

PRE-APPLICATION DESIGN STATEMENT

Affordable Housing at Clovullin, Ardgour

Date

January 2026

Stage

1 - Pre-Design

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architecture & landscape studio



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Introduction

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Client Details

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with

Communities Housing Trust
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Architect Details

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Proposal Description

6no affordable housing units of mixed tenure & community parking with associated infrastructure. Housing to be provided to align with local needs, ensure sustainability, and integrate with the community fabric.

Proposed Site Ownership

AGDT currently in progress to purchase the site.

Development History of the Site

N/A - Greenfield site

Purpose of Pre-Application

Assess the viability of delivering affordable housing on a Greenfield site with access off a private track/avenue.

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Location Plan

EXISTING

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Existing Site

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Site Appraisal

Location & Geography

Clovullin lies on the Ardgour peninsula, west of Loch Linnhe, characterised by rugged Highland terrain and scenic views.

Topography: Gently sloping ground towards the loch; mixed woodland and open grassland.

Geology: Typical Highland soils with potential peat pockets; requires ground investigation at RIBA Stage 2/3.

Existing Constraints

Access: Limited by single-track roads; B8007 provides main connectivity.

Flood Risk: Low, but surface water management needed due to high rainfall.

Planning: Must comply with West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan and National Planning Framework 4.

Opportunities

Strong demand for affordable housing (chiefly 2-3 bed houses); supports local sustainability.

Scenic location enhances quality of life and potential for community-led design.

Proximity to local services (school, shops) within Clovullin village and nearby Corran.

Roads & Access

Primary access via B8007; site will likely require new junction or shared access.

Private tracks exist but potentially unsuitable for construction traffic without upgrade.

Visibility splays and pedestrian safety (primary school adjacent) per National Roads Development Guide.

Infrastructure

Electricity: mains cable runs adjacent to site (up to primary school); confirm capacity with SSEN.

Water supply; Scottish Water network available; connection feasibility to be confirmed.

Drainage: foul drainage via Scottish Water; surface water via SuDS (attenuation ponds or swales).

Telecoms: Broadband provision limited.

Social & Community Aspect

Ardgour/Clovullin has strong community identity; population ageing, need for family housing.

Community facilities: Primary school, village hall, ferry link to Fort William.

Engagement essential: community consultation to align design with local aspirations.

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Existing Site Photographs

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Built Environment Appraisal

- Surrounding buildings - predominantly detached and semi-detached houses.
- No major industrial uses nearby; rural residential character.
- MOWI fish farm compound located near Ardgour ferry terminal (not immediate but relevant for traffic context).

Settlement Pattern

Clovullin is a small rural village characterised by low-density housing clusters along the B8007 and minor tracks. The predominant form is detached houses, with occasional semi-detached properties. These dwellings generally follow traditional Highland patterns, avoiding suburban ribbon development, which is discouraged under rural housing policy.

House Types

Detached houses - typically 1-1.5 storey, pitched roofs (40-45°), and modest footprints.

Semi-detached houses - less common, usually near the village core, sharing similar proportions and roof pitches. Extensions and outbuildings are frequent, often adapted for storage or ancillary use.

Materials

Walls - predominantly rendered masonry or blockwork; some timber cladding for aesthetic integration.

Roofs - slate or concrete tiles are common; modern replacements may use composite materials.

Windows & doors - timber or uPVC frames with double glazing.

Foundations & structures - concrete strip foundations; timber frame construction is prevalent for newer buildings, aligning with sustainable design principles.

Design Characteristics

Traditional Highland vernacular influences: simple form, steep roofs (some with hipped roofs), and minimal overhangs.

Policy guidance discourages suburban features such as deep footprints, integrated garages, and excessive fascia detailing.

