

**THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL**  
**PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

**12 August 2009**

Agenda Item	
Report No	

**Housing in the Countryside – Interim Guidance**  
**Report by the Director of Planning & Development**

**SUMMARY**

Members will recall that the outcomes of the Housing in the Countryside review group were reported to the March 2009 meeting of this Committee. The Committee was presented with a revised draft interim guidance that incorporated changes to the existing Housing in the Countryside guidance. Committee agreed that this draft interim guidance policy be issued for public consultation and this report considers the comments received and sets out recommended changes.

Members are asked to approve the changes to the existing guidance for use as supplementary planning guidance until such time as it is integrated into the new Highland wide Local Development Plan.

This report contributes to the Council's commitment to enable an increase in the number of houses built in Highland.

**1. Introduction**

1.1 The Planning Environment and Development Committee agreed on 18 March 2009 to undertake consultation on the Housing in the Countryside draft interim guidance. The revised interim guidance had been prepared from the work undertaken by the short-life working group set up to consider the existing Housing in the Countryside (2006) Development Plan Policy Guidance.

1.2 Policy was amended to increase the potential for housing in the hinterland areas by:

- Promoting development opportunities within smaller housing groups;
- identifying potential for the sub-division of garden ground in the hinterland
- simplifying policy on replacement of existing dwellings and conversion of traditional buildings
- defining opportunities relating to derelict land

To support the policy, the preparation of siting and design guidance was considered important, providing a tool for use by developers, officials and members in considering housing proposals in countryside areas. Work on the Siting and Design guidance has not yet been completed but it will be finalised and issued before the end of 2009.

## **2. Consultation**

- 2.1 The consultation on the interim guidance ran for a period of 9 weeks from Friday 24 April to Friday 26 June. During the consultation period 43 feedback forms and letters were received. The main points raised and The Council's response can be viewed on the attached Appendix 2. Copies of the full submitted comments can be viewed in the Members' library. Comments were received from a broad spectrum of contributors including individuals, developers, architects, landowners, agencies and community councils.

## **3 Main issues raised in the consultation and response.**

- 3.1 Feedback was sought in respect of the 4 main areas of change to the policy and the main issues are indicated below:

**HOUSING GROUPS** – The majority of comments agreed that the interim guidance provided further opportunity for housing, although some indicated that the guidance had not gone far enough in removing restrictions. Clarification was sought on the fact that the interim guidance states that housing groups can not develop by more than 100%.

Overall the changes to allow a more flexible approach to development of housing groups were well received and it was considered that allowing further housing in groups outwith those identified in local plans would allow for more opportunity within the hinterland.

The 100% guide is intended to ensure that development is managed in a way that will not lead to over development of small groups of housing in the countryside. The revised guidance now states that this limit will be applied to groups of less than 10 existing houses. The potential for development of larger existing groups will be assessed on their individual merits and in the context of the forthcoming siting and design guidance. Given the potential landscape impact of expansion of larger groups this is expected to be significantly less than 100%.

- 3.2 **POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT IN GARDEN GROUND** – respondents highlighted the importance of maintaining an appropriate plot ratio and the potential effect on the amenity and privacy of adjacent properties. Some comments also sought the extension of this policy to include the use of garden ground of existing single houses.

The interim guidance already highlights the need to preserve the integrity of existing properties and further guidance will be incorporated in the forthcoming siting and design guidance. In addition, the potential for the sub-division of garden ground of single houses has now been included in the revised interim guidance.

- 3.3 **REPLACEMENT OF HOUSING BELOW STANDARDS FOR MODERN LIVING** – comments related to the policy restrictions on the increase in scale and footprint of replacement housing.

The revised interim guidance has relaxed the restrictions on the scale of redevelopment. Proposals will now be assessed against the impact on landscape setting, allied to the flexibility to re-site within the curtilage of the property. This will give more opportunities for redevelopment proposals to provide better design and siting solutions.

- 3.4 DERELICT LAND AND BUILDINGS – Some respondents were concerned that land and buildings were being allowed to fall into dereliction in order to comply with policy. Clarity was also sought as to the length of time from an activity stopping and the land being classed as “derelict”. The issue of the role new build enabling development was also raised.

