

Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan

Plana Leasachaidh Ionadail Gallaibh agus Cataibh



Main Issues
Report
Aithisg nam
Prìomh Chùisean

Comments Beachdan

We would like you to tell us what you think about our initial vision, strategy, policy and site preferences. For example, if you think that a site is unsuitable then tell us about any other sites that you think are more suitable for development. You may feel that certain issues need to be addressed to enable development to happen.

The easiest way to read this Main Issues Report is to view the interactive version of the Main Issues Report www.highland.gov.uk/casplan.

You can then submit comments by either:

- Clicking on the speech bubble on each page of the interactive version of the MIR; or
- Visiting our website and click on "make comments on the Main Issues Report".

If you are not able to use our website or do not have access to a computer please contact the Development Plans Team and we will provide an alternative method for you to submit your comments.

All comments must be received by us by **12 noon on Thursday 29 January 2015**.

The website also includes details of events that are being held during the consultation on this plan.

Contact Cuir Fios Gu

If you would like to speak to a member of the Development Plans Team please do not hesitate to contact us:

Email:

casplan@highland.gov.uk



“ The Main Issues Report is an important stage in the preparation of the new Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan. It sets out priorities for things such as employment, housing, town centres and the environment.

It is essential that everyone gets involved at this stage; this is your chance to help shape the future of the places where you live and work. ”

Councillor Deirdre Mackay

**Chair, Caithness and Sutherland
Area Committee**

Contact Service Centre:

01349 886606

Or by post:

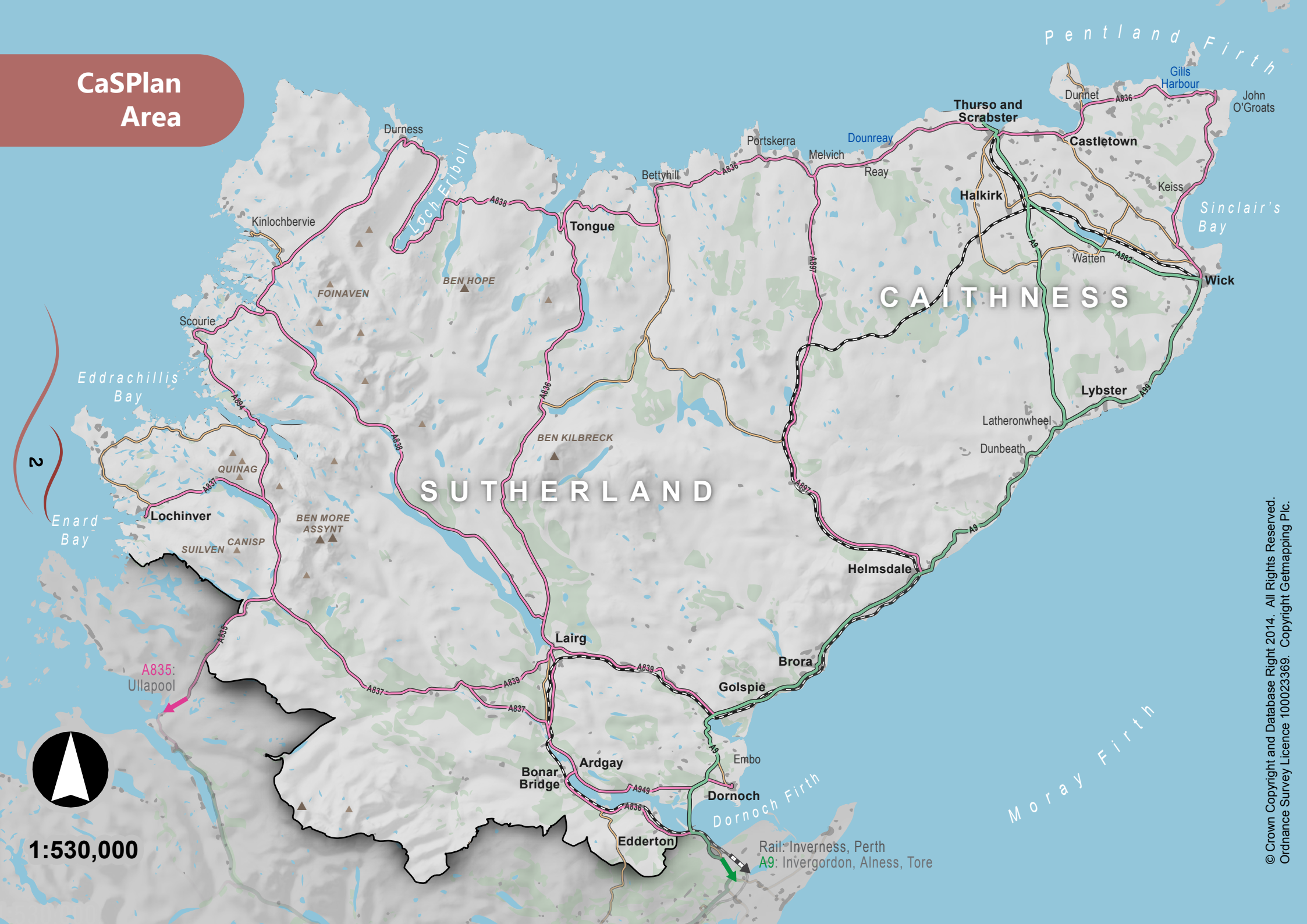
Development Plans Team,
Development & Infrastructure Service,
Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road,
Inverness, IV3 5NX

