no gable windows and the spacing for back-to-back properties ranges from 15m to 20m wall-to-wall in most places. Some oblique angled properties where the roads layout turns corners or sweeps round are closer at 12m, but again, do not present direct window-to-window overlooking. In terms of level changes, there do not appear to be any differentials that would create an undue sense of overbearing between neighbouring properties.

- 13.35 There will potentially be some noise and disturbance and related loss of amenity during the construction phase of the development to the neighbouring residential properties, but it is considered that this can be minimised by use of conditions relating to construction hours, noise and dust.
- 13.36 Considering the development proposals as a whole, it is considered that the development proposals are consistent with the six qualities of successful places – healthy, pleasant, connected, distinctive, sustainable and adaptable, having benefitted from a master planning exercise in conjunction with stakeholders. With well-considered and landscaped external spaces, located with natural surveillance from the adjacent houses, provides opportunities for healthy and pleasant places. The strong pedestrian connectivity and capacity for public transport through the area, and linking into the existing footpaths and bus stops serving the adjacent areas, ensures the development is well connected. The varied house design ensures the place has distinctive features, that still reflects the wider character of the area in terms of form, proportions, and materials. The houses have suitable consideration of sustainability, ensuring that renewables, biodiverse planting, and surface water management are integrated into the whole site design. The development contains a significant range of housing types; has high numbers of adapted units to support whole-life living of residents; and also a serviced-plot to provide capacity for a commercial development to serve the development long-term.
- 13.37 Having assessed the development against these key development policies, it is considered, that the proposal complies with the intentions of OHLDP Policy PD1 and NPF4 Policy 14 on Design, quality and place.

#### **Local Living and 20 minute neighbourhoods**

- 13.38 NPF4 Policy 15 seeks to encourage, promote and facilitate the application of the Place Principle and create connected and compact neighbourhoods where people can meet the majority of their daily needs within a reasonable distance of their home, preferably by walking, wheeling or cycling or using sustainable transport options.
- 13.39 To establish this, consideration will be given to existing settlement pattern, and the level and quality of interconnectivity of the proposed development with the surrounding area, including local access to sustainable modes of transport including local public transport and safe, high quality walking, wheeling and cycling networks; employment; shopping; health and social care facilities; childcare, schools and lifelong learning opportunities; playgrounds and informal play opportunities, parks, green streets and spaces, community gardens, opportunities for food growth and allotments, sport and recreation facilities; publicly accessible toilets; and affordable and accessible housing options, ability to age in place and housing diversity.
- 13.40 While the 20-minute neighbourhood intention is relevant to town and city centre locations, and rural and island authorities should apply it appropriately to their context, the intentions of connectivity are important within the Main Settlement location, particularly for a larger-scale housing scheme. The location of the site is on a main transport route to the town centre, with the bus service from Point and Melbost serving the existing Melbost East and Parkend housing developments and bus laybys already in place. The current proposals enhance this with the provision of a bus layby within the site to encourage routing through the scheme. This is particularly beneficial for school bus routes. The site itself provides new pedestrian routes and connects to existing pathways towards the community hall, town centre and out towards Point. Within Stornoway, there are existing employment, education, health and social care facilities. The site has provided a serviced plot to promote the opportunity for a commercial enterprise on site. The scheme has laid out connected green spaces with amenity and play provision on site. The development itself is an affordable housing development with a wide range of housing scale and adaptability. It is considered that, in the local context, the development meets the aspirations for Local Living.