The revised policy states that information on how long the use of land or property has ceased will be sought from the applicant, and this will assist in considering the validity of the proposal. It would not be appropriate to have a set time period, as the potential to resume former activities will vary depending on the previous use. New build enabling development should only be considered where wider infrastructure improvements are required.

- 3.6 General Comments

Concern was expressed that the revisions to the Housing in the Countryside guidance were too permissive and that the changes were a step backwards and will result in increased development pressure in the hinterland. In addressing this, it is important to point out that the guidance is an interim policy document developed prior to a wider assessment of all housing policy through the Highland wide Local Development Plan. This work will give further opportunity to assess how the revised policy is working and if significant development pressures on the hinterland areas arise, the Local Development Plan will provide a “safety net” for further review.

Clarity was also sought as to where the policy applied, and what elements if any were applicable to wider countryside areas. Revisions have been undertaken to the interim guidance to clarify which areas of policy are applicable to the wider countryside.

#### 4 **Recommended changes to the Interim Guidance and further work**

- 4.1 Overall the changes to the Housing in the Countryside were generally accepted and the view accepted that greater flexibility would offer more potential for housing in the hinterland areas. There were as indicated above the need to further clarify some points and further amendments have been made to the guidance to reflect these concerns as follows;

1. We have clarified which elements of the policy apply only to the hinterland and which apply to the wider countryside. A map showing the extent of hinterland areas has been included.
2. The potential for sub-division of garden ground has been extended to apply to existing gardens in both housing groups and single house developments.

3. The policy regarding the replacement of below standard housing has been merged with the policy relating to the conversion, reuse or redevelopment of buildings or land. This is because there is significant overlap in assessment criteria and development opportunities.
4. We have amended the policy which restricts the growth of existing groups of less than 10 houses to 100%. Development in larger housing groups will be assessed on their individual merits and against the forthcoming siting and design guidance.
5. The guidance has been redrafted to provide a simplified and more accessible policy document.

The redrafted guidance is attached as Appendix 1 of the report.

- 4.2 The preparation of the siting and design guidance which will accompany the Housing in the Countryside interim guidance is underway, and will be presented to Committee in the coming months for issue before the end of the year. This will support and inform the interpretation of the interim guidance.

## **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report that have not been considered within the Service budget requirements.

## **6. Conclusions**

- 6.1 The revisions to the interim guidance address many of the points raised during the consultation of the revised Housing in the Countryside policy guidance. It allows a more flexible approach to well sited and designed development in housing groups whilst maintaining a more controlled approach to the development of single houses in the countryside.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That Committee agrees that the interim planning policy set out in Appendix 1 be approved as interim guidance with a further review of hinterland boundaries to be undertaken as part of the preparation of the Highland Wide Local Development Plan.

Signature:

Designation: Director of Planning & Development

Date: 4 August 2009

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Ref: MM/HIC

# Interim Supplementary Guidance: Housing in the Countryside

Taigheadas air an Dùthaich

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The Highland  
Council  
Comhairle na  
Gàidhealtachd

An Lùnastal 2009  
August 2009

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## **1. Introduction**

1.1 This interim guidance offers advice and assistance with the location of new housing in the Highland countryside. It is particularly relevant to the areas of Highland which fall within the “hinterland of towns” which are the areas under greatest pressure for housing development. The background to these areas is given in appendix 1 of this guide.

1.2. The guidance updates the 2006 Development Plan Policy Guideline on Housing in the Countryside and alters some of the existing policy guidance set out within the Caithness Local Plan (adopted 2000), Nairnshire Local Plan (adopted 2001), Inverness Local Plan (adopted 2006), and the Ross & Cromarty East Local Plan (adopted 2007).

## **2. Design and Siting of Houses in the Countryside**

2.1 The Council is committed to raising the quality of development in the Highland countryside. New proposals will therefore be expected to contribute towards this commitment through quality design, high standard of site layout and use of appropriate materials.

2.2 The Council is currently preparing new design guidance for housing in the countryside. In the meantime, the following documents should be used by developers to help with their planning submissions:

- Scottish Government Planning Advice Note 72 Housing in the Countryside (available from their web-site at: [www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/02/20637/51636](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/02/20637/51636));
- The Highland Council’s Designing for Sustainability Guidance (revised in 2006), and available at [www.highland.gov.uk](http://www.highland.gov.uk).

### **3. Development in the Hinterland of Towns**

3.1 Local plans identify the majority of housing development opportunities within the hinterland in existing settlements, crofting townships and any planned new settlements.

