

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE
14 January 2014**

Agenda Item	5.7
Report No	PLN/008/14

**13/04401/FUL : RSPB on behalf of the Peatlands Partnership
Land 175M NE of Forsinard Hotel Forsinard**

Report by Area Planning Manager

SUMMARY

Description : Demolish Existing Dwelling and Erect New Field Centre with Offices, Education Room, Permanent and Visiting Staff Residential Accommodation

Recommendation - GRANT

Ward : 01 - North, West and Central Sutherland

Development category : Local Development

Pre-determination hearing : None

Reason referred to Committee : More than 5 representations from separate addresses as per the scheme of delegation.

1. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 1.1 The application is in detail for the erection of a new field centre with associated offices, staff and visitor accommodation, foul drainage facilities and car parking on land to the east side of the A897 to the north of the level crossing in the centre of Forsinard.
- 1.2 The proposed field centre forms part of a project known as the 'Flow to the Future Project', which is being developed by the Peatlands Partnership. The Peatlands Partnership is independently chaired and includes Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), the Highland Council, RSPB Scotland, Plantlife International, and the Environmental Research Institute (Thurso).
- 1.3 The proposal is for 2 storey split level building. From the east the building has a single storey appearance, whilst from the road to the west the building is two storey with a single storey projecting entrance. The building has a double valley roof construction with slate covered 40° roof and a sedum planted roof on the single storey entrance. The external walls are to be finished in a white wet dash render with horizontal and vertical larch cladding. The windows and doors are to be timber double glazed in dark grey.

- 1.4 Internally, the ground floor has a reception, education room, office accommodation, kitchen, storage, drying and service / plant rooms. The first floor has 5 single bedrooms, 5 bunk rooms, one twin room and one quad room, social space (lounge) and laundry.
- 1.5 The building lies on a north-south axis and measures approximately 29m x 11m (19m including the education room) and 9m high.
- 1.6 Nine parking spaces are located to the northwest of the building, with a total of 13 other spaces to the east side of the building. The existing store outbuilding on site (timber walls/corrugated roof) is to be retained and will be positioned to the east of the new building. Grey water storage is to be in a tank to the north east of the new building. Foul drainage is to be by means of a new system to the west of the building. The existing bridge over the burn to the west of the site is to be upgraded with new barriers and the access track widened to 3.7m and finished in bituminous macadam.
- 1.7 Informal pre-application discussions have been held with the developer prior to the submission of a planning application. In addition a formal pre-application enquiry was also submitted 13/03031/PREAPP.
- 1.8 There is an existing access onto the public road, as well as private foul and surface water drainage, all of which serve the existing house.
- 1.9 The application has been accompanied by a detailed Design Statement and photomontage.
- 1.10 **Variations:** None

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The Forsinard Hotel lies around 180m to the southwest of the site. There is a single storey house on site at present and this will be demolished as part of the development. The site is set out to garden curtilage and has a burn between it and the public road.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 There is no relevant recent planning history to the site.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- 4.1 Advertised : Neighbours, expiry 20.12.2013
Representation deadline : 20.12.2013
Timeous representations : 6
Late representations : 0
- 4.2 Material considerations raised are summarised as follows:
 - Structure inappropriate for the area
 - Increased traffic
 - Forsinard residents opposed to development
 - Biomass boiler

- Water supply
- Site drainage
- Forsinard residents opposed to development.

4.3 All letters of representation are available for inspection via the Council's eplanning portal which can be accessed through the internet www.wam.highland.gov.uk/wam. Access to computers can be made available via Planning and Development Service offices.

5. CONSULTATIONS

5.1 **SNH** : In principal, we support this development and consider that it will make a positive contribution to the enjoyment for the Flow country. We advise that the Planning Authority ask the applicant to carry out a bat survey of the building proposed to be demolished. Bats are known to be in the vicinity of the proposal and both the type of building and the adjacent habitats, indicate that it could potentially support a bat roost. If bats could be affected by this proposal, you should also request that the applicant submits a species protection plan before determining the application.