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CaSPlan Area



2



1:530,000

Rail: Inverness, Perth
A9: Invergordon, Alness, Tore

1. Vision and Strategy

Lèirsinn agus Ro-innleachd

1.1 This Main Issues Report (MIR) is an important consultation stage in the preparation of a new Caithness & Sutherland Local Development Plan, which we will be calling CaSPlan.

1.2 This section of the MIR presents a set of outcomes that it is hoped CaSPlan can deliver. It also sets out a suggested strategy for how and where the Caithness and Sutherland area should develop over the next 20 years. We would like people to tell us what they think about these.

1.3 Sections 2 to 6 of the MIR include a series of questions about the main issues affecting people and places in the area. Section 7 asks where future development should be located. Each question has options for dealing with the main issues including a preferred option for your consideration. These are the questions and options that we are seeking people's views on through this consultation. Once the consultation period has closed on 29 January 2015, we will consider the comments received carefully before drawing up the Proposed CaSPlan.

1.4 To help us prepare this MIR we have also prepared a [Monitoring Statement](#) and an [Environmental Report](#) which set out background information on the main issues and the development options. For more information on why and how we prepare development plans, please read our [Development Plans homepage](#).

Issue 1a – A Vision for Caithness & Sutherland in 2035

1.5 The [Highland-wide Local Development Plan \(HwLDP\)](#) has already set out a broad vision and spatial strategy for Caithness and Sutherland, which provides a starting point for preparing the CaSPlan. However, following discussions with a range of communities and partners we think it is also important to agree what outcomes CaSPlan should be aiming to achieve for the Caithness and Sutherland area.

1.6 To do this we have taken the relevant outcomes and actions from the [Highland Community Planning Partnership's Single Outcome Agreement \(SOA\)](#). We have tried to make sure that these outcomes reflect the priorities identified by all sectors of the community in Caithness and Sutherland. These have been checked against other organisations' priorities, and simplified down to four themed outcomes tailored to this Plan.

These four outcomes are the suggested vision for CaSPlan - they reflect the Highland Single Outcome Agreement.

1.7 These outcomes make up our suggested vision - and our preferred option - for CaSPlan in 2035.

Issue 1a -What should Caithness & Sutherland be like in 2035?

Option 1 - The Preferred Vision

Employment: go to Section 3, page 19

A strong and diverse economy characterised by a renowned centre for renewable energy, world class engineering, traditional land and sea based industries and a tourist industry that combines culture, history and adventure.

Growing Communities: go to Section 4, page 22

A network of successful, sustainable and socially inclusive communities where people want to live, which provide the most convenient access to services, education, training and employment and are the primary locations for inward investment.

Connectivity and Transport: go to Section 5, page 25

Enhanced communications, utilities and transport infrastructure that support communities and economic growth, with development anchored to existing or planned provision.

Environment and Heritage: go to Section 6, page 27

High quality places where the natural, built and cultural heritage is celebrated and valued assets are safeguarded.

Reasons:

These four outcomes are our preferred vision for Caithness and Sutherland because we think they would best support both the Council's Programme and the SOA. They also provide a stronger connection to the suggested actions outlined in this Plan.

Option 2 – An Alternative Vision

As an alternative we could carry forward the existing [HwLDP](#) Vision for the Caithness and Sutherland area, which is summarised below.

By 2030, Caithness and Sutherland will:

- be a regenerating place with a network of strong communities;
- be a competitive place connected to the global economy;
- be a connected and accessible place;
- be a place of outstanding heritage: safe in the custody of local people;
- be a centre of excellence for energy and engineering;
- have become an international centre of excellence for marine renewables
- have a high quality tourist industry; and
- have a more diverse economy.