3.2 Outwith these settlements, smaller housing groups can however offer more potential to meet the demands for housing. This draft guidance sets out a more flexible approach to ensure that appropriate opportunities for further small scale development or “rounding off” of housing groups is enabled and supported. It maintains a presumption against single houses in the open countryside, except where a number of tests are met relating to the need for the house in that location.

#### **Housing Groups**

3.3 Smaller housing groups can offer potential to meet the demands for housing in the countryside. This approach is considered suitable for small scale housing development proposals (generally single houses). More significant proposals which may have wider implications should be promoted through the formal Local Development Plan process.

3.4 The individual Local Plans for Caithness, Nairnshire, Inverness and Ross & Cromarty East identify some housing groups and the suggested additional levels of development that would be acceptable. These limits to growth at individual housing groups will now be used only as a guide to future planning decisions, rather than as a reason in itself for refusal of an otherwise acceptable planning application.

3.5 In Caithness, where economic and social regeneration remains a priority, the flexible approach applied under housing groups will apply to the dispersed townships, housing groups and settlements identified in policies 11, 12 and 13 of the Landward section of the Caithness Local Plan. In addition, the policy on spacing between houses will be taken as a guide only, rather than as a requirement.

3.6 There are also a number of housing groups which have not specifically been identified in the Local Plans and this guidance also provides advice on how development in these locations can be enabled. Where housing groups are not currently identified in Local Plans, the existence of a housing group will be determined by there being at least three houses in close proximity to one another. The Council will take into account their form and cohesiveness, the level of containment by natural boundaries such as water courses, trees or enclosing landform, or existing man-made boundaries such as existing roads, plantations or means of enclosure.

**3.7 New housing should be located within, or round off an existing housing group.**

3.8 Existing housing groups of less than ten houses will be allowed to expand by up to 100% from the baseline date of approval of this guidance (August 2009). Expansion of larger groups will be assessed on their individual merits. Given the potential landscape impact of expansion of larger groups this is expected to be less than 100%.

3.9 A group will be considered to be complete where further development could result in a detrimental impact on the housing group or wider countryside. In particular, the Council will carefully consider the potential adverse impact of additional development on those groups that have already been subject to recent development under the housing in the countryside policy.

3.10 There will be a presumption against ribbon development along public roads and development which would result in the coalescence of a group with a nearby settlement or another housing group or the unplanned extension of a defined settlement.

### **Suitability for growth**

3.11 To be an acceptable form of development, proposals for new housing in housing groups should address the following criteria:

- the scale and siting of new development should reflect and respect the character and amenity of the existing group and the individual houses within the group;
- any new build should be located within a reasonable distance of the existing properties within the housing group. The distance between existing properties and proposed new build should be guided by the spacing between the existing properties within the group;
- proposals must not be visually intrusive in the landscape, or detrimental to landscape characteristics, scenic quality or attributes of the existing group;
- proposals should not have an adverse impact on heritage interests;
- proposals must not have an adverse impact on foul and surface water drainage arrangements and conditions;
- proposals must be able to be accommodated by the local road network and relevant junctions. The development of existing housing groups may require the upgrading of existing services, infrastructure and access. Where housing groups are served by a private road access there will be a requirement to bring roads to adoptable standard in line with the Council policy (as set out in Highland Structure Plan Policy H8). The Council has also produced new roads guidance for small scale developments, which must be followed.

- sites should not create an inappropriate intrusion into a previously undeveloped field;
- presence of mature trees will form part of the consideration; and
- sites close to working farm buildings or other rural industries should ensure that there is no conflict.

### **The conversion, reuse or redevelopment of buildings or land.**

3.12 The development of rural brownfield sites is supported by national policy, and Planning Advice Note 73 defines these as sites which are occupied by redundant or unused buildings or land that has been significantly degraded by a former activity. It will be important through this policy to secure the retention of historically valuable and traditional buildings which are no longer required for their original use, as well as to offer the opportunity to remove buildings which are an eyesore and will achieve a net environmental benefit. Information should be supplied indicating how long the property or land has been disused and why no longer required.

3.13 For the purposes of this guidance a traditional building is usually built using traditional materials generally of stone, slate and timber often sourced locally.