### **Landscape, Natural heritage and places, Biodiversity**

- 13.41 NPF4 Policy 4 – Natural places provides that proposals which by virtue of their type, location or scale will have an unacceptable impact on the natural environment will not be supported. The policy focuses on designated areas and species protection.
- 13.42 OHLDP Policy NBH1: Landscape supports the approach taken by NPF4 in that it requires that development proposals should relate to the specific landscape and visual characteristics of the local area, ensuring that the overall integrity of landscape character is maintained. Development proposals should not have an unacceptable significant landscape or visual impact.
- 13.43 NPF Policy 3 - Biodiversity requires that proposals for major development will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that the proposal will conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity, including nature networks so they are in a demonstrably better state than without intervention. It highlights that the proposal should be based on an understanding of the existing characteristics of the site and its local, regional and national ecological context prior to development, including the presence of any irreplaceable habitats. A Nature Network connects together nature rich sites, including restoration areas and other environmental projects, through a series of areas of suitable habitat, habitat corridors, and stepping-stones.
- 13.44 OHLDP Policy NBH2: Natural Heritage also focuses on the protection of designated areas and species but also seeks that development proposals should avoid having a significant adverse effect on, and where possible should enhance, biodiversity and ecological interests of the site.
- 13.45 The application site is within the Gently Sloping Crofting Landscape Character Type, which includes the 'contrasting urban settlement of Stornoway'. The general Gently Sloping Crofting landscape is characterised by long sweeping gentle slopes, often domed, ending in long curving beaches to the seaward and merging evenly into boggy moorland elsewhere. It is a large-scale landscape with open views. The NatureScot (SNH) National Landscape Character Assessment (Landscape Character Type 317) highlights the following in relation to the main settlement of Stornoway: '[it] exhibits some of the characteristics of an urban, rather than a rural settlement, notably a higher density of population. Stornoway can be further broken down into two distinct areas, the original central core and the later area of urban expansion, or urban fringe. ... Beyond the urban core is an area of urban expansion, characterised by a mix of Local Authority and private housing. ... The outer edge of Stornoway is bounded by adjacent crofting townships. Frequently along this edge there is a clear change in character from the urban fringe immediately into the Gently Sloping Crofting Landscape Character Type.'
- 13.46 The development site is within the Main Settlement, sitting to the town-side of the fully developed Melbost East housing development and to the north of the Parkend housing area. The context of how the development would be viewed is important and the landscape character of the area has well established peri and suburban characteristics. The overall character of this larger housing development is not out of character with the wider views to and from Stornoway.
- 13.47 While the consultation response from Sandwick Community Council contends the proposals are not in character with the area of Sandwick, this is based on their particular concern that '*What was once a distinct rural settlement will become effectively absorbed into Stornoway, losing its identity as a separate, crofting based, close-knit community.*' While this is appreciated, and single house developments in the areas of Greater Stornoway which still retain crofting characteristics are sought to endeavour to reflect the immediately surrounding urban-rural fringe, the mapped area falls within the Main Settlement, and the site has been allocated for larger scale housing to meet the projected needs of the Settlement. The local development plan consultation and allocation processes are subject to public engagement and strategic environmental assessment. The development is large, but the semi-detached nature of the houses; the limit of the housing forms at 1.75-storey; and the overall constrained palette of finishes gives an impression of a character suited to the urban fringe of the

settlement. It is thus not considered that the development is unacceptable in terms of the character of the landscape and surroundings.

- 13.48 The site is not within any natural heritage designations, nor does it abut or form an evident interconnectivity with any designations. The site is grazed farmland and does not contain any trees, hedgerows or watercourses that would readily support a wide range of species. The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) submitted with the application noted that their desk-study returned no publicly available records of protected species within or adjacent to the site boundary (within 100 m). The nearest record for otter is approximately 1.7 km northwest of the site.
- 13.49 The PEA surmises that the site is considered to be of low suitability for roosting, hibernating, foraging and/or commuting bats due to the presence of open grassland and adjacent hedgerows. The PEA notes the site provides suitable habitat for slow worm due to the presence of open sunny areas for basking, vegetation cover for shelter and protection, and potential hibernation sites such as piles of stone. The site provides limited opportunities for nesting passerine birds within the site (due to a lack of trees or hedges), though there are hedgerows and houses on the western boundary where house sparrow and starling were observed. However, breeding habitat is present for some disturbance tolerant ground nesting species in the less managed areas of the site. Goose droppings were present and small flocks of greylag geese were observed in the adjacent fields. The site provides suitable foraging habitat for species such as golden plover, which is a qualifying species of the Lewis Peatlands SPA. However, the risk of golden plover breeding on site is considered to be low given management activities and existing disturbance from bordering residential development and the airport.
- 13.50 The PEA considered the data on foraging ranges, the location and scale of the development site and concludes no impacts on golden plover or any other qualifying feature of the SPA are predicted. Likewise, no impacts on any of the notified features of The Tong Saltings SSSI that may use the site for forage are predicted.
- 13.51 The site provides suitable habitat for slow worm and suitable mitigation measures to protect any reptiles present should be employed. These can be secured by condition. While no evidence of breeding bird species was found during the survey, the site provides suitable habitat for ground nesting birds and therefore, a nesting bird survey should be undertaken within the site, should any works take place during the bird breeding season (March – September). Again, this measure can be secured by condition.
- 13.52 The site is dominated by grassland, with varying degrees of management. Approximately 50% of the site is identified as poor quality, of low ecological value, with the remainder being in good condition, and of a relatively high ecological value for grasslands. This should be recognised when considering compensation measures and biodiversity enhancements for the proposed development.
- 13.53 Proposed biodiversity enhancement measures include following a planting-for-nature approach. Plants should be native species or species of benefit to wildlife. The use of native species in preference to non-natives can have significant benefits for biodiversity, as they usually provide a home or food source for a greater diversity of insects, fungi and birds than non-natives. Native species within their natural range and appropriate to the site conditions, that compliment those found locally, should be selected. The PEA recommends Planting for Pollinators – flowering shrubs will help support and attract pollinators and may help compensate for the potential foraging habitat lost to the development. Wildflower Meadow planting around trees and within open amenity areas will provide for pollinators and other wildlife, offering greater diversity than some habitats currently present on site. Tree planting will provide stepping stones for wildlife to cross the site, as well as potential homes for nesting birds and food for foraging bats. Feature trees planted in groups or corridors could provide benefits for sustainable urban drainage schemes and urban cooling, as well as biodiversity. The site details Sustainable Drainage System areas which would provide a new habitat with biodiverse opportunities.