5.2 **Disability Access Panel:** Comments awaited

5.3 **TEC Services:** Comments awaited

6. DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY

The following policies are relevant to the assessment of the application

6.1 Highland Wide Local Development Plan 2012

28	Sustainable Design
29	Design Quality and Place Making
36	Development in the Wider Countryside
42	Previously used land
43	Tourism
57	Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage
64	Flood Risk
65	Waste Water Treatment
66	Surface Water Drainage

6.2 Sutherland Local Plan

7. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 Draft Development Plan

Not applicable

7.2 Highland Council Supplementary Planning Policy Guidance

Not applicable

7.3 Scottish Government Planning Policy and Guidance

Not applicable

8. PLANNING APPRAISAL

8.1 Section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

8.2 This means that the application requires to be assessed against all policies of the Development Plan relevant to the application, all national and local policy guidance and all other material considerations relevant to the application.

8.3 Development Plan Policy Assessment

The application is in detail for a new field centre at Forsinard which lies on ground owned by RSPB within the Forsinard Flows RSPB Reserve. In their supporting statement, the applicant has indicated that one of the key aims of the Peatlands Partnership and the Flow to the Future Project is to promote peatland restoration and management and to promote engagement with this work, both at Forsinard and elsewhere. They have indicated that the biggest barrier to providing increased opportunities for people to learn about and participate in the ongoing work of the RSPB at Forsinard is the limited availability of local accommodation. There is a limited volunteering programme currently running at the RSPB reserve, but demand far outstrips the capacity. There are also academic studies based at Forsinard.

8.4 The applicants have advised that the existing provisions are limited and that modern facilities are required at Forsinard, both in terms of office space, field centre, teaching space and accommodation.

8.5 The building has public space on the ground floor and private space above. The agent has noted that the spaces are arranged in a linear plan form on a north-south line running parallel with the existing contours. The building is dug into the site, thus reducing the impact of the mass of the building upon its surroundings when viewed from the A897 by minimising the ridgeline in relation to the top of the hillside and tree line behind. To further minimise the roof ridge height the building is split in to two long building forms, each with its own dual-pitched roof, running parallel to each other and separated at first floor level by a flat roofed and top-lit corridor space. To make it more readily identifiable to visitors the entrance and the Education Room (capable of containing retractable tiered seating) is projected out

from the main facade. This space incorporates a low pitch sedum roof and the curve forming its rear wall is extended at low level in plan to define a manageable hard and soft landscaped entrance 'courtyard'.

8.6 The site lies within the settlement of Forsinard on the site of an existing house. The proposed building is of a similar bulk, scale and mass to the existing hotel to the west side of the public road. It will be set back from the road and it is considered that it will not unduly dominate the site. The existing access has good visibility splays to both the north and south. The re-development of the house site is not considered to have any significantly detrimental impact on the built fabric of the community and accords with development plan policy.

8.7 SNH have indicated that the proposal is acceptable subject to a bat survey being undertaken with appropriate mitigation measures put in place. This can be addressed by condition.

8.4 **Material Considerations**

Representations set out in section 4.2 relate to the following:

- Structure inappropriate for the area, ruin the vista, scale of building, materials – Planning Comment – the development will have an impact on the landscape. However, there are other large building in the village, including the hotel, and this is a comparably sized building. The materials are considered to be acceptable.
- Increased traffic – Planning Comment – The development has parking provision within its curtilage for staff and visitors.
- Biomass boiler
- Water supply – Planning Comment – The provision of a sufficient private water supply is a technical matter for the developer to address in consultation with the Environmental Health Authority.
- Site drainage – Planning Comment – This is a technical matter for the developer to address in consultation with the Building Standards Authority.
- Forsinard residents opposed to development.

8.5 **Other Considerations – not material**

8.6 **Matters to be secured by Section 75 Agreement**

None

9. **CONCLUSION**

9.1 All relevant matters have been taken into account when appraising this application. It is considered that the proposal accords with the principles and policies contained within the Development Plan and is acceptable in terms of all other applicable material considerations.