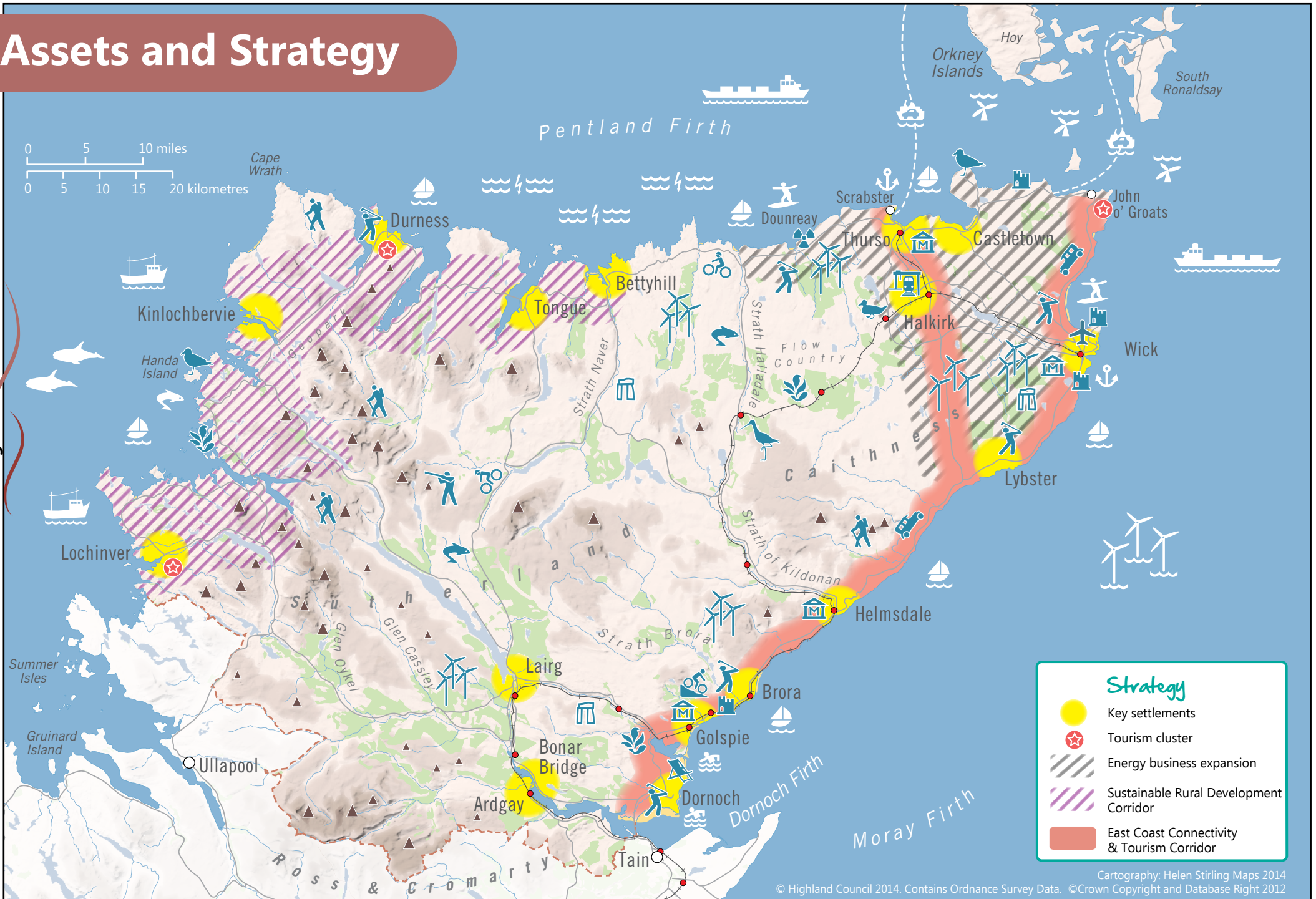
Reasons:

This option is only an alternative because the [HwLDP](#) vision is less up to date and has not been prepared in the context of the Single Outcome Agreement 3.

Question 1a

Do you agree with the preferred vision for Caithness and Sutherland?
Is there anything missing or requiring to be changed?

Assets and Strategy



Issue 1b – The Strategy for CaSPlan

1.8 Caithness and Sutherland are the two most northerly parts of Highland and the British mainland and they are characterised by a unique landscape and coastal setting. Their location presents many challenges but make them well placed to take advantage of a number of opportunities. Tourism, aquaculture, renewable energy and the service industry play a strong role in the local job market.

1.9 However, new stable and skilled jobs must be found to replace those lost as Dounreay is decommissioned and new connections set up to the world wide economy. Opportunities for work, training and education must be provided for local people to stay in the area. Development and regeneration cannot take place at a cost to the outstanding built, natural and cultural heritage. New homes also need to be delivered to accommodate demand, including an ageing population, and to build the economy.

1.10 The [HwLDP](#) already provides a number of policies which seek to address these priority issues. The spatial strategy for CaSPlan needs to reflect how this can be done at the local level.

Issue 1b - What should the strategy for CaSPlan be?