3.14 There will be a presumption in favour of conversion and re-use or redevelopment of buildings and land where former uses have ceased to be required for its original purpose, the site is significantly degraded and where the development would bring about an environmental benefit. Subject to the following:

- the building is substantially complete, including having walls to wall head level;
- the existing building must be of at least a scale that is commensurate with a habitable building;
- proposals should not significantly alter the character of the building, its setting or the character of the surrounding landscape;
- existing openings are used where feasible and new openings placed on elevations away from public view;
- unbroken roof slopes should be retained;
- existing materials should be reused where rebuilding cannot be avoided and the use of traditional materials will be encouraged.
- in the case of replacement houses, the resultant floorspace should not result in an excessive increase on that of the original building, in order to maintain the level of impact on the landscape, thereby ensuring that replacement houses reflect the character and scale of existing houses in the countryside;
- in the case of replacement houses, the siting of the new house must be within the same curtilage of the original house, and only resited within the curtilage, where benefit to the landscape and setting can be achieved and

3.15 The replacement of an existing dwelling may also be supported where there is a clear case made that the costs of upgrading are not justified on economic or environmental grounds, subject to the existing dwellings being demolished. the application must be in detail and the replacement house must comply with the Siting and Design Guidance

3.16 Enabling new build development may be acceptable where wider infrastructure improvements are required.

3.17 Rural buildings can provide nesting and roosting places for wildlife. Prospective developers should be aware that all bats and birds are protected species and their presence is a material planning consideration. A protected species survey by a suitably qualified professional to assess for the presence of bats and other creatures may be required to be undertaken before making an application for planning permission involving the conversion or demolition of an existing building. This should identify the species in the building or on the land, outline the impact of the proposed development and the mitigation measures required.

## **Development in the Open Countryside**

3.18 New build single houses within the open countryside within hinterland areas will be by exception and will only be permitted in accordance with national guidance and the approved Structure Plan policy, where they comply with the requirements listed below.

3.19 All development proposals will also be assessed in terms of their suitability against relevant policy and guidance on Design and Siting of Houses in the Countryside.

- **Agriculture**

3.20 Applicants must provide an independent statement prepared by a suitably qualified professional to support the need for a house in relation to the proper functioning of the farm holding. Justification will be judged against the information provided by the applicant in support of operational need. Section 75 legal agreements will be used to tie the houses to the land holding.

3.21 Applicants must provide:

- a) description of the current farm enterprise (where applicable) including: extent, operations, infrastructure and existing labour;
- b) description of the proposed changes to the farm enterprise including: extent, operations, infrastructure and labour requirement;
- c) information on how the proposed changes are to be funded, including evidence on how the proposed development is financially viable and sustainable;
- d) information about who is to live in the house and where they reside now;
- e) evidence of why it is essential that accommodation is actually needed on site;

or

- f) evidence of the need for housing for family succession purposes, ie retiring farmers and spouses.

3.22 The applicant will also be required to provide information on:

- the potential to use existing accommodation in the area;
- any other permissions for houses that have not been taken up or developed;
- number of previous houses/plots having been sold off the holding and
- any land on the holding that is identified within an existing settlement or housing group.

- **Croft land and forest croft management**

3.23 It is recognised that a degree of flexibility will be required, for example, in such circumstances it may not be possible to sustain full time employment and this will be taken into consideration in the tests(a to e above). Any application for a house associated with crofting should be on a Registered Croft or associated

common grazing and accompanied by appropriate confirmation from the Crofters Commission of the bone fides of the crofting application. Proposals for forest crofts should be accompanied by a management plan that meets UK Forestry Standard.

3.24 Regard would also be had to the history of the previous housing development on the croft and the density of development. Any new housing must support and respect the traditional settlement pattern, avoid being sited on the better agricultural land of the croft and not compound sporadic suburban type development. Section 75 legal agreements will be used to tie the houses to the land holding.

- **Provision of housing associated with an existing or new rural business**

3.25 National planning policy is supportive of the establishment of new enterprises in rural locations, whether that is through existing businesses entering into new areas of activity, expansion or the creation of entirely new enterprises. These new enterprises may include farm diversification directly related to agriculture or, for example, tourism or leisure or may also relate to other new businesses which are suited to rural locations. The provision of housing to support these enterprises may be required and national policy recognises the role of the planning system in facilitating this.