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Existing Built Environment

INITIAL IDEAS

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Initial Idea 1 - Site

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Project Name, Location
Affordable Housing, Clovullin

Project Number
25130

Drawing Name
Proposed Site Plan - Option 1

Date
October 2025

Drawing Number
PRELIM

DRAFT



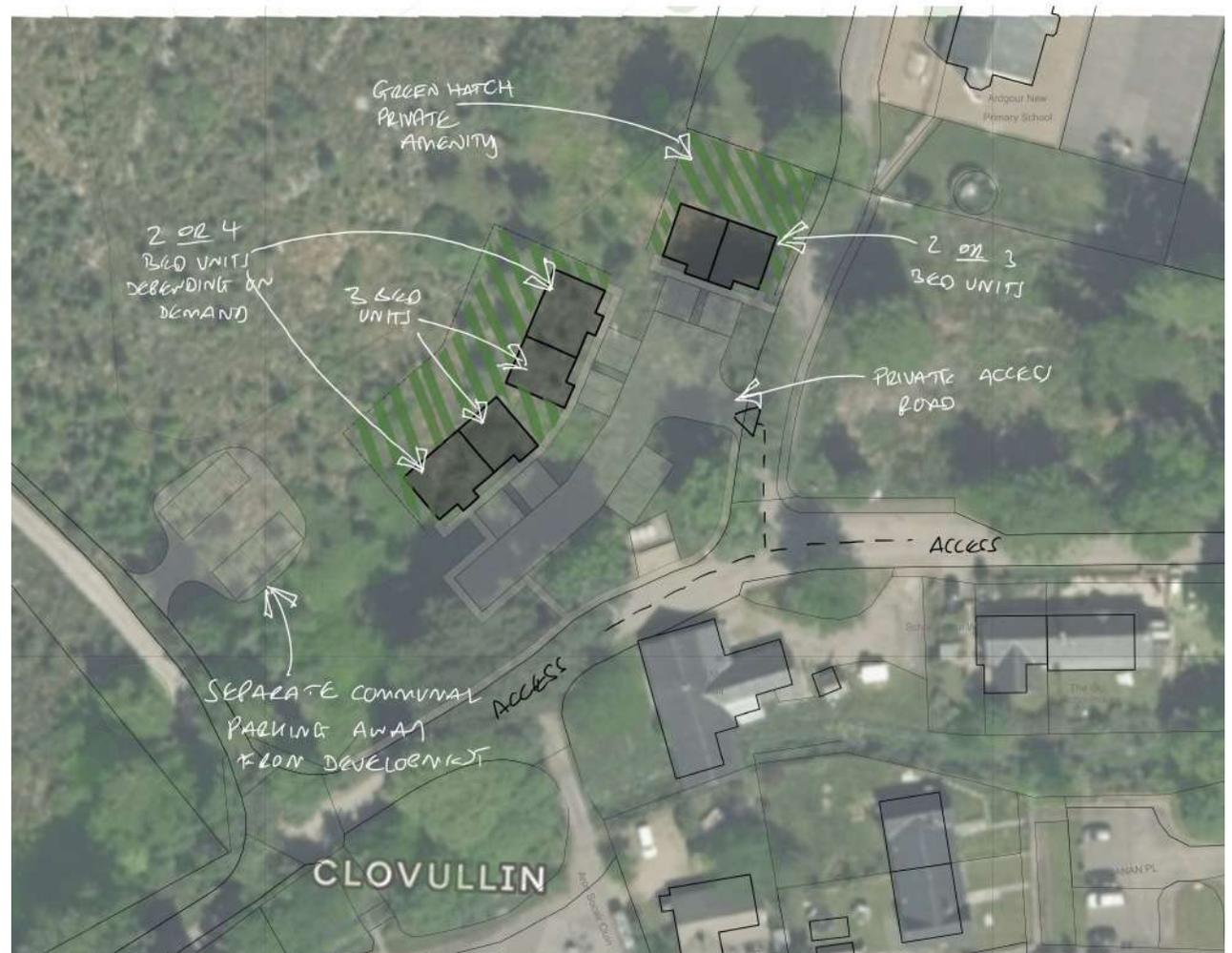
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Initial Idea 2 - Site

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Project Name, Location
Affordable Housing, Clovullin

Project Number
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Drawing Name
Proposed Site Plan - Option 2

Date
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Drawing Number
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Initial Idea 3 - Site

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Project Name, Location
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Project Number
 25130

Drawing Name
 Proposed Site Plan - Option 3

Date
 October 2025

Drawing Number
PRELIM

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Community Feedback

Trustee Direction

Across the responses, there is a strong alignment on:

- Direct access & parking at each home - not remote parking, not communal only
- Parking directly outside each dwelling is essential for practicality, safety & convenience
- Concern that central/shared parking (Option 1) would result in residents parking informally on verges or roadside
- Parking behind houses (via rear access road is viewed positively
- Avoid using the school access for vehicle access as shared access with the school creates conflict with heavy pedestrian and vehicular movements at drop-off/pick-up although the community thought that this is not so much of an issue
- Rear access land from estate/avenue track is strongly favoured by the trustees to provide safer vehicle routing, allows parking behind plots & allows gardens to be placed on the sunnier front side
- Alternatively, access from the school road was seen as a preference from the community
- Larger plot sizes and avoidance of 'cramped' layouts as feedback indicates recent nearby developments feel undersized & concerns that plots look too small, comparable to previous developments in North Corran
- Avoid metal sheet roofs (noise/maintenance) as trustees want a quality development aligned with Place Plan & local character
- Trustees suggest 2x2-bed, 2x3-bed & 2 serviced self-build plots, which also aligns with Urram's survey showing strongest demand for 2-3 bed homes and self-build however, self-builds are seen as less favourable to

funders and it has been hard to sell over recent years within the affordable housing sector with rural housing burdens in place

- South facing gardens to improve sunlight, amenity & create a better streetscape as gardens placed north-facing behind houses = cold, shaded, less usable
- Houses are too close to the main road, with better land at the rear

The themes align with Urram survey findings:

- High demand for 2-3 bed affordable homes
- High need for adaptable & accessible homes
- Need to attract younger households to maintain community resilience & school rolls
- Desire for quality, energy-efficient homes

Community Feedback

- South facing gardens with vehicular access to buildings from the northern side of each unit was accepted as a good basis to proceed.
- Access from the school road was acceptable & would reduce infrastructure costs & highlight that a number of children use the private track/avenue as a cycling route
- Happy with communal car parking provision
- Preference for a revision of Option 1 for access but new layout required
- High construction costs & funding opportunities mean self-build plots are an unattractive option - 6 units are a preference

CONCEPT

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Recommendations for Concept Design

Access & Road Layout

Create two concepts, where the first concept is accessed from the estate/avenue track to solve school safety concerns, provides direct parking at each house, and supports the long-term masterplan for the Clovullin community. The second option where the site is accessed from the school road.

Parking Strategy

Provide 2 parking spaces per dwelling, located immediately adjacent to each house to allow for delivery, loading, mobility access, and daily convenience.

Housing Layout & Orientation

Move houses further back from the main road to create gardens facing the road, thus improving natural daylighting, solar gains, garden usability, and visual engagement with the street. Rear access behind the houses (to the north) aligns with multiple trustee preferences.

Plot Size Strategy

Increase in plot depths and widths where possible and aim for meaningful private amenity space, garden usability, space for future sheds, EV charging, better spacing between homes.

Architectural Form & Materials

Avoid metal sheet roofing, use of slate or fibre-cement tile to maintain a rural vernacular character.

Drainage & SUDs

Locate SUDs in a visible, accessible green space to contribute to biodiversity and landscape amenity.

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Initial Idea - Sketch Impression

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Concept 1 - Site Access from Private Track

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Project Name, Location
Affordable Housing, Clovullin

Project Number
25130

Drawing Name
Proposed Site Plan - Option 1

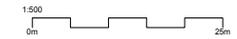
Date
January 2026

Drawing Number
PRELIM-201

Scale @ A3
1 : 500

Rev
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PRE-APPLICATION



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Design Principles

Concept 1

The proposed layout comprises six detached residential plots arranged along a gently curving shared access route. The layout has been informed by the pattern of existing trees and the natural structure of the site, allowing the development to sit comfortably within the woodland context. Each plot is well-proportioned, providing space for private gardens, parking, and planting that reinforce the rural character of Clovullin.

Access to the development is taken from the existing private track/avenue, with a new junction designed to current engineering standards to ensure safe vehicle and pedestrian movement. The internal access is shared, low-speed, and designed to encourage a landscape-led approach rather than suburban road hierarchy. Surface water will be managed on-site through a dedicated SuDS basin, to be fully engineered and integrated into the wider green infrastructure network.