Option 1 - The Preferred Strategy

The map on the previous page shows our suggested spatial strategy for CaSPlan together with key local assets. The spatial strategy seeks to address the headline issues within the area. These are based on our 4 key outcomes: employment, communities, connectivity, and environment. The main spatial elements of the strategy include:

- Focusing new development within Principal Growth Areas;
- Increasing the vibrancy and vitality of town centres;
- Improving the transport infrastructure along the East Coast;
- Maximising the benefits of Energy Business Expansion in the north east;
- Protecting and enhancing the unique natural environment;
- Promoting and supporting Tourism along the East Coast Corridor and within the Sustainable Rural Development Corridor; and
- Strengthening the links between marine and terrestrial planning.

The following sections of the MIR present options for achieving these and delivering the outcomes for Caithness and Sutherland.

Question 1b

Do you agree with the strategy for CaSPlan and the priorities it reflects from above?

Is the strategy well illustrated in the map?

Do you think the Strategy will deliver the outcomes in Section 1a?

2. The Main Issues

Na Prìomh Chùisean

2.1 To deliver the vision and strategy set out in Section 1 we have identified a range of issues that need to be addressed. This section outlines four general issues that relate to all of the proposed outcomes for the Caithness & Sutherland area:

- a the need for housing land and the distribution of new housing;
- b how we direct future development;
- c tying in with marine and coastal development; and
- d creating a Carbon CLEVER Caithness & Sutherland.

2.2 Sections 3 to 6 cover more detail on the main issues for delivering the four outcomes reflected in our vision – Employment, Growing Communities, Transport & Connectivity and Environment.

Issue 2a - Housing needs in Caithness & Sutherland

2.3 The Scottish Government expects us to provide a generous supply of land for new homes to meet a diverse range of housing needs. CaSPlan will need to set out details of land considered to be suitable to meet these needs.

To meet housing needs we suggest that most new housing land is directed towards allocated sites in the main settlements as shown in Section 7.

2.4 We use the Highland Council Housing Needs and Demand Assessment (HNDA) to tell us how many homes are needed, so that we can ensure the plan provides enough suitable land. Our [Monitoring Statement](#) sets out further information on housing needs and shows that there is currently enough land within sites recognised in existing local plans and additional “windfall sites” to accommodate the current and future need for new homes.

2.5 We estimate that the preferred sites identified in this MIR are sufficient to accommodate around 2250 new homes, in addition to which CaSPlan would support some new homes in suitable locations on non-allocated (windfall) sites. This would be sufficient to meet requirements for the first ten years (2016 to 2026) and for an indicative longer term supply. This is considered to be a generous supply of housing land in accordance with Scottish Planning Policy.

2.6 The Council's [Housing Strategy](#) guides our, and our partners', investment in new social housing. Within the Plan area there are two communities which are a priority for investment: Dornoch and Lochinver. This is noted in Section 7 Settlement Plans.

Issue 2a - How should we plan to meet housing needs?

Option 1 – The Preferred approach

Our preferred approach is to:

- 1 Identify development allocations along with assumptions on windfall development to meet the overall housing needs set out in the accompanying [Monitoring Statement](#).
- 2 If more up to date information on housing needs is published through the Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA) we will take this into account in the next stage of the plan, known as the Proposed Plan.
- 3 Work with partners to enable the delivery of affordable housing, with a particular focus on Dornoch and Lochinver.

Reasons:

This is our preferred option because:

- The amount of housing land identified in CaSPlan will be based on the most up to date HNDA.
- This approach will meet identified housing needs.

Option 2 – Non-preferred approach

We could instead:

Base the CaSPlan only on the housing needs identified in the current HNDA, even if more up to date information becomes available.

Reason:

This is not preferred because we don't think this is a reasonable approach whilst we have yet to make decisions on the contents of the Proposed Plan.

Question 2a

What do you think about the suggested approach to meeting housing land requirements across the Plan area?

Issue 2b - Managing Growth

2.7 Scottish Planning Policy and the [Highland-wide Local Development Plan](#) favour new development in and around existing settlements and town centre locations. This approach has a number of benefits including:

- reducing the need to travel;
- making the best use of capacity in existing infrastructure;
- supporting community facilities and services; and
- minimising the impacts of development on the landscape and natural environment.

2.8 Previous local plans have approached the growth of settlements by defining Settlement Development Area (SDA) boundaries to contain development within existing towns and villages and on individual allocated sites.

2.9 We think CaSPlan should provide clarity about how each place can grow in the future but it should also be a concise document that is easy for people to use. We think this means that more detail should be provided for the larger settlements where the majority of new development is being directed. Whereas, in smaller settlements more general guidance could be used to determine the suitability of new development proposals.

2.10 The Inner Moray Firth Proposed Local Development Plan includes a new approach to managing development in smaller settlements. Policy 3 Other Settlements proposes a set of criteria for determining planning applications in smaller settlements rather than allocating specific sites for development in the Local Development Plan. The preferred option below is based on this approach. However, in the longer term this issue will need to be considered through the review of the [Highland-wide Local Development Plan](#) which begins later this year. In the meantime to cover this issue we have suggested a similar policy for inclusion in CaSPlan.