The PEA highlights the importance of maintaining these measures on site, and this will be advised to the developer through an informative.

- 13.54 The PEA outlines precautionary working methods to be employed during construction to avoid injury, obstruction or disturbance of any mammal species using the area; to avoid injury to any reptiles present within suitable habitat; and to avoid vegetation removal or site clearance works during the nesting bird season (March – September).
- 13.55 Sandwich Community Council has objected to the proposals with concerns over their view that the site is a ‘sensitive habitat’ and the site’s contribution to biodiversity and climate resilience. As assessed above, the PEA and initial landscaping proposals show that the site has a low to good ecological quality as it currently stands, however, this is in relation to the general quality of grasslands and it is not a protected, sensitive or high-quality habitat in terms of biodiversity. The proposals show a landscaping and planting scheme which endeavours to increase the diversity of habitat on site within the designed green areas and the SUDS schemes. It is not considered the development would have unacceptable environmental impacts.
- 13.56 As assessed above, and providing compliance with the proposed conditions, it is anticipated that development will not have undue landscape impacts; will not have unacceptable impacts on habitat or protected species; and can contribute to the enhancement of biodiversity.

#### **Climate Impact and Zero and Low Carbon Buildings**

- 13.57 NPF4 Policies 1 and 2 state that when considering all development proposals, significant weight will be given to the global climate and nature crises and seek that development proposals be sited and designed to minimise lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions as far as possible.
- 13.58 OHLDP Policy PD4 – Zero and Low Carbon Buildings has been largely superseded by current, updated building regulations managing these matters. It seeks that all planning applications for new buildings demonstrate that the carbon dioxide emissions reduction target, as required by Scottish Building Standards, has been met.
- 13.59 The development is considered to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, by meeting modern insulation and heat loss standards, which will largely be achieved as a result of the requirements of the Building Warrant process and, while of neutral impact on global climate change, this is positive in itself. It is clear that the inclusion of air source heat pumps and solar PV panels for each property, and the including of e-charging points at each house, are in line with the building warrant requirements. The general orientation of the houses on site is such that they take advantage of passive solar gain. The site is on a main bus route to the town centre and within biking and walking distance of amenities within the town.
- 13.60 As such it is considered that the proposed development would comply with NPF4 Policies 1 and 2 and OHLDP Policy 4 in relation to climate impact and aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

#### **Transport Infrastructure, Roads Layout and Carparking**

- 13.61 Policy EI 9 seeks that development proposals fit with the character of the area, in relation to the Development Strategy; utilise a sustainable drainage system (SuDS); and accommodate pedestrians and cyclists and improved road safety in relation to the proposals.
- 13.62 OHLDP Policy PD2 seeks that road design and car parking should be suited to the type, location, scale and circumstances of the development.
- 13.63 Appendix 3 of the OHLDP states that the appropriate car parking provision is 2 spaces per dwelling house. The development provides two car parking spaces for each house.