The development of a purpose built visitor centre is considered to accord with the Development Plan policies for the area. It will provide a purpose designed building for educational and scientific purposes allowing study of the landscape, flora and fauna of the Forsinard Flows.

10. RECOMMENDATION

Action required before decision issued

Subject to the above, it is recommended the application be **Approved** subject to the following conditions and reasons / notes to applicant:

1. Foul drainage shall be by means of a septic tank and land soakaway. For the avoidance of doubt, the developer shall submit full details in writing and on plan of the finalised foul drainage system, all for the approval in writing of the Planning Authority in consultation with the Building Standards Authority, and prior to the commencement of development. The development shall thereafter be undertaken in accordance with the approved details.

Reason : In the interests of amenity and for the avoidance of doubt.

2. Before the first use of the building, all the parking and access arrangements, including the surfacing of the access and upgrading of the bridge, all as shown on the approved Site Plan 001(1) Rev A docquetted hereto, shall be undertaken to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority.

Reason : In the interests of road safety and amenity.

3. No development shall commence on site until the developer has undertaken a bat survey of the building. Should bats be identified by the survey, the developer shall provide mitigation measures, including a species protection plan and appropriate timing of the works, all for the agreement in writing of the Planning Authority in consultation with SNH. For the avoidance of doubt, the development shall thereafter be undertaken in accordance with the identified mitigation measures.

Reasons: In order to protect the natural heritage interests of the site and for the avoidance of doubt.

4. No development shall commence on site until full written and plan details of the biomass plant are provided for the approval in writing of the Planning Authority. The development shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of amenity and for the avoidance of doubt.