2.11 The next stage of CaSPlan – the Proposed Plan – will need to include information on the issues to be addressed and infrastructure required to support new development. Some issues have been identified in Section 7 but we have not been able to list all of these requirements at this stage. We will be working with key agencies and partners to identify these more fully. We also encourage anyone with views on such issues to raise these through the MIR consultation.

2.12 We think communities should have the opportunity to collaborate with the Council in preparing their own guidance for their settlement, based on the issues and placemaking priorities set out in CaSPlan. We therefore ask people to review the issues and placemaking priorities for their settlement, and for any communities interested in taking this approach to let us know through the MIR consultation.

Issue 2b - How should CaSPlan manage new growth?

Option 1 – The Preferred approach (further details in paragraphs 2.13 to 2.21)

Our preferred approach is to adopt a three tier hierarchy for managing new development through CaSPlan:

- 1 We propose to identify sites suitable for development, known as development allocations, within specific Settlement Development Areas (SDA) and Economic Development Areas (EDA). These areas are shown in Section 7.
- 2 For the 'Growing Settlements' listed in paragraph 2.16 we propose to assess new development proposals against a list of considerations in our 'preferred option' policy (further described in paragraph 2.18) to ensure that new development is appropriate to the location and to provide criteria for any settlement briefs prepared.
- 3 For all other areas we propose to assess planning applications through [HwLDP Policy 36](#), and [HwLDP Policy 35](#) in the case of housing in the Hinterland of Tain.

Reasons:

This is our preferred option because we think:

- Site allocations in SDAs and EDAs are the best way to direct development towards the locations that are considered to be most suitable for new development.
- The criteria for Growing Settlements provide measures for determining the suitability of development proposals and for preparing Development Briefs and Masterplans in these named settlements.
- This approach can ensure that new development in the countryside is planned carefully, taking into account matters such as landscape character and the ability to provide services. The area designated under [HwLDP Policy 35](#) is required to prevent an excess of rural housing development in the Hinterland of Tain, which includes countryside around Dornoch, Embo and Edderton.

Our preferred approach also means that CaSPlan can be as brief and succinct as possible and easy to use.

Option 2 – An Alternative approach

We could instead: follow the preferred approach but include or exclude certain settlements from particular approaches, and/or, follow the preferred approach except using one of the alternative approaches for the Growing Settlements policy set out in paragraph 2.18.

Option 3 – An Alternative approach

We could instead: Carry forward the existing settlement policy approach unchanged from previous local plans.

Reasons:

Options 2 and 3 are not preferred because monitoring data indicates that take up of the existing sites allocated for development has been poor. This makes it appropriate that we review the situation.

Question 2b

Do you agree with the suggested approach to managing growth through CaSPlan?

Further details are set out below.

Further details on our suggested approach to managing growth

Development Allocations (within specific SDAs and EDAs)

2.13 Development allocations provide certainty that an adequate supply of suitable land will be available for development. Our suggested approach proposes that certain larger settlements or areas listed below should include sites allocated for specified uses. Other small-scale developments may also be suitable as well as these allocations. Settlements or areas where we propose to allocate land have been selected based on:

- the degree of need for housing within the area as defined in the Housing Needs and Demand Assessment and [Housing Strategy](#);
- the degree to which the settlement acts as a service centre for the surrounding area;
- the appropriateness of defining a Settlement Development Area considering the existing built form of the settlement, opportunities, constraints and the degree of pressure for development;
- in the case of Economic Development Areas, the need to provide more information on future economic development potential in those areas.

2.14 We propose to apply this approach to the places listed below. Placemaking priorities and maps of these areas are provided in Section 7 of this document, together with options for future development for SDAs, for you to comment on.

Settlement Development Areas (SDAs)		
Ardgay	Bonar Bridge	Brora
Castletown	Dornoch	Edderton
Golspie	Halkirk	Helmsdale
Lairg	Lochinver	Lybster
Thurso/Scrabster	Tongue	Wick

Economic Development Areas (EDAs)	
Dounreay	Gills Harbour

Growing Settlements

2.15 Our suggested approach proposes that in the “Growing Settlements” identified below, planning applications for development should be guided by a new policy containing general criteria, combined with issues and placemaking priorities tailored to that particular settlement. Development will also need to take account of the Development Factors that we propose to identify in the Proposed Plan. Our preferred policy provides a series of factors for assessing development proposals on matters such as the type, scale, siting and design of development. The issues and placemaking priorities tailored to each Growing Settlement are provided in Section 7 of this document.