- 13.64 Policy EI 9 seeks that development proposals fit with the character of the area, in relation to the Development Strategy; utilise a sustainable drainage system (SuDS); and accommodate pedestrians and cyclists and improved road safety in relation to the proposals.
- 13.65 Comhairle Roads section has advised *'The indicative proposals now detailed in the engineer's drawings for the roads layout is suitable for the current planning stage. The roundabout proposal, A866 partial realignment, the proposed new road network within the site, and its integration with the Melbost East adopted road network are acceptable in principle. The developer should make an application for Roads Construction Consent to allow for the adoption of roads and streetlighting following completion. Additional details of pedestrian crossing points with dropped kerbs and tactile paving; lane widening; splitter islands; bus shelter specification; road signage and markings; and other necessary additions can be addressed through the RCC process.'*
- 13.66 The proposed new section of road network to serve the development, along with the associated alterations to the A866, are considered acceptable in the Main Settlement area. The development includes SuDS proposals, the finalised detail of which will be required by condition. The development includes non-vehicular pathways that can support pedestrians and cyclists, where appropriate.
- 13.67 Comhairle Roads section has advised that a Road Construction Consent (RCC) application will be required to allow the roads and footpaths to become adopted. While the overall roads layout is suitable, slight changes to land width and additional detail on crossing points may be needed and can be dealt with through the RCC process.
- 13.68 The number of car parking spaces and turning provision in the development will be controlled by condition. Space has been provided for a bus layby on the eastern boundary of the site – this sits centrally to the existing Melbost East site and this proposed Melbost West development. This will ensure a safe stopping point to allow alighting from a bus and has a connected footpath back in to the development site. This will be required and managed by condition.
- 13.69 Stornoway Community Council raised concern over the scale and provision of bus shelters. As noted above, to be adopted by the Comhairle, bus shelter provision will require to reach specifications set out by the Comhairle as Roads Authority.
- 13.70 The Sandwick Community Council objection states opposition to the inclusion of a roundabout, and consider it inappropriate. They are of the view that it would disrupt traffic flow and lead to increased accidents; that it is out of character for a 'rural road'; and that the proposals suggest a lack of understanding of the road's function and scale. As considered above, the Comhairle Roads section – who would assess these proposals in detail at the RCC stage – have advised that the principle of the development design, which includes the roundabout, is acceptable. They further note that, following concerns with the existing junction from Mackenzie East on the A866, it was decided to introduce a roundabout as the Melbost West development was progressed. Roundabouts are used to improve the operation of an existing access and widely used at junctions to new developments. The benefits of a mini roundabout include traffic calming, improved traffic flows and road safety. The road is not a rural road. The capacity, function and scale of the road which is adopted and managed by the Comhairle is clearly understood and the final details as determined in the RCC will require to meet all the identified needs from the Comhairle as Roads Authority. It is considered that the matters raised in the objection do not raise comments or evidence that would weigh against the professional assessment of the Comhairle Roads section.
- 13.71 Subject to compliance with relevant conditions, and the provisions of the RCC being met, the development is considered to suitably address the relevant roads and parking policies.