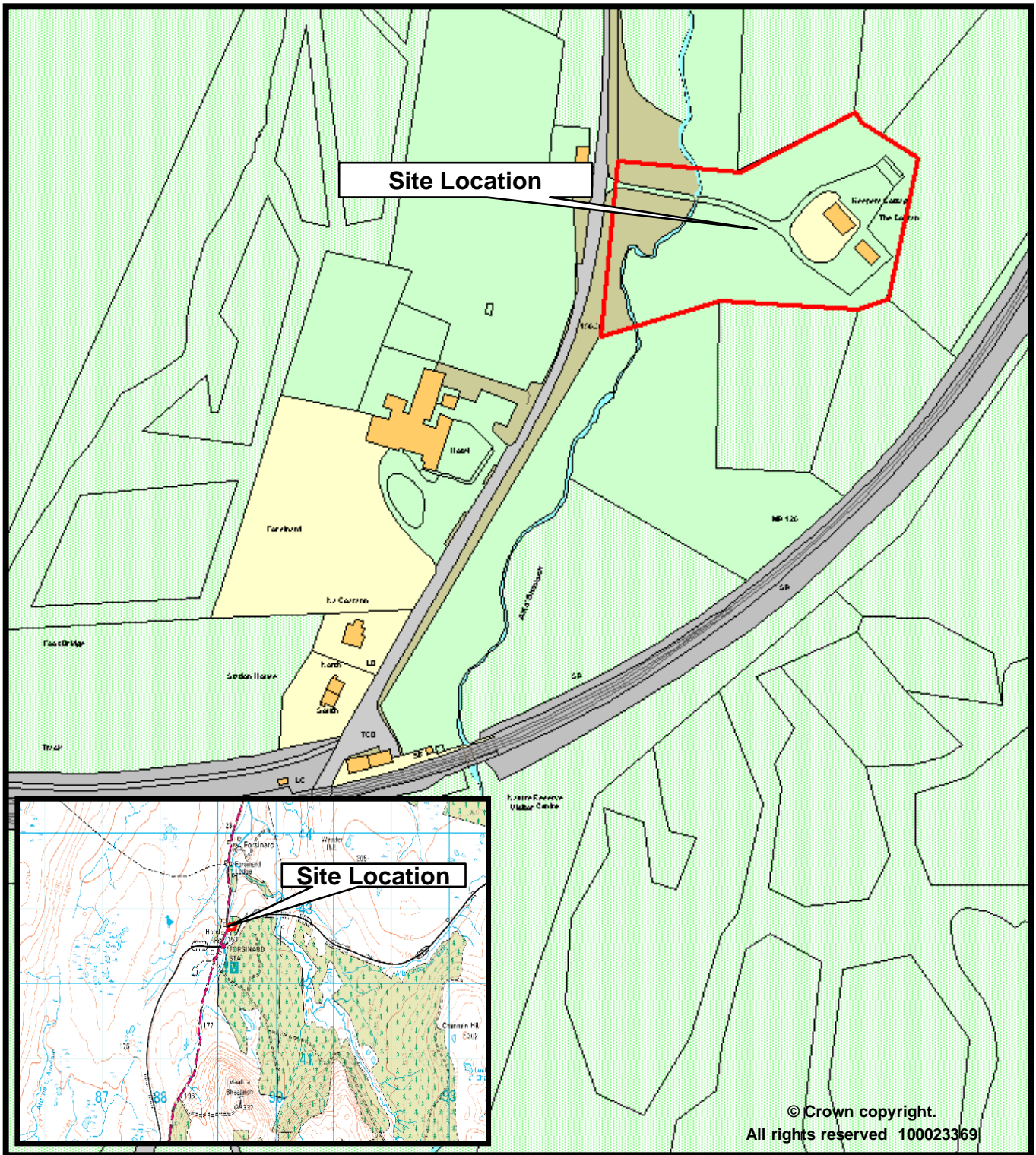
REASON FOR DECISION

The proposals accord with the provisions of the Development Plan and there are no material considerations which would warrant refusal of the application.

Signature: Dafydd Jones
Designation: Area Planning Manager North
Author: Bob Robertson – Principal Planner
Background Papers: Documents referred to in report and in case file.
Relevant Plans: Elevations P(RT6)303, Floor Plan P(RT6)100, Elevations P(RT6)302, Site Layout Plan (001)A, Location Plans P(RT6)00

Appendix – Letters of Representation

Name	Address	Date Received	For/Against
Maureen and Stuart Cross	Forsinain Steading Forsinain KW13 6YT	9.12.2013	A
Andrew Mackay & Susan Sutherland	Na Coarann Forsinard KW13 6YT	16.12.2013	A
John & Kim Leonard	Forsinard Hotel Forsinard KW13 6YT	16.12.2013	A
John & Paul Atherton	The Firs Forsinard KW13 6YT	18.12.2013	A
Jeff & Linda Bower	Station Cottage Forsinard KW13 6YT	18.12.2013	A
John Campbell-Smith	1 Forsinard KW13 7YT	18.12.2013	A



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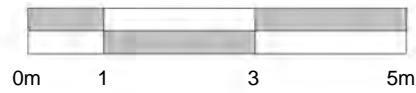


Planning & Development
Service

13/04401/FUL
**Demolish Existing Dwelling and Erect New Field
Centre with Offices, Education Room, Permanent
and Visiting Staff Residential Accommodation at
Land 175m NE of Forsinard Hotel**

Date: 17/12/2013





PROPOSED EXTERNAL MATERIALS

ROOFS

Natural slate roofing to pitched roofs.
 Single ply polymeric roofing membrane to low-pitch 'valley' section between pitched roofs.
 Sedum planted low-pitch roof over single storey part of building.

EXTERNAL WALLS

White wet-dash render.
 Horizontal and vertical untreated Scottish larch cladding boards.

WINDOWS, SCREENS AND DOORS

Timber framed high performance double glazed; colour dark grey.