2.16 We propose to apply this approach to the following:

Growing Settlements		
Bettyhill	Dunbeath	Dunnet
Durness	Embo	John O’Groats
Keiss	Kinlochbervie	Latheronwheel
Melvich	Portskerra	Reay
Scourie	Watten	

2.17 We do not propose to have maps showing the boundaries of these Growing Settlements and their potential development sites within CaSPlan. However, where it is felt appropriate CaSPlan could be accompanied by settlement briefs, following the issues, placemaking priorities and development factors set out in the Plan, which would provide more detail to guide development. These briefs would not be part of the Plan, but CaSPlan will provide the necessary “hook” to enable them to be prepared in the future where it is felt there would be benefit in doing one. This trigger would come if, for example, there was significant developer interest in a settlement. This approach should help provide more flexibility for settlements which have experienced low levels of development pressure. The preparation of such settlement briefs might be led by developers, landowners or the community in agreement with the Council, or by the Council themselves.

2.18 Our preferred policy for guiding development in the Growing Settlements, and alternatives, are set out below. Tell us what you think under Question 2b.

Issue 2b - Policy for Growing Settlements

Option 1 – The Preferred policy

Bettyhill, Dunbeath, Dunnet, Durness, Embo, John O’Groats, Keiss, Kinlochbervie, Latheronwheel, Melvich, Portskerra, Reay, Scourie, Watten.

Development proposals that are contained within, round off or consolidate the Growing Settlements (listed above) will be assessed against the extent to which they:

- take account of the issues and placemaking priorities (listed in Section 7) and development factors (to be included in the Proposed Plan);
- are likely to help sustain facilities in that settlement;
- are compatible in terms of use, spacing, character and density with development within that settlement;

- can utilise spare, existing capacity in the infrastructure network (education, roads, other transport, water, sewerage etc.) within that settlement or new/ improved infrastructure could be provided in a cost efficient manner;
- avoid a net loss of amenity / recreational areas significant to the local community; and
- would not result in an adverse impact on any other locally important heritage feature (which may include a war memorial, burial ground, important public viewpoint/vista or open space).

Proposals which demonstrate overall conformity with the above criteria will be in accordance with this policy.

Option 2 – Alternative policy: More rigid approach

Using the policy approach in the Preferred Option above but require that for development to be supported it must meet all of the criteria.

Option 3 – Alternative policy: More flexible approach

Using the policy approach in the Preferred Option (Option 1) above but specify that for development to be supported it only needs to meet some or certain criteria.