### **Flooding, Water Environment and Management**

- 13.72 OHLDP Policy EI 1 – Flooding seeks that development proposals avoid areas susceptible to flooding and promote sustainable flood management.
- 13.73 OHLDP Policy EI 2 – Water and Waste Water requires new developments to adopt the principles of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). New buildings in settlements with public sewerage systems, and developments of 25 houses or more in unsewered settlements, will be required to connect to the public sewer. New developments in areas with public water supplies will be required to connect to the public water supply.
- 13.74 NPF4 Policy 22 – Flood and water management requires that development proposals will not increase the risk of surface water flooding to others, or itself be at risk; to manage all rain and surface water through sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS), which should form part of and integrate with proposed and existing blue-green infrastructure; and seek to minimise the area of impermeable surface. Development proposals will be supported if they can be connected to the public water mains.
- 13.75 Small areas of the site are mapped as being susceptible to surface water flooding. This has been acknowledged generally within the application submission, and surface water drainage proposals have actively followed these routes and areas. This is not an unacceptable approach; however, calculations will need to ensure that the current surface water on site and the additional run-off from development can be acceptably managed on site. A condition will be applied to ensure that, prior to the substructures of the new housing development being installed, a full and finalised surface water drainage plan and associated calculations will be submitted for assessment and approval, in consultation with Comhairle Building Standards, Comhairle Roads and Comhairle Floodrisk sections to ensure the development fully meets the requirements of the site's current and future developed surface water management needs.
- 13.76 The initial proposals for the site SUDS schemes show these integrating with the existing surface water systems in Melbost East. While this is, again, supported in principle, further details will be required as part of the above condition to ensure that the proposed and current systems can adequately manage the volume of run-off.
- 13.77 The engineering consultant for the development has affirmed via the agent for the application that the development intends to employ permeable parking areas, which will greatly reduce the hard surfaced areas associated with the development and also provide an additional layer of surface water treatment and management. While the proposed roads and housing will increase hard surfaced areas, the amenity areas have been specified in green coverage, with the addition of trees and appropriate SUDS planting will increase the active management of water by planting on site.
- 13.78 Sandwich Community Council has objected to the proposals with concerns that the site is a low-lying area with poor drainage, and the proposal risks increased surface water, waterlogging, and downstream flooding. As assessed above, the SUDS schemes have been positioned with consideration of the areas at risk of surface water flooding. The finalised designs of surface water management of the site will be required by condition. Subject to the agreement of the finalised SUDS proposals, it is considered the development would not create unacceptable impacts on surface water management or result in flooding.
- 13.79 The development proposes to connect to the public water and foul sewer in the area. The developer is aware of the potential requirements for works to the system and is engaged with Scottish Water on this matter.
- 13.80 Provided the submission and agreement of suitable finalised SUDS details via condition, the development is considered to suitably address the requirements of floodrisk and surface water management, as well as the connections to public water and sewer systems as sought in policy.

### **Archaeology, Historic assets and places**

- 13.81 LDP Policy NBH5: Archaeology and NPF4 Policy 7: Historic assets and places look to protect archaeology and monuments. LDP policy notes that development proposals which preserve, protect, or enhance the archaeological significance of heritage assets, including their settings, will be supported. Scheduled Monuments (scheduled archaeological remains) are nationally important monuments or archaeological sites. NPF4 Policy 7 provides that non-designated historic environment assets, places and their setting should be protected and preserved in situ wherever feasible. Where there is potential for non-designated buried archaeological remains to exist below a site, developers will provide an evaluation of the archaeological resource. Where impacts cannot be avoided, they should be minimised. Where it has been demonstrated that avoidance or retention is not possible, excavation, recording, analysis, archiving, publication and activities to provide public benefit may be required through the use of conditions.
- 13.82 Comhairle Archaeology Service notes that: *'There are no Historic Environment Records within the development boundary; however, this general surrounding area was the location for Second World War accommodation and infrastructure associated with airfield of RAF Stornoway. Potentially evidence from this period of activity may be present on the site. All earlier maps do not indicate settlement activity in the area, and this suggests the site has not been developed previously. ... The historic environment records show a scattering of evidence between Stornoway and Agnish, that suggest a moderate / high level of activity in this area during prehistory (Neolithic - Early Iron Age). These sites are characterised by burial cairns, isolated structures, and stray finds; however, settlement sites have not been identified. For significant periods in prehistory the climate was better than in the modern era and raised areas such as Sandwick Hill were often identified as good settlement locations. ... The Archaeology Service has concerns that there is a potential for unknown buried archaeological structures or deposits to be encountered during the ground works phase of this development. Therefore, to ensure that the archaeological potential of the site is taken into consideration by the developer, the Archaeology Service recommends a program of archaeological works.'*
- 13.83 Due to the potential for archaeology on site, the Comhairle Archaeology Service seeks that a programme of archaeological works is undertaken in the form of a limited number of pre-determination evaluation trenches within the proposed development boundary. The subsequent evaluation report will inform what further archaeological mitigation if any, is required. It should be noted that further mitigation may include additional survey, watching briefs or full excavation. This mitigation can be secured by a condition on any permission, and it is considered the development would thusly not have an undue impact on the historic environment in this regard.
- 13.84 Overall, subject to relevant mitigation secured by condition, the development would not have a significant adverse impact on the archaeological resource of the area.

