

Highland wide Local Development Plan - Main Issues Report Consultation Summary and Actions Sheet

Reference Number:	HWLDP-MIR-230
Organisation/Individual:	Graham Dunbar

Action:

Immediate Response Required	
Meeting required with Respondent	
Issue for Area Local Development Plan	
Further Information Required	
Other (Please Specify)	

If no box ticked - issues raised will be dealt with in preparation of the Proposed Plan.

Issues Raised in Response:

Purpose of Main Issues Report		Previously used Land	
NPF2 for Scotland		Wild Land	
Vision for the Highlands		Water Environment	
Inverness and A96	x	Renewable Energy	
The A96 Corridor		Flooding	
Phasing of Development		Waste Management	
Developer Contributions		Air Quality	
East Inverness		Sustainable Design	
Nairn	x	Business and Industrial Land	
Tornagrain		Accessibility and Transport	
Smaller Settlements in A96		Agricultural Land	
Caithness and North Sutherland		Subdivision of Existing Crofts	
Easter Ross and Nigg		Allocation of Inbye Land	
Development of Local Centres		New Crofting Township	
Wider Countryside and Fragile Areas		Small Scale New Crofts	
Population and Housing	x	Coastal Development	
Housing in the Countryside		Forestry and Woodland	
Affordable Housing		Minerals	
Planning for an Ageing Population		Open Space and Physical Activity	
Gypsies/Travellers		Access to the Outdoors	
Retailing		Comments on Consultation Process (+ve)	
Developer Contributions		Comments on Consultation Process (-ve)	
Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage			

Key:

Background	Spatial Strategy	Policy Options	Consultation
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Notes:

Does not take full account of current economic climate
 Justification needed for population growth
 Environmental issues should be addressed regarding the A96 dualling
 Real needs of area need to be investigated fully

Action Sheet Completed by:	SH
Date:	10/12/09

Kirsty McCreath

From: Graham
Sent: 09 November 2009 10:01
To: devplans
Subject: response

Please find attached a personal response to the Highland wide Local Development Plan Main Issues report, Aug 2009

Regards
Graham

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This paper is purely a private and personal view of the document and does not reflect the views of BCC or any other organisation. I have no planning or development expertise and neither do I have any interest in the Plan other than being a member of a family resident of Balloch, and a proprietor of a UK wide business based in Balloch.

1 Overview of the Plan

My basic objection to the Plan is that it is a very detailed plan that does not take into account, nor makes any real reference to, the current economic climate in the Highlands, Scotland and the UK at large. Recent (Oct 2009) figures reveal that the UK is still in recession, that this recession is the longest ever in the UK, UK national debt is now measured in trillions of pounds and whatever economic recovery will come it is likely to be fragile, slow and protracted.

Speculation has it that the full impact of recovery measures will not be known until after the next Westminster elections in 2010 and the picture in Scotland is fairly gloomy with our economy currently shrinking and Highland Council hinting at a range of cuts.

Some sectors, in particular financial lenders, retail, and real estate developers have taken a massive hit.

The developments of housing, business and retail units, outlined in the plan, and the infra-structure necessary to support them adequately will require finance that just is not available in the foreseeable future.

The plan is not a real-world 2009 onwards solution and does no credit to Highland Council; spending public money to colour in maps is not what is needed.

Residents and other interested parties need a clear, flexible strategic vision that can be adapted to take advantage of economic improvements as they occur, and, furthermore this vision should be based on the real needs of residents and other interested parties, present and future.

I would urge anyone reading the document to be cautious and apply some out-of-the-box thinking to their deliberations. Highland Council has drawn up a detailed technical plan outlining what they consider should happen, as lay people (the ones directly affected by it) we can now comment on it.

2 More detailed objections

I have a problem in spending time commenting on a document which is fundamentally flawed and which should be rejected.

However, there are elements of thinking within it that I believe need discussion before a proper strategic vision for the Highland Region and for Scotland can be realised.