EAST ELEVATION

1 : 100



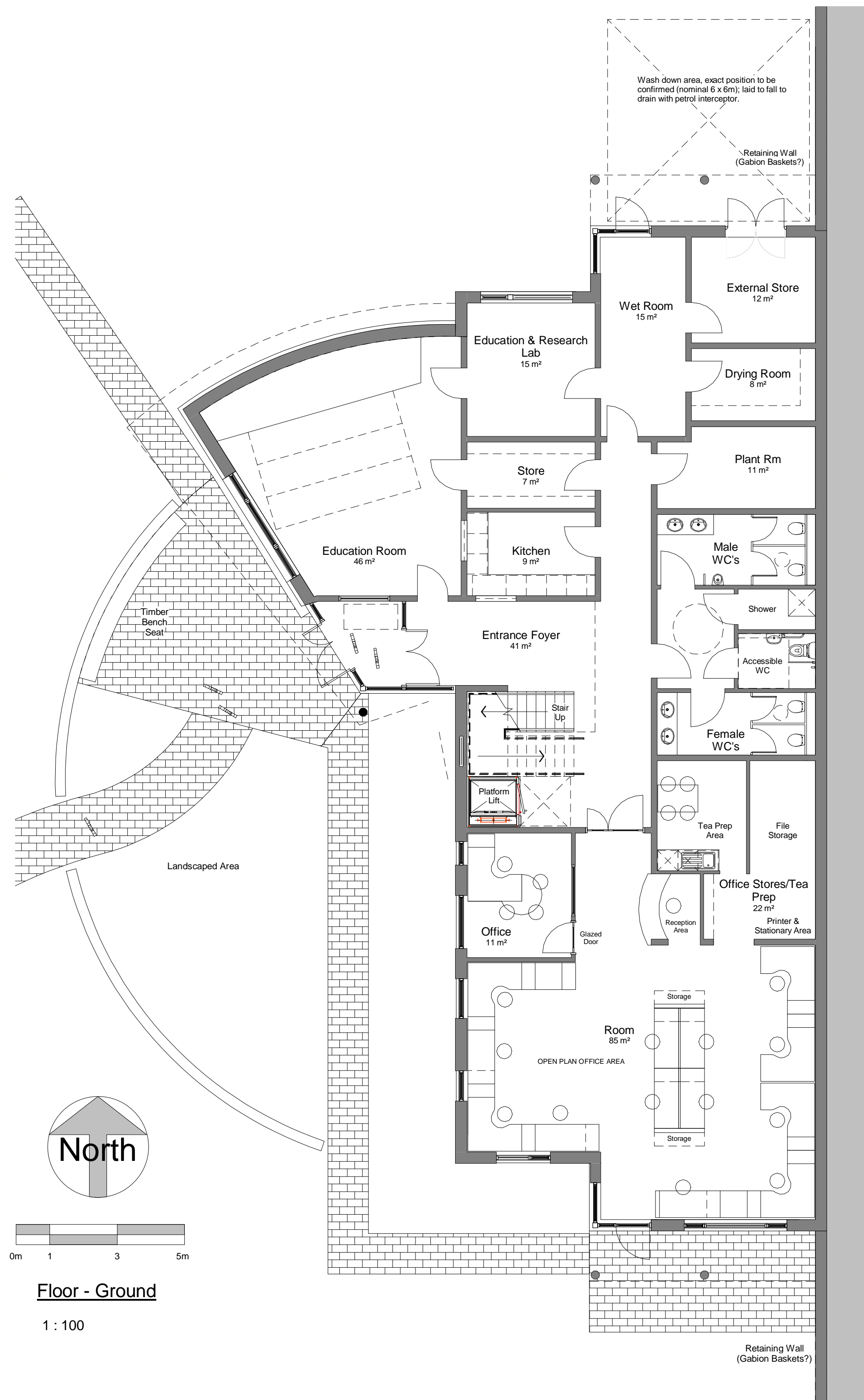
WEST ELEVATION

1 : 100

NOTE: Natural timber cladding shown weathered to a 'silver' finish. Timber when initially fitted will be a 'brown' colour.

Rev. A 18 December '13 DJC
 Added boiler flue outlet to drawing as per Client comments.