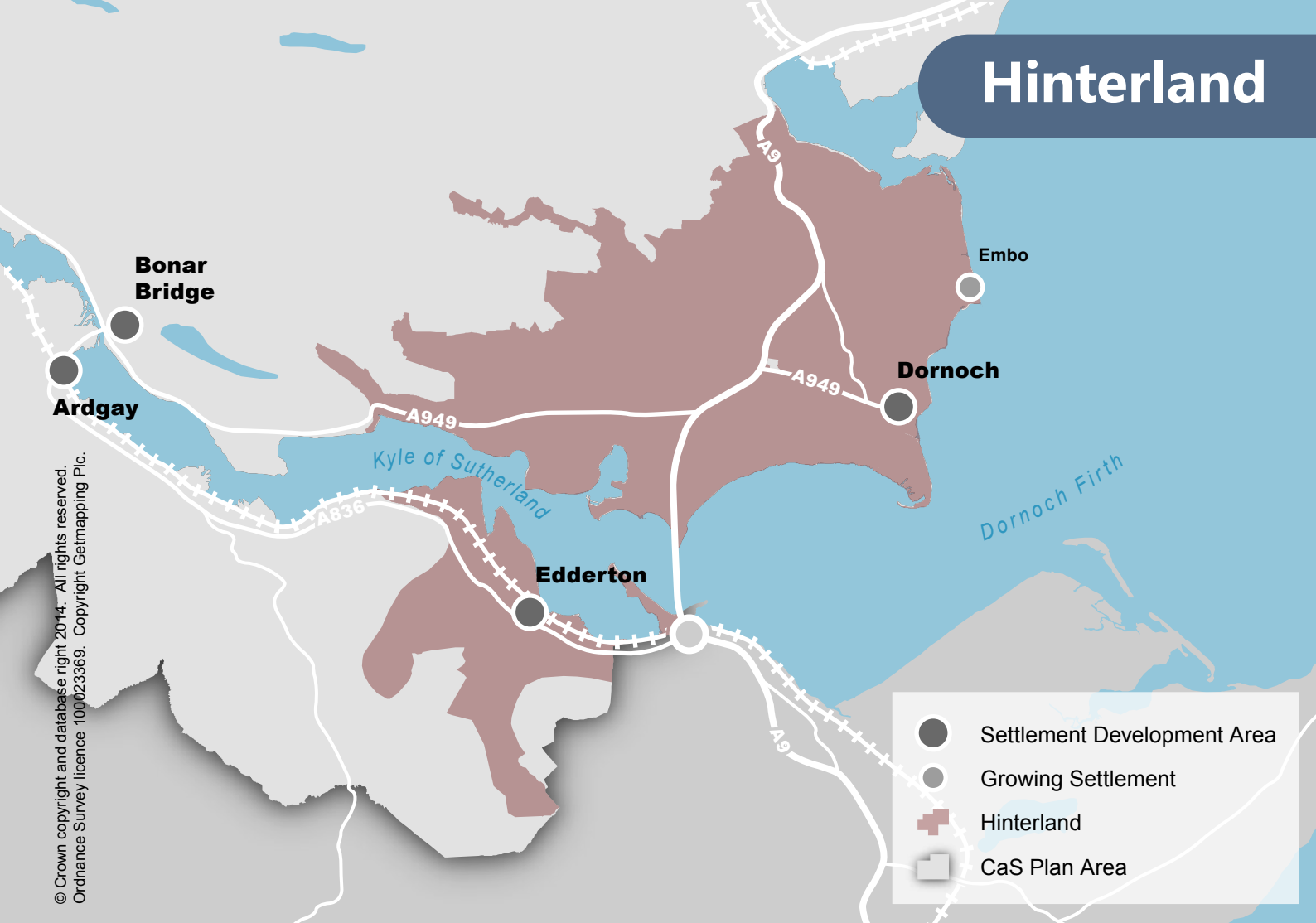
Elsewhere

2.19 Our suggested approach proposes that, within other parts of the Plan area including the smallest housing groups or open countryside, planning applications for development will be assessed under [HwLDP Policy 36](#) (or any policy that supersedes this through the review of the [HwLDP](#)). This policy provides a checklist of considerations to make sure new development does not harm the character of rural areas.

2.20 The exception to this approach would be that housing proposals within the hinterland of Tain would continue to be assessed under Policy 35 of the [HwLDP](#) which deals with Housing in the Countryside. Policy 35 sets out a more restrictive approach than Policy 36 for an area of countryside which includes the areas around Dornoch, Embo and Edderton as shown on the map below. Our preferred option does not propose any changes to the extent of the hinterland area boundary.

2.21 We propose to apply this approach to the areas defined as countryside under Policy 36 of the [HwLDP](#) and to the area defined under Policy 35 Housing in the Countryside:

“Countryside” Policies
HwLDP Policy 36 - Wider Countryside
HwLDP Policy 35 - Housing in the Countryside (Hinterland around Tain)



Issue 2c – Our marine and coastal environment

2.22 Highland’s marine activities are thriving. They include commercial shipping through established ports and harbours, plus fishing, aquaculture, tourism, leisure and recreation activities. All of these rely on the quality of our marine waters and coastal environment; they also have a role in maintaining these qualities to support sustainable economic development.

2.23 The policy framework for marine planning is evolving at both national and regional levels, with the development of a National Marine Plan and subsequent Regional Marine Plans. However, Regional Marine Plans are several years from being prepared and the Regional Marine Partnerships who will have responsibility for delivering these plans are yet to be formed.

2.24 Given the growth of various maritime industries around our coasts, including offshore renewable energy in Caithness and Sutherland, and the timescales for national and regional policy development, some policy steer is required at the local level to shape where growth sectors can develop. CaSPlan also needs to address the relationship between land use and marine planning. We think that CaSPlan should do this by supporting the integration of marine and coastal development through policies, guidance and land allocations.

2.25 We specifically propose that the CaSPlan includes a policy in support of marine renewables and, alongside, a link to a Highland-wide Aquaculture Strategy to be prepared as supplementary guidance. In addition, the Council is one of three key partners developing a [Pilot Pentland Firth and Orkney Waters Marine Spatial Plan](#) which is proposed to be adopted as Supplementary Guidance. It will steer applications along the north Caithness and Sutherland coastline.

2.26 Finally, we propose that CaSPlan identifies land and infrastructure to support offshore development. To this end, the Council has sought suggestions for onshore sites to support the marine renewables industry, and this MIR suggests some land allocations to support these uses.

Issue 2c - How should we plan the marine and coastal environment?

Option 1 – The Preferred approach

Our preferred option for managing the marine and coastal environment is to:

- 1 allocate some sites for the onshore elements of marine sectors especially marine renewables;
- 2 prepare an Aquaculture Strategy to be adopted as Supplementary Guidance to the [Highland-wide Local Development Plan](#);
- 3 adopt the [Pilot Pentland Firth and Orkney Waters Marine Spatial Plan](#) as Supplementary Guidance; and
- 4 to include a policy for marine renewables in the revised [Highland-wide Local Development Plan](#).