The scheme retains the majority of mature trees, threading the new homes between existing root protection areas to preserve the established woodland character. This approach enhances biodiversity, provides natural screening, and ensures that the development remains visually unobtrusive when viewed from surrounding properties and the adjacent primary school. Additional native planting and habitat enhancement will strengthen ecological value and contribute to long-term landscape resilience.

Overall, the proposal delivers much-needed rural housing while safeguarding the environmental qualities that define Clovullin. The design approach is landscape-led, context-responsive, and consistent with the Highland-wide

Local Development Plan policies relating to sustainable development, woodland protection, placemaking, and rural housing. The applicant seeks feedback on the principle of development, access strategy, landscape approach, and any technical requirements that should be addressed at planning application stage.

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Concept 2 - Site Access from School Road

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Project Name: Location
Affordable Housing, Clovullin

Project Number
25130

Drawing Name
Proposed Site Plan - Option 2

Date
January 2026

Drawing Number
PRELIM-203

Scale @ A3
1 : 500

Rev
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PRE-APPLICATION



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Concept 2

The Option 2 layout organises six dwellings across two distinct groupings: a cluster of three homes positioned towards the northern edge of the site, and a second grouping of three homes to the south, arranged around a short, shared access loop. This layout reduces the perception of a single linear development and instead creates a more natural, dispersed pattern of settlement that reflects the existing grain of Clovullin. Building footprints are set within generous plots, providing scope for private gardens, parking, and soft landscaping.

Access is taken from the existing private track/avenue, with a new junction designed to current engineering standards to ensure safe access for vehicles and pedestrians. Internally, the looped shared surface offers low-speed movement and reinforces a landscape-led design approach, avoiding the suburban feel of engineered road layouts. Each dwelling has level or near-level access, supporting inclusive design principles.

Surface water from roofs and hardstanding will be attenuated and treated within an on-site SuDS basin, which is to be fully engineered and integrated into the site's green infrastructure network. This approach assists in managing run-off, reducing flood risk, and enhancing biodiversity.

A key feature of Option 2 is the retention of the extensive mature tree structure that surrounds and weaves through the site. The proposed development is carefully threaded between root protection zones, ensuring that the woodland character—central to the identity of Clovullin—is preserved. The configuration of the plots maintains visual permeability, allowing filtered views through the trees and minimising

visual impact from neighbouring properties and public viewpoints. Opportunities for additional native planting, understorey enhancement, and habitat creation will further strengthen the site's ecological value.

Overall, Option 2 presents a balanced and contextually responsive design solution that delivers much-needed affordable homes while safeguarding the environmental and visual qualities that define the area. The proposal aligns with the Highland-wide Local Development Plan policies on sustainable placemaking, woodland protection, drainage, and rural housing. Feedback is sought on the acceptability of the layout, access strategy, tree protection approach, and technical matters to be addressed at planning application stage.

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Recommended Materiality

Walls & Façades

Construction Type:

- Timber frame or SIP (structurally insulated panels) for energy efficiency and speed of build, using local suppliers, where possible
- Alternative: I-beam timber frame or solid timber systems for rural sustainability.

External Cladding:

- Rendered blockwork with weather-struck joints for durability.
- Timber cladding (e.g. larch) to offer warmth and natural aesthetic that complements both historic and modern contexts.
- Alternative: Non-timber composite cladding (low maintenance) where timber board is not permitted (achieves high fire rating).

Insulation & Performance:

- Mineral wool or PIR foam insulation within timber frame; maintain drained and vented airspace behind cladding.
- U-value targets: Walls ≤ 0.17 W/m²K.

Roofing

Covering:

- Slate or fibre cement slates for traditional appearance and longevity.
- Alternative: concrete tiles as cost-effective alternative or metal sheet (on ancillary units).

Structure & Performance:

- Timber trusses or SIP roof panels with breathable membrane.

- U-value targets: Roofs ≤ 0.12 W/m²K.

Rainwater goods:

- uPVC gutters and downpipes; soakaway system per BRE Digest 365 for sustainable drainage.

Windows & Doors

Windows:

- High-performance timber or aluminium composite frames with double glazing; Secure by Design certification; reversible opening for maintenance.