3.26 The development of a house in connection with self-catering tourist accommodation will be supported where accommodation relates to a clearly defined business opportunity relating to the development of tourism. Section 75 legal agreements will be required to tie the house to the business enterprise.

3.27 Applicants must provide:

- a) description of the current business (where applicable) including: extent, operations, infrastructure and existing labour;
- b) description of the proposed business including: extent, operations, infrastructure and labour requirement;
- c) information on how the proposed changes are to be funded, including evidence on how the proposed development is financially viable and sustainable;
- d) information about who is to live in the house and where they reside now; and
- e) evidence of why it is essential that accommodation is actually needed on site.

3.28 The applicant will also be required to present information on:

- why a rural location is appropriate to the business;
- the potential to use existing accommodation in the area and
- whether there is demand for what is proposed.

- **Garden Ground**

3.29 Potential may exist for the sub-division of existing garden ground for a single house provided that the garden has clearly defined boundaries and meets the terms of the Siting and Design Guidance. Development should be able to deliver an appropriate plot ratio for a countryside location and be cohesive and not incongruous to the existing house or houses. Further sub-division of the subsequent plots will not be acceptable. Section 75 legal agreements will be used to ensure effective planning control can be maintained.

3.30 Potential may also exist in established gardens once associated with a country/estate house, which provide an appropriate landscape setting, but where development would not fundamentally affect the qualities and integrity of the site.

- **Provision of housing by a social housing provider to meet a demonstrable local affordable housing need.**

3.31 The development of affordable housing to meet a demonstrable local affordable housing need, as identified by the Council, will be acceptable subject to the involvement of a registered social housing provider. Social housing providers will be expected to demonstrate that a sequential approach has not identified opportunities for affordable housing development within nearby settlements, or conversion or restoration of traditional buildings within the immediate area.

- **Part of a comprehensively planned new settlement**

3.32 The Highland Structure Plan recognises that in some circumstances, new settlements have a role to play in meeting housing demand. These would generally be in association with development plans.

3.33 Applications for new settlements will be assessed against the following criteria:

- location relative to housing need and demand;
- mix of housing tenures;
- proximity to existing and potential employment opportunities;
- opportunities for generation and support of local employment;
- location relative to public transport infrastructure;
- level of provision of new infrastructure and
- range of services and facilities.

#### **4. Policy application in the wider countryside**

4.1 In the areas of Highland outwith the hinterlands of towns, development of new housing of an appropriate location, scale, design and materials may be acceptable, particularly where it supports communities experiencing difficulty in maintaining population and services. In these areas, the settlements identified within the relevant Local Plans are the preferred locations for most development.

4.2 However, outwith the settlements, housing development will be assessed against the relevant Local Plan policies, and in particular, the extent to which it:

- supports the viability of the wider rural community;
- demonstrates appropriate siting and high quality design and materials;
- takes into account locally important croft land;

and

- complies with the other criteria of Highland Structure Plan Policy G2 Design for Sustainability.

4.3 All applications will also be assessed against policy criteria and guidance indicated in Section 2 Design and Siting of Houses in the Countryside

4.4 In regard to the policy guidance within this document, paragraphs in relation to development of Housing Groups (pages 2 to 4) and the conversion, reuse or redevelopment of buildings or land (pages 4 to 5) represent best practice.

## **Appendix: Local and National Planning Policy**

### Highland Council Policy

The Council's overarching policy on housing development in the open countryside is contained in Structure Plan Policy H3 which was approved by the Scottish Ministers in March 2001.

The differing needs of areas experiencing high levels of housing demand in and around the larger settlements and the more rural areas which are experiencing difficulties in maintaining population and services requires a two-tiered policy response. In the areas which have been experiencing the greatest pressure for housing in the countryside, a more restrictive policy is in place. These areas are known as the "hinterland of towns" and were identified in the Highland Structure Plan and subsequent Local Plans. These hinterland boundaries will remain in place until the review of the Highland wide Local Development Plan (which is currently underway) is complete.

The hinterland of towns areas are based on commuting patterns to and from major employment centres and where the thrust of policy is to manage growth, self-sustaining communities and protect the countryside. Hinterland areas relate to Inverness and the Inner Moray Firth (Nairn, Dingwall, Alness, Invergordon, Tain), Fort William, Wick and Thurso.