### **Soils**

- 13.85 NPF Policy 5 and OHLDP EI5 seek to protect carbon-rich soils, restore peatlands and minimise disturbance to soils from development. This includes areas identified in the LDP as of local importance.
- 13.86 The site is within an area mapped as Mineral Soils on the Carbon and Peatland 2016 map, with a minor area highlighted as having a potential of peaty gleys. There is no priority peatland habitat. It is considered that the development of the site would not impact on a significant volume or depth of peat soils, or an area of significantly sensitive peatland habitat.
- 13.87 The site is not mapped as being of local importance such that it would be undevelopable.
- 13.88 It is therefore considered that the development, subject to best construction practices to minimise disturbance, compaction or sealing, would be in compliance with the aims of the soils policies.

### **Communications Infrastructure**

- 13.89 OHLDP Policy EI 10 advises that opportunities for the provision of digital infrastructure to new homes and business premises should be explored as an integral part of development.
- 13.90 The submission does not currently detail the intended provision for the housing site, and an informative will be applied to ensure the developer integrates digital connectivity plans as part of their infrastructure proposals.

### **Waste Management**

- 13.91 Policy EI 4 of the OHLDP seeks that space to accommodate the provision of recycling facilities be designed and built into all new industrial, commercial, retail and residential development proposals both during the construction phase as well as the completed development. Preparation of a Site Waste Management Plan will be required to accompany proposals for Major developments and developments involving significant demolition works.
- 13.92 The Comhairle Cleansing Services has provided detailed advice of the developer in relation to provision of appropriate waste receptacles on site and the requirements to allow for refuse vehicles to collect domestic waste from site.
- 13.93 The proposals show suitable 4-bin hardstandings within the curtilage of each unit to serve the houses. This is in line with the waste and recycling format of the Comhairle services. Further, a dog waste bin is provided within the site, at a central location, to encourage the responsible disposal of waste for those using the amenity spaces throughout the development.
- 13.94 Given the scale of the development, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be required by condition of any consent. This will require details of site waste management within the CEMP.
- 13.95 The development, subject to condition, is considered to meet the aims of this policy.

### **Safeguarding**

- 13.96 OHLDP Policy EI 11 states that 'For all development proposals the Comhairle will take account of the advice of the relevant agencies with regard to safeguarding and consultations zones notified by the Health and Safety Executive, Civil Aviation Authority, Highlands & Islands Airports, NATS, Ministry of Defence, Meteorological Technical Sites, Marine Consultation Areas, relevant Harbour Authorities and Marine Protected Areas'.
- 13.97 The area lies within a consultation zone for HIAL in relation to Stornoway Airport. NATS were also consulted for their remit in relation to air traffic and monitoring in the area.
- 13.98 HIAL required additional information in relation to development heights prior to providing their final response. The final response advised that, at the given position and height, this development would not infringe the safeguarding criteria and operation of Stornoway Airport, and thus they do not object to the development.
- 13.99 It should be noted that the developer has also intended to ensure minimising impact on airport operations by limiting expanses of continuous standing water on site, or planting berry bearing plants. This will be managed through the finalised landscaping and SuDS plans.
- 13.100 NATS do not object to the proposals.
- 13.101 There is an overhead line crossing the site. SSEN confirm that the developer is in discussion for the rerouting of the supply to ensure compliance with health and safety requirements.

