

8. KEISS



Background

The small community of Keiss (popn. 300) lies some 10 km. to the north of Wick on the John O' Groats road. Situated in a prominent position overlooking Sinclair's Bay, the village now mainly serves as a dormitory settlement for Wick, although there are opportunities at the pipeline yard at Wester. There are few employment opportunities in the community itself, although it has a reasonable level of services including primary school, shop, hotel and play facilities. Development in the village has been limited in recent years to individual houses off South Street. More development has taken place in the surrounding crofting community. In accordance with national planning policy, the Council is now stressing the need to meet the bulk of demand for new houses in existing settlements. This means identifying further land.

Although local employment is limited, the community is located on the key tourist route to John O' Groats. There may be an opportunity to take advantage of this situation. It would be prudent therefore to allocate a small area of land to meet any demand that may arise. The former garage is in a prominent location next to the A99 and the local hotel. Redevelopment for a more appropriate use would benefit local amenity.

Keiss harbour is a key part of the areas heritage. Several buildings are listed, including the "A" category harbour and warehouse. Such a resource needs to be both safeguarded and promoted. The old drying areas off High Street are also important to the amenity of the village as are the views across the bay. The approaches to the village along the A99 are straight and fast. Although there is a speed limit in the village speed reduction / traffic calming measures would be of benefit.

Community Input

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

- provide family houses and affordable housing;
- introduction of traffic calming measures;
- upgrade and improve the facilities at the harbour;
- minor road improvements and the provision of car parking; and
- maintain / establish footpaths.

Development Factors

The future development of Keiss will be shaped by several factors. There is a need to safeguard the surrounding croft land from ad hoc development. The sea clearly restricts further expansion to the south east and access to the A99 is a further constraint. The best opportunities appear to be allowing further development at South Street and to the north west of Robertson Crescent.

Objectives

The Plan seeks to:

- identify further land for housing;
- protect the open space and playing field off High Street;
- promote improvements to the harbour area;
- safeguard a site for business uses;
- protect important community, heritage and amenity features, including identification of a Conservation Area; and
- safeguard views across the bay.

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 encourage further infill housing development within the settlement*

boundary, subject to Settlement Policy H. Further development at South Road will require upgrading of the road itself and improvements to the junction with the A99.

B: Business

2. 0.1ha is allocated on the southern approaches to the village for provision of a high amenity tourist related commercial development. Access onto the A99 via South Street will require improvement.

3. The Council will encourage the relocation of the Garage to a less high profile location. The site would be suitable for business / tourist uses or housing development.

S: Special Uses

4. The Council will encourage improvements to the harbour. The community workshop suggested a need for:

- improvements to the pier;*
- provision of a picnic site*
- a scheme of environmental improvements; and*
- promoting the area as a tourist attraction.*

5. The Council will examine the scope for speed reduction / traffic calming measures on the approaches to the village as resources permit.



Photo: Potential for traffic calming

A: Amenity

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

- (a) Open space off the High Street; and*
- (b) Playing field / play area at the school.*

Environmental Action

7. The Council proposes to designate Keiss Harbour as a Conservation Area. Separate statutory advertisement and consultation would be required.