Client RSPB on behalf of the Peatland Partnership		Drawing title EAST & WEST ELEVATIONS		PLANNING
Project Proposed Field Centre		Scale 1 : 100 @ A3	Date November 2013	Revision A
Forsinard Flows, Sutherland		Drwg No. P(Rt6)303	Job No. 1387	Drawn DJC



Floor - Ground

1 : 100

Typical Cross Section

1 : 100



Floor - First

1 : 100

SUMMARY OF FLOOR AREAS

GROUND FLOOR GROSS INTERNAL FLOOR AREA	= 342 m ²
FIRST FLOOR GROSS INTERNAL FLOOR AREA	= 284 m ²
TOTAL GIFA	= 626 m ²

NOTE: Natural timber cladding shown weathered to a 'silver' finish. Timber when initially fitted will be a 'brown' colour.
 Rev. A 18 December '13 DJC
 Added boiler flue outlet to drawing as per Client comments.

Client	RSPB on behalf of the Peatland Partnership
Project	Proposed Field Centre Forsinard Flows, Sutherland

COLIN ARMSTRONG ASSOCIATES
 Chartered Architects

Planning

Drawing title GENERAL ARRANGEMENT		
Scale 1 : 100 @ A1	Date November 2013	Revision A
Drwg No. P(Rt6)100	Job No. 1387	Drawn DJC

PROPOSED EXTERNAL MATERIALS

ROOFS

Natural slate roofing to pitched roofs.
 Single ply polymeric roofing membrane to low-pitch 'valley' section between pitched roofs.
 Sedum planted low-pitch roof over single storey part of building.

EXTERNAL WALLS

White wet-dash render.
 Horizontal and vertical untreated Scottish larch cladding boards.

WINDOWS, SCREENS AND DOORS

Timber framed high performance double glazed; colour dark grey.



NORTH ELEVATION

1 : 100



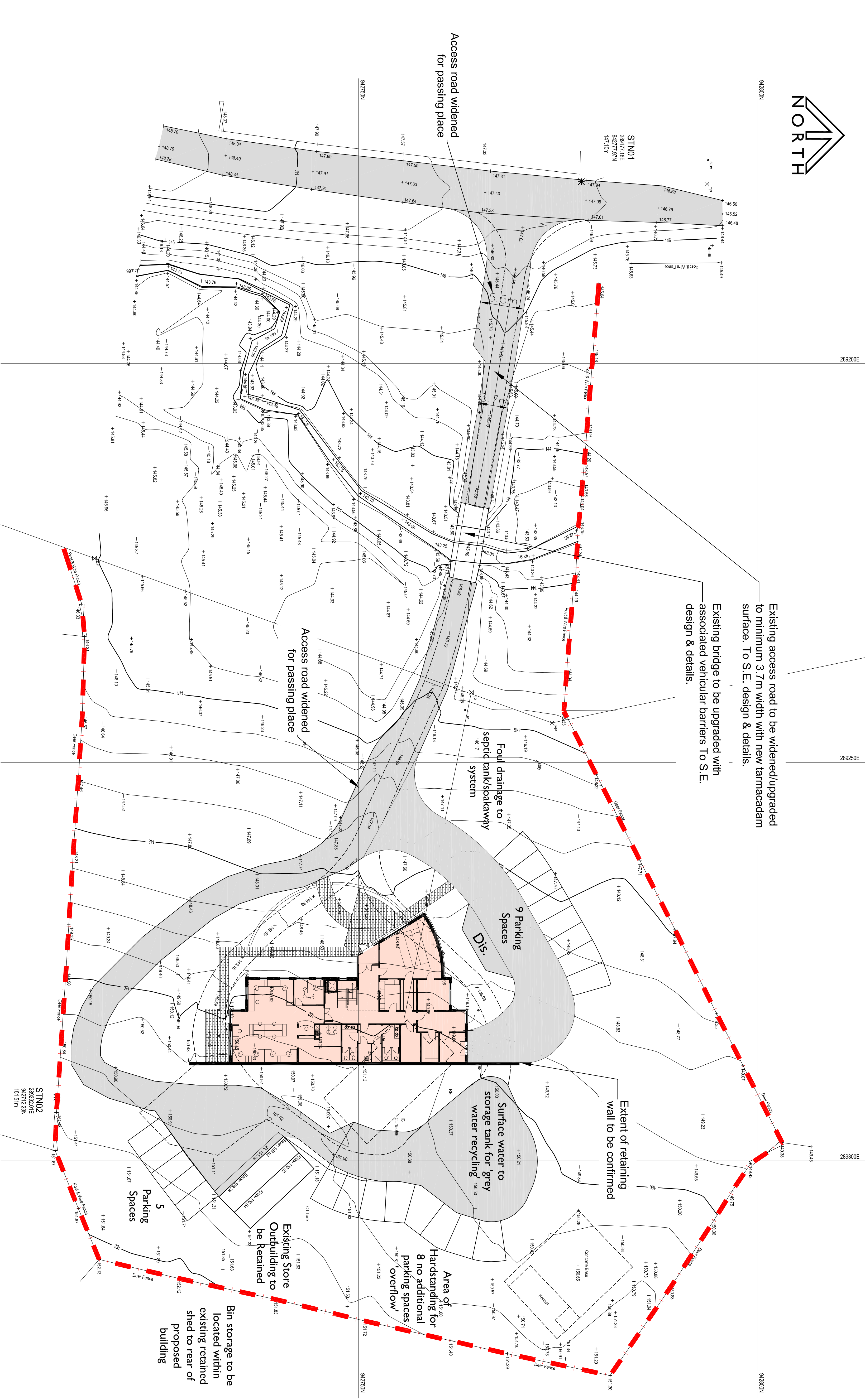
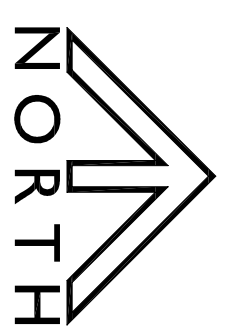
SOUTH ELEVATION