In the hinterland of towns area, development pressures can result in the spread of sporadic new housing in the countryside. The cumulative effects of this can lead to the undermining of the service role of smaller settlements, the damaging of the character of the countryside and the rural environment, the generation of increased pressures for infrastructure provision and a potential conflict with other rural land uses. This requires a policy approach which channels demand to appropriate locations within existing settlements or housing groups and which permits only exceptional developments in the open countryside.

**The main national policy and advice are highlighted below:**

- **Scottish Planning Policy 3: Planning for Homes (Revised 2008)**

This SPP focuses on "the supply and delivery of new housing, which must be of a high-quality design and contribute to the creation of sustainable places." It recommends that: "The settlement pattern is the product of generations of investment in physical infrastructure, social and cultural facilities and public amenities. Planning authorities should promote the efficient use of land and buildings. In principle this means directing the majority of new development towards sites within existing settlements to make effective use of existing infrastructure and service capacity, and reduce energy consumption, while ensuring the creation of quality residential environments."

- **Scottish Planning Policy 15: Planning for Rural Development**

With regard to Housing, this SPP “advances policy in respect of small scale rural housing developments including clusters and groups in close proximity to settlements, replacement housing, plots on which to build individually designed houses, and holiday homes.”

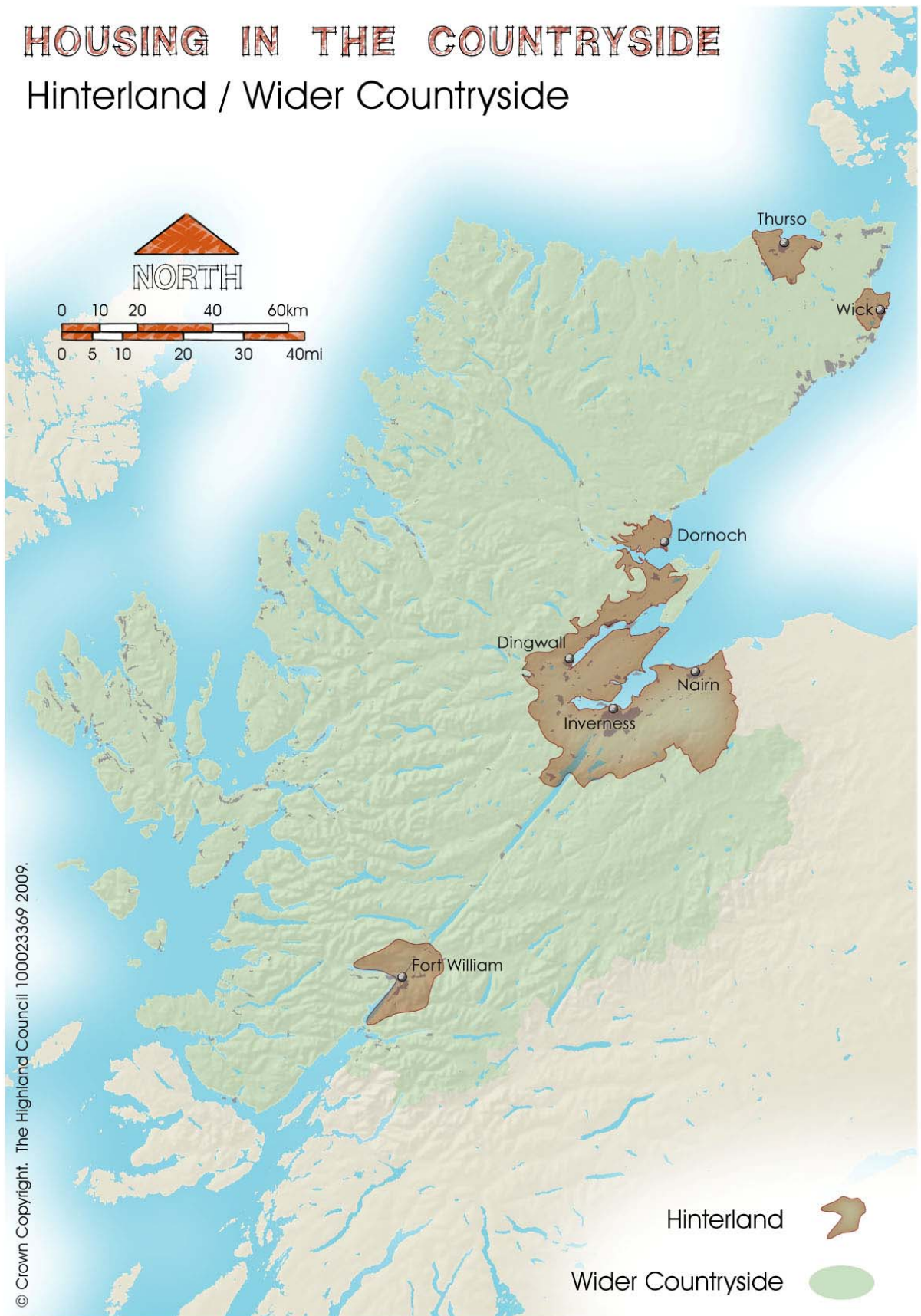
- **Planning Advice Note 72: Housing in the Countryside**