2.1 The New Clearances

The plan proposes a high population increase for what it terms the A96 corridor and which I call Greater Inverness, there is no indication where these extra people will come from and what demographic they will form. It is likely that this Greater Inverness will lead to depopulation in more fragile areas of the Highlands and Islands, some alternatives are proposed but no overall strategy for area is forthcoming. The best alternative in the plan appears to be the developments to the North of Inverness but I am sure that Dingwall, Tain, Dornoch etc residents, and those travelling over the Kessock Bridge, have their own views on this.

The Greater Inverness solution is a very non-Scottish proposal, our scattered Highland and Islands communities need support to continue their way of life. For these communities and their culture to be sustainable will take effort and resources, Greater Inverness will just encourage a new round of economic clearances.

Our own community of Balloch urgently requires community facilities; we know this from soliciting the views of all residents. This village and other similar settlements will be subsumed into a Greater Inverness meaning that even less will be provided in the way of genuinely local amenities for the community at large and especially for its more vulnerable residents. Repeated suggestions for community developments in Balloch have been refused; it would be helpful if Highland Council was to propose what type of community resource it would support.

Note..are we also seeing the first stage of a political plan to separate Inverness from the rest of the region, if so can this be discussed openly?

2.2 Population content

Thought must also be given to the new population having a large percentage of retirement age persons with all the imbalances that brings to the economic structure of the area and the social/medical support needed. Will new hospitals, surgeries, care homes etc be included in the resources set aside?

Recruitment of professionals, especially young professionals, into Highland is difficult at present; Greater Inverness will need an increase that at present looks unattainable.

More work should be done on creating quality, sustainable employment in the whole of Scotland and especially in the Highlands and islands, and then population levels can be properly managed

The communications infra-structure necessary for hi-tech industries (and sustainable development is likely to include a high proportion of these) to prosper is just non-existent, the Highlands are third-world at best, mobile phone coverage is poor, broad-band speeds are appalling. Percentage figures disguise real pockets of technological deprivation in the Highland region.

Let us get employment strategies right first, houses for people with no work is totally the wrong way round

2.3 A96 and the environment

There is a proposal to dual the A96 for some sections. Current wisdom is that most such schemes just move traffic more quickly to the next bottleneck. The scheme would also make relatively short local

journeys within the area much more difficult by having to cross and join a high speed highway. Examples for us would be Balloch to Alturlie, Ardersier to Croy etc etc .

However the greatest objection to the A96 improvements and corridor developments may be that encouraging a vast increase of commuting into Inverness must have a massive environmental impact and is at variance with all reasonable current thinking.

Land use is also a major issue to consider...quoting from very cogent arguments raised in the recent Nairn open meeting (he thought) ' it foolish to build on agricultural land given the dangers to the country's food supply in the future.'

We know that agricultural businesses face very real problems at present but clearing good productive land for housing seems very short-sighted....surely better solutions to food production and land utilisation could be sought.

I would like to add my personal views on the proposals for Nairn which seem to me to be a way of destroying a very charming Highland town.

Is this relevant to Balloch? It is because Nairn and other places like it are the only ones where Balloch residents can go to enjoy facilities such as playparks and a lively programme of events. (Our children can, of course, also go to Whin Park in Inverness and enjoy the excellent large-scale wooden play equipment and benches etc all imported from Germany)

Others have also raised objections based on the area's attraction as a tourist destination and that this is bound to be ruined by ribbon development. Tourism to me is a complicated issue and I do not favour an over-reliance on it as an area's means of support, however it has to be recognised as a contributor to the area's economic viability.

2.4 Highland Boundary

I am happy to accept that Highland Council's remit does not extend beyond the local authority area, but also to note that this is at times an entirely artificial boundary.

A development of the A96 corridor could certainly impact on the towns and communities eastward along the Moray Firth just as the Inverness retail park has already. Do we want all the Moray Coast population, greatly increased in the plan, all driving along the new A96 super-highway to Inverness Tesco to shop?

Some consultation and genuine area-wide planning is needed outwith the Highland Council boundary

Conclusion

This is a plan that is planner and developer centred, perhaps what is required is for the real needs of the area to be investigated fully, infra-structures put in place and resources identified as and when they become available. This may well require expertise and input from those outside Highland Council