1 : 100

NOTE: Natural timber cladding shown weathered to a 'silver' finish. Timber when initially fitted will be a 'brown' colour.

Rev. A 18 December '13 DJC
 Added boiler flue outlet to drawing as per Client comments.

Client RSPB on behalf of the Peatland Partnership		Drawing title NORTH & SOUTH ELEVATIONS		PLANNING
Project Proposed Field Centre		Scale 1 : 100 @ A3	Date November 2013	Revision A
Forsinard Flows, Sutherland		Drwg No. P(Rt6)302	Job No. 1387	Drawn DJC



Existing access road to be widened/ upgraded to minimum 3.7m width with new tarmac/adam surface. To S.E. design & details.

Existing bridge to be upgraded with associated vehicular barriers To S.E. design & details.

Extent of retaining wall to be confirmed

Foul drainage to septic tank/spoakaway system

Area of Handstanding for 8 no additional parking spaces +100% overflow

Access road widened for passing place

Bin storage to be located within existing retained shed to rear of proposed building

Existing Store Outbuilding to be Retained

Surface water to storage tank for grey water recycling

Site Plan
Scale 1:250 @ A1

Client
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

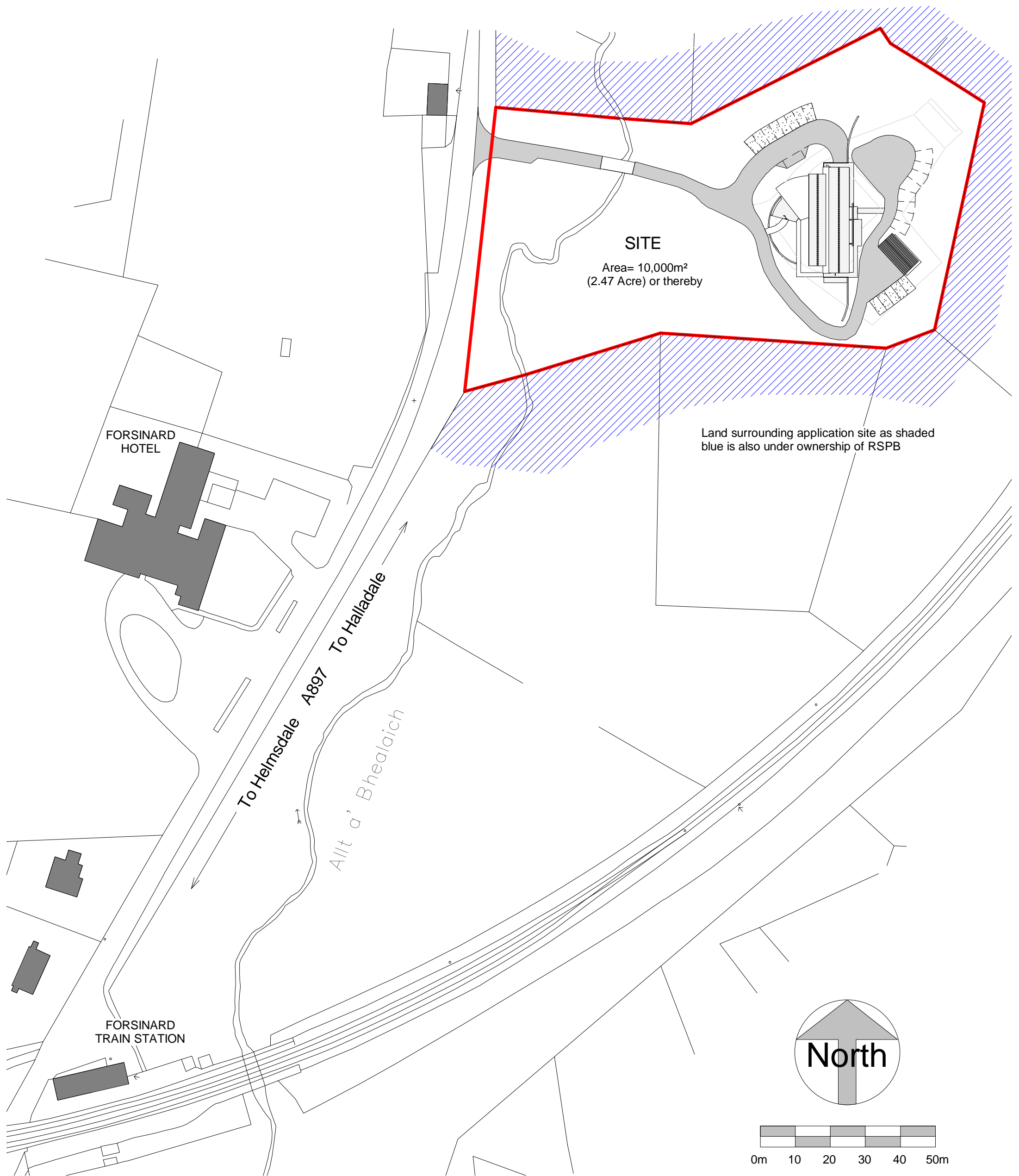
Project
Proposed Field Centre
Forsinard Flows, Sutherland

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LYLE HOUSE, PAVILION 1, FAIRWAYS BUSINESS PARK, INVERNESS, IV2 6AA.

TEL NO: 01463 712288 / FAX NO: 01463 712055 / EMAIL: architects@colinarmstrong.com

Drawing Title		Drawn by	
Site Layout Plan	Sheet AI	CP	Revision
Scale 1:250	Date April '13		
Job Number 1387	Drwg. No. 001(1)		



COLIN ARMSTRONG ASSOCIATES
Chartered Architects

Client RSPB on behalf of the Peatland Partnership	Drawing title Site Location Plan		
Project Proposed Field Centre Forsinard Flows, Sutherland	Scale 1 : 1000 @ A3	Date August 2013	Revision *
	Drwg No. P(Rt6)002	Job No. 1387	Drawn DJC