Published in 2005, this places a strong emphasis on design and quality:

“... sets out key design principles which need to be taken into account: by applicants when planning a new development and by planning authorities, when preparing development plans and supporting guidance, and determining applications. The purpose is to create more opportunities for good quality rural housing which respects Scottish landscapes and building traditions. The advice should not, however, be seen as a constraint on architects and designers wishing to pursue innovative and carefully considered contemporary designs.”

# HOUSING IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

## Hinterland / Wider Countryside



## Housing in the Countryside – Interim Supplementary Planning Guidance Feedback

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Design</b></li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local and neighbourhood should be distinctive to the area;</li> <li>- guide should not inhibit innovative and contemporary design;</li> <li>- individuality is not catered for;</li> <li>- the “high quality” “exceptional” design the HC wish to see in the countryside will not happen if the guide is slavishly adhered to;</li> <li>- should respect landscape, historic buildings and settings;</li> <li>- inclusion of draft siting and design guide would have been helpful.</li> </ul>	<p>The Siting and Design Guidance will example various designs that may be appropriate, however much of the guidance will be based on the general principles of design and siting.</p> <p>Examples will include designs that embrace sustainable design principles. Siting criteria in the guidance will address issues such as choosing an appropriate site, fit with landscape character and design within the Highland context.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Housing Groups</b></li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- need for more flexibility, too restrictive with criteria, in particular reference to undeveloped fields/land and trees in good condition, should be based on the landscapes ability to absorb the development;</li> <li>- small scale should be max of two houses not one, this allows for semi-detached (affordable) and lower build costs etc;</li> <li>- lack of choice due to restrictions;</li> <li>- 100% rule - reservations over this and what exactly it will mean – siting and design more important than some arbitrary figure;</li> </ul>	<p>The may be opportunity for the development within previously undeveloped fields where this is consistent with development of an existing housing group or meets an appropriate exception.</p> <p>The revised guidance does offer an increase in choice and opportunity for house building, adopting a more flexible approach to identification of sites. The guidance offers the potential for more than one house to be developed where potential exists, within larger groupings of houses.</p> <p>The 100% rule is intended to ensure that development is based on a delivering an acceptable level of growth on existing groups, this limit will be applied to smaller groups of less than 10 units. Siting and design are integral to the delivery of the policy and this element of the guidance may result on</p>

<p>- “rounding off” – implies rigid boundaries and does not respect the potential for organic growth – term should be removed.</p> <p>The potential for developing garden ground, the principle of being able to develop garden ground was considered ok but the practicalities were of concern – plot ratio, affect on existing neighbours, change to character of setting etc.</p>	<p>constraining development to a lesser percentage. The potential for development of larger existing dispersed groups will be assessed on their individual merits and in the context of the siting and design guidance.</p> <p>The rounding off of housing groups refers to the consolidation and growth of groups that have been established over the years reflecting the more traditional patterns of housing development related to family or work related occupation. The exceptions to the policy still allow for this type of growth for housing within the hinterland area whilst seeking to control commuter led housing development.</p> <p>The interim guidance already includes reference to the need indicates that proposals for the sub-division of garden ground should preserve the integrity of existing properties, further guidance will be incorporated in the siting and design guidance.</p>
<p>▪ <b>Affordable Housing</b></p>	
<p>- need for more social housing and affordable housing;</p> <p>- more specialised housing for elderly, special needs as well as family homes;</p> <p>- should not be a prerequisite to be a RSL provider.</p>	<p>The guidance provides an exception to policy for clearly identified affordable housing need. The type of need will be determined through needs information and will respond to the relevant shortfall in provision.</p> <p>This can take the form of housing across a full range of housing need; for the elderly, young or families.</p> <p>The policy seeks the involvement of an RSL, to facilitate the</p>