13.102 As such, it is considered that the development meets the intentions of the safeguarding policy.

#### **Other Material Planning Considerations and Matters Raised in Consultation**

- 13.103 Education – The objection from Sandwich Community Council and a query raised by Stornoway Community Council raised the matter of school capacity. Having consulted the Comhairle Education services, they have advised that the primary school capacity is not an issue for the catchment area. It highlights however that nursery provision is at capacity in both the Stornoway Primary catchment area – in which the development falls – and the adjacent Sgoil an Rubha catchment. Early years provision has been a Scottish Government commitment through their Early Learning and Childcare programme.
- 13.104 The delivery of this provision is not policy-led in the current Local Development Plan, and there is not a clear policy approach in NPF4 other than encouraging infrastructure provision for new developments. The planning decision can highlight the importance of all relevant parties working towards an increase in key early years provision through an informative, and we recommend the Comhairle highlight and action the capacity issues to endeavour to meet the potential needs of a new 160 house development within the Stornoway catchment area.
- 13.105 Adequate Play Area Provision was raised as a concern in comments from Stornoway Community Council. The development shows a suitably scaled range of recreation and amenity spaces. The provision and nature of play area design will be secured by condition.
- 13.106 Social issues – This was identified in Sandwich Community Council's objection to the development. While it is not entirely clear what the key areas of concern are in relation to social issues, the objection highlights 'unbalanced', 'under-supported neighbourhoods'. All elements of essential social care, be that for vulnerable persons, elderly people or young families, are required to be provided by the relevant services regardless of geographic location. It should be noted that the development site is within the Main Settlement of Stornoway, where the majority of social support and health services are located. The development is through a registered social landlord, who also requires to provide tenant support as appropriate.
- 13.107 Maintenance of social housing schemes has been highlighted, including concerns over green space, parking and lighting. Without specific legal or policy impetus, the planning process does not have control over long term maintenance for developments of this nature. Registered Social Landlords have legal obligations in relation to their housing stock that is administered outwith the planning process.
- 13.108 Queries over third party funding of housing development and occupancy have been raised. The funding and specificities of occupancy of general housing developments (outwith elements managed by policy, such as the percentage of affordable housing) are outwith the planning process.

#### **CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 14.1 Planning Authorities are required to determine planning applications in accordance with the Development Plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise.
- 14.2 An assessment has been carried out against the provisions of the Development Plan which is comprised of the relevant policies of NPF4 and the OHLDP. Consideration has also been given to all relevant material planning considerations.
- 14.3 It is considered that the proposed development of 160 semi-detached and detached houses, proposed as affordable homes, and associated infrastructure on a Local Development Plan allocation site within the Main Settlement of Stornoway accords with the development strategy of the OHLDP and NPF4 Policy 16 – Quality Homes.

- 14.4 The proposed houses as sited and designed would not harm the amenities of neighbours. The housing is of a good design quality that complements the existing Melbost East housing, and contributes to positive place-making aims, creating a suitable connection with the existing Melbost East housing and with Parkend to the south. The provision of new housing is supported in the local and national planning policies. The development will be conditioned to ensure a minimum provision of 25% affordable housing, in line with policy requirements.
- 14.5 The site can be adequately serviced, and the proposed development would not be incompatible with road safety, as determined in consultation with the Comhairle Roads section. The development would require Roads Construction Consent which is a separate process that manages the finalised details and adoption of new and altered public roads.
- 14.6 The proposed development would not cause harm to landscape or have any adverse effect on designated habitats or species, subject to best practice construction methods as detailed in the PEA. Biodiversity enhancement is planned through planting schemes to increase pollinator-friendly species on site and other native planting. The development will endeavour to minimise contributions to climate change and greenhouse gas emissions through meeting of building standards of insulation to the properties, and the use of renewable technologies to serve the houses once complete. Mitigation measures that are considered necessary can be secured by planning conditions.
- 14.7 Water, flooding and waste water management have been considered in the proposals and in the above planning assessment. Subject to conditions securing appropriate surface water management and the connection of the development to the public wastewater infrastructure, it is considered the proposals are compliant with the aims of policies relating to water and flooding.
- 14.8 The site is of mineral soils and will not disturb important peatland soils. Though the site is currently semi-improved grazing land, it is not prime agricultural land and its development for housing is not against the policy intentions for soil protection.
- 14.9 There is no known archaeology, or historic environment impacts from the development. A condition to manage the potential for unknown buried archaeological potential will be applied to any consent.
- 14.10 Matters relating to waste, safeguarding, and communications infrastructure have been considered in the assessment and any necessary requirements can be secure by condition or conveyed to the applicant through informatives attached to any permission.
- 14.11 Subject to conditions set out in Appendix 1 to this Report, it is concluded that the proposal accords with the Development Plan.
- 14.12 There are no material considerations of sufficient weight, including those raised in objection, to justify a decision other than approval.

#### **PLANNING OBLIGATION**

- 15.1 None.

#### **DIRECTIONS**

- 16.1 None.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

- 17.1 It is recommended that the planning application be approved subject to the conditions set out in Appendix 1 to this Report.