

## 9. LYBSTER



### Background

Lybster (popn. 530) is a key settlement on the A9 serving a large rural hinterland. It was laid out as a planned village with a coherent structure and design by General Patrick Sinclair at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Like many other Caithness communities it expanded as a result of the herring trade. The first pier was opened in 1810 and by the 1830s around 100 boats were using it. The trade collapsed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and with it a key element in the community's prosperity. Economic opportunities today are mainly service related with many residents commuting to Wick for work. Land has been identified at the golf course for industry but has never been progressed. The Gallery and pottery are important local craft enterprises offering a nucleus on which to build similar enterprises. A few boats still use the harbour and

there may be opportunities to build on the work of Lybster Heritage Trust through promotion of the harbour.

The village contains a good range of services, including bank, hotels, a range of small shops, community hall, football pitch and golf course. The Council's Structure Plan supports the expansion of such communities. There is potential for new development, although the infrastructure network is a constraint. This will be overcome with the completion of a new sewage treatment works. With the exception of the public housing at Mowat Place / Shaltiegie Road, most development has been infill along the Village Road. However, most opportunities have now been realised and future expansion will require backland development. The previous Local Plan identified a significant area of ground to the east and west of the main road. Most of this ground has never been developed and still offers prospects for new housing development.

The local townscape is one of the finest in Caithness. The Conservation Area contains a number of listed buildings and the harbour is one of the gems of the Highlands. There is a need to ensure that this is protected and enhanced. Extending the Conservation Area to cover the harbour would highlight its quality and ensure that it is protected from inappropriate development and complement the work of the Heritage Trust.

### Community Input

The main concerns of the community put forward at community workshops in the Spring of 1998 were:-

- improvements to the harbour area including tourist facilities, pier improvements, toilets, interpretation and provision of a small boat jetty;
- promote tourism projects especially at the vacant church / golf course and the provision of more signs;
- provision of affordable / sheltered housing to the north of Golf View Drive and off Harbour Road;
- transport improvements, including speed limits, bus shelters and road widening;
- provision of a fire station; and
- protection of open space and farmland.

### Development Factors

There are no physical constraints on expansion of the village and there are a number of opportunities for development, particularly to the rear of the main street. These must be carefully developed to ensure that the setting of the Conservation Area is protected and the loss of agricultural land is carefully controlled. Equally, significant development must await the upgrading of the sewage treatment works.

## Objectives

The Plan seeks to:

- identify land for further housing expansion;
- protect the older core of the village from inappropriate development;
- allocate land for business and tourist uses;
- safeguard a site for a new sewage treatment works;
- support improvements to the harbour area; and
- extend the Conservation Area to cover the harbour.

## Policies

In the built up area of the village, Primary Policies and Settlement Policies apply as shown on the Inset Map. Site and area specific policies, proposals and development opportunities are as follows.

### H: Housing

**1. The Council will favour further small scale infill housing development, subject to Settlement Policy H. However, there will be a presumption against more significant development until the waste disposal system is upgraded or the means of effluent disposal is agreed by the Council and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency.**

### B: Business

**2. The following sites are identified for business uses:**

- (a) 0.9ha. to the south of the golf club house for business or tourist related uses.**
- (b) The former church has potential for conversion to business or community uses. It also has potential for conversion to housing.**

### S: Special Uses

**3. 0.3ha to the north of the playing field is identified for a play area or similar community facility.**

**4. Land to the south of the village is identified for a new sewage treatment works and associated 90m safeguarding area. This is not currently programmed until after 2009 and village expansion will be limited meantime.**

### E: Village Expansion

**5. Land is allocated for the expansion of the village as indicated in table 1. Proposals must await completion of sewage treatment works. Significant proposals may require improvements to the water supply.**

Site	Area (Ha)	Capacity	Comments
<b>(a) East of Stewart's Building</b>	3	40	<b>An overall Master Plan must be submitted showing details of access, layout, house design and landscaping. Development must accord with the special character of the adjoining Conservation Area. In this regard:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>the north south street pattern should be maintained;</b></li> <li>• <b>house ridge lines should be north – south;</b></li> <li>• <b>the roof pitch should be in the range 35° - 55° and ideally be between 40° and 45°; and</b></li> <li>• <b>design of built form and selection of materials must take account of the traditional architecture of the Conservation Area.</b></li> </ul>
<b>(b) Russel Street</b>	1.8	15	<b>An overall Master Plan must be submitted showing details of access, layout, house design and landscaping.</b>
<b>(c) West of the Police Station</b>	2	25	<b>An overall Master Plan must be submitted showing details of access, layout, house design and landscaping</b>
<b>(d) South of Harbour Road</b>	3	5	<b>Planning permission has been granted for two large plots. The remaining ground should be developed at a similar density.</b>
<b>(e) North of Harbour Road</b>	1.5	12	<b>An overall Master Plan must be submitted showing details of access, layout, house design and landscaping. Land must be set aside for an area of open space / play area.</b>

**A: Amenity**

6. *The Council will protect important open spaces and amenity areas, particularly:*

- (a) Open spaces along Main Street; and*
- (b) playing field / play areas.*

**Environmental Action**

7. *The Council proposes to extend Lybster Conservation Area to cover the Harbour area and place an Article 4 Direction over the whole area. Separate statutory advertisement and consultation will be required. Development within the Conservation Area should have regard to the Design Guidance in Appendix V.*

8. *The Council has allocated £30,000 in for environmental improvements in 2004/2005. Part of this sum is dedicated to completing a scheme of environmental improvements at the former Joiners workshop to include provision of a car park and landscaping. The scheme also involves storage for the Fire Service and land for the Community Centre. The remainder will go towards funding the Lybster Heritage Trust project to convert the Old Cooperage / Salt Store to a Visitor Centre, café and picnic site.*

9. *The Council, in conjunction with other interested parties, will consider other potential improvements to the harbour area to encourage its use for fishing, recreational sailing and other tourist related uses.*

10. *Other opportunities exist to improve the village environment. The Council will consider potential environmental improvement schemes as follows:*

- (a) enhancement of the village entrances*

*including improved signage, landscaping and speed reducing measures;*

- (b) improvements to the main street, including streetscape improvements, traffic calming / management and provision of interpretative materials; and*
- (c) improvements to the local network of village and coastal footpaths.*



*Photos: Above - the Free Church, a listed building in the existing Conservation Area.*

*Left - land for expansion of housing north of Harbour Road.*

*Below - former church with potential for conversion to business community or residential use.*