Doors:

- Timber or aluminium composite door sets with three-point locking, draught stripping, and security chain.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

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National Planning Policy Framework (NPF 4)

Policy 16 (Quality Homes) highlights that new housing must contribute to meeting identified needs, particularly in rural and island communities facing shortages. National policy confirms that developments should support affordability, provide choice, and deliver liveable environments that respond to the climate and nature crises. The Clovullin proposal contributes directly to rural housing need by delivering six sensitively sited homes that maintain local character while supporting population stability and housing diversity.

Policy 17 (Rural Homes) supports appropriate, small-scale rural development that strengthens local living, sustains services, and contributes positively to settlement patterns. Highland Council's Rural Housing Supplementary Guidance (RHSG) provides further interpretation, requiring rural homes to be well-sited, landscape-led, and reflective of local built form. The development meets these expectations through clustered siting within existing woodland clearings, use of a shared rural access route, and strong landscape integration consistent with Clovullin's dispersed structure.

The proposal also responds to NPF4's environmental policies. Policy 3 (Nature Crisis) requires biodiversity enhancement and habitat protection. By retaining mature woodland, protecting root zones, adding native planting, and incorporating a nature-based SuDS basin, the scheme supports NPF4's nature-positive agenda and aligns with Highland Council's call for strengthened green-infrastructure delivery in new developments. This approach enhances ecological connectivity and contributes to long-term woodland resilience.

Policy 5 (Soils) emphasises conserving soil quality and minimising disturbance. The layout avoids significant cut-and-fill operations, preserves woodland soils, and integrates natural drainage solutions—supporting carbon retention and soil health, both central to NPF4's climate objectives.

Policy 6 (Forestry, Woodland and Trees) requires new development to protect, enhance, and expand woodland cover. The proposal's retention-first approach, combined with native understorey planting and long-term management, directly meets this requirement and strengthens landscape character.

Finally, through its modest scale, woodland setting, proximity to the primary school, and support for everyday local living, the development meets the aims of NPF4's climate and wellbeing policies, reinforcing social cohesion and contributing to Clovullin's long-term community sustainability.

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Local Planning Policies (HwLDP)

The HwLDP supports sustainable rural communities, landscape protection, biodiversity enhancement, and sensitive siting of new homes. Highland Council's rural housing guidance confirms that new rural housing must fit the existing pattern, landscape, and infrastructure context, particularly where woodland is present.

- The development fits seamlessly into the woodland edge of Clovullin, maintaining key views and settlement character.
- The design respects green infrastructure networks, aligns with local biodiversity aims, and retains the wooded backdrop that defines the village.
- The proposal supports community life by placing new households close to existing services, thereby reinforcing population stability.

How the Development Enhances the Community

Supporting Local Living & Services

NPF4 and Highland Council policy highlight the importance of "local living" and supporting rural services, particularly in remote communities experiencing depopulation or housing pressure.

Benefits:

- New homes help sustain the roll of Ardgour Primary School, supporting educational resilience.
- Increased population supports local amenities, transport links, and community facilities.
- Affordable housing helps retain young families, key workers, and local employees who otherwise struggle to secure housing in rural areas—a key issue identified in national rural housing research.

Strengthening Social Cohesion

- The small scale and woodland setting support a sense of place and belonging.
- Homes are arranged in clusters that support social interaction while maintaining privacy.
- Elderly residents, families, and workers benefit from a walkable connection to the village centre, enhancing inclusivity.

Climate-Positive, Nature-Positive Development

- Landscape-led design contributes to community wellbeing by preserving the green, wooded setting central to Clovullin's character.
- Native planting and habitat enhancement support community interest in biodiversity and local stewardship.

Long-Term Community Sustainability

The development aligns with rural sustainability goals outlined in Highland Council's policy framework, which emphasises the importance of enabling appropriate rural housing to support local economies and address the housing challenge, especially in remote areas.

Conclusion

We believe that the proposals represent a policy-compliant, climate-positive, nature-positive, and community-strengthening development, fully aligned with NPF4's core principles and Highland Council's rural housing strategy. By retaining the woodland character, enhancing biodiversity, protecting soils, and delivering homes that support local living, this proposal provides a model for sustainable rural development that reinforces the identity and long-term vitality of Clovullin.

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