<p>_ why should affordable housing be acceptable and not a house for an individuals need?</p>	<p>delivery of affordable housing where that has been clearly identified. A variety of mechanisms for the delivery of affordable housing exists and can encompass housing for rental or low cost home ownership.</p> <p>The provision of affordable housing is an “exception” for the approval of housing to meet a clearly defined need where otherwise housing may not gain approval, this policy aspect is driven by national and local policy to assist in meeting unmet need for affordable housing.</p>
<p>▪ <b>Conversion/re-use of buildings</b></p>	
<p>- too restrictive, regarding footprint, height and materials;</p> <p>- should include all buildings not just ‘traditional’;</p> <p>- need for limited amount of new build.</p>	<p>The potential for reuse and conversion of buildings is intended to offer redevelopment opportunities, the potential scale of redevelopment is intended not to be excessive in respect of the original building, proposals will be assessed on individual merits and in the context of the siting and design guidance.</p> <p>Revisions have been made to the interim guidance to include the redevelopment of all buildings that comply with other requirements.</p> <p>The potential for elements of new build development to support redevelopment will only be considered where wider infrastructural improvements are required to progress the redevelopment.</p>

<p>▪ <b>Crofts/rural business</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- need for houses on croft land;</li> <li>- justifiable need should be removed – too restrictive.</li> </ul>	<p>In order to assist in maintaining valid crafting interests the consideration of housing related to crafting use will consider the part-time nature of crafting in assessing proposals.</p>
<p>▪ <b>Sustainable development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- new policy does not promote/stress this enough;</li> <li>- biodiversity protected areas and species – protect, enhance and extend.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- need for developers to provide landscape character assessments and protect features such as trees, dry stone walls, water etc;</li> </ul>	<p>The Council already has guidance that focuses on sustainable development and this should be considered by developers when bringing forward proposals, the Designing for Sustainability guidance addresses many issues that will overlap with the Siting and Design Guidance, also including biodiversity.</p> <p>The Siting and Design guidance should be referred to in preparing applications as this will form the basis for consideration of aspects such as fit in the landscape and retention and use of natural features.</p>
<p>▪ <b>Other comments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- hinterland boundary – why distinction as all countryside;</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- reference to recent report indicating restrictions on single house developments being overly cautious</li> </ul>	<p>The hinterland boundary relates to areas of countryside and relate to areas that are under most pressure from commuter housing. A more permissive approach is taken in countryside areas outwith the hinterland, although the siting and design of housing is of equal importance in determining proposals.</p> <p>The reviewed guidance offers the potential for the development of housing in the hinterland area within existing groups, with exceptions offering potential for single house development, within wider countryside areas development</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- services – if available this land should be allowed to be developed;</li> <li>- derelict land – should be developed before other sites;</li> <li>- sec75's – not really understood – too restrictive;</li> <li>- new settlements – agree with approach;</li> <li>- need for existing policy and guidance to be followed.</li> <li>- view the change in policy as a backward step and too permissive, this will have detrimental impact on countryside in the hinterland area</li> </ul>	<p>proposals for single house development may be acceptable; all subject to appropriate siting and design.</p> <p>Access to services will form a factor in the consideration of proposals, and forms only one factor in determining the suitability of a site for development.</p> <p>The policy, along with wider policies in the development plan, seek to encourage the development of previously used sites, however the development of these sites may present more issues to be addressed and take longer to be delivered.</p> <p>Section 75 agreements are used for the purpose of restricting or regulating the development of use of land, and form an integral and relevant part of the planning process.</p> <p>New settlements are acknowledged as having a role and these will normally be identified through development plans outwith this proposals will need to accord with strategic policy objectives.</p> <p>The development of the Housing in the Countryside guidance and supporting Siting and Design guidance provides clearer basis for decision making.</p> <p>The guidance is an interim policy document developed prior to a wider assessment of all housing policy through the Highland wide Local Development Plan. The work on the HwLDP will give opportunity to assess how the revised policy is working and ff significant development pressures on the hinterland</p>
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	areas arise, the Local Development Plan will provide a “safety net” for further review.
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