Reasons:

This option is preferred because:

- It helps support viable economic opportunities for employment, particularly in the burgeoning field of wave and tidal marine renewable development on the north coast;
- It helps protect the character and special qualities of the coastal zone from inappropriate development;
- It provides a range of mechanisms to help deliver integrated terrestrial and marine planning, as required by various planning legislation and evolving marine policy;
- The [Pilot Pentland Firth and Orkney Waters Marine Spatial Plan](#) provides a useful framework to integrate marine and coastal development along the north Highland coast;
- It supports the spatial strategy and outcomes proposed for CaSPlan.

Option 2 – An Alternative approach

No alternative approach is proposed.

Question 2c

What do you think about the suggested approach to marine and coastal development?

Issue 2d – A Carbon CLEVER Caithness & Sutherland

2.27 The Council is committed to mitigating our impact on climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, to taking steps to adapt to the unavoidable impacts of a changing climate and to working with the community to respond to climate change.

2.28 We believe that the Caithness and Sutherland area has a vital contribution to make towards achieving our ambitious aim of a low carbon Highlands by 2025.

2.29 The area already plays a significant part in this. Peatland is a vital carbon store and Caithness and Sutherland's peatland resource is of international importance. Alternative fuels and heating options are important and the district heating scheme in Wick and the biomass boilers being widely implemented in Council buildings are examples of what is already being achieved. The area also has substantial renewable energy resource, with many onshore wind and hydro energy developments already in the area and offshore and marine energy developments being planned.

2.30 We think there is opportunity for the area to continue to develop in a [Carbon CLEVER](#) way. Through planning we can help safeguard important peatland resources. We can also plan carefully for energy generation from a range of types of renewable resource. We can work with developers to identify potential for low or zero carbon heating and district heating schemes, by making use of the [Scotland Heat Map](#) which provides information on heat demand and supply opportunities. These actions can supplement approaches mentioned elsewhere in this MIR, and be guided by CaSPlan together with existing policies in the [HwLDP](#). This includes where developments are located, how they can incorporate sustainable design and how places can be improved in order to help people access services. A forthcoming review of the [HwLDP](#) and a forthcoming revision of the [Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance](#) will enable us to consider whether those documents require amendment and we will consult with the public on them.

Issue 2d - How should we plan for a low carbon Caithness and Sutherland?

Option 1 – The Preferred approach

Our preferred option for planning for a low carbon Caithness and Sutherland is to:

- 1 Continue to safeguard peatland resources through Policy 55 of the [HwLDP](#) and consider, through review of [HwLDP](#), whether that policy should be strengthened.
- 2 Continue to plan for a wide range of renewable energy developments through Policy 67 of the [HwLDP](#), with particular encouragement to the marine renewables sector through CaSPlan.
- 3 Revise the [Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance](#) and consult on it.
- 4 Encourage developers to consider options for low or zero carbon heating and district heating schemes, through pre-application discussions.
- 5 Use our existing policies in [HwLDP](#) and our preferred approach to managing growth through CaSPlan in order to deliver sustainable development.

Reasons:

This option is preferred because:

- It recognises the potential contribution of both the overall distribution of growth and the design of individual developments as being important to achieving a low carbon area;
- It acknowledges that energy developments can have both positive and negative considerations from the point of view of carbon issues;
- It provides opportunity to use the [Scotland Heat Map](#).

Option 2 – An Alternative approach

No alternative approach is proposed.

Question 2d

What do you think about the suggested approach to planning for a low carbon Caithness and Sutherland?

3. Employment Cosnadh

Outcome: A strong and diverse economy characterised by a renowned centre for renewable energy, world class engineering, traditional land and sea based industries and a tourist industry that combines culture, history and adventure.

Challenge: For more than 50 years, the economy of Caithness and North Sutherland has been driven largely by the Dounreay Nuclear Research Facility which is planned to be decommissioned to what is known as the Interim End State by around 2025. The dramatic landscape of the area also supports tourism and more traditional work on land and sea. To deliver change, CaSPlan must support inward investment which retains the high level of knowledge and skills and generates wider career choices.

Issue 3 – Strong and diverse economy

3.1 [Scottish Planning Policy \(SPP\)](#) requires us to promote business and industrial development that increases economic activity while safeguarding the natural and built environments.

3.2 Previous local plans have supported the diversification of the economy and the expansion of a more varied labour market. These plans looked mainly towards building the primary industries and the promotion of the area as a tourist destination. This was partly in response to the decommissioning of Dounreay which has been considered as the main reason for a decline in overall job numbers within the Plan area. On the other hand, the [Monitoring Statement](#) also shows that the percentage of jobs dependent upon Dounreay has decreased from 15% to 10% since 2006, and the number of new businesses being created on the rise.

3.3 Investment in renewable energy generation in North Highland is not only helping to meet Council and national climate change targets but it is also offering substantial economic benefits for the area. Onshore wind has grown significantly over recent years, particularly in the south and north east of the Plan area.

3.4 This Plan now provides an opportunity to set a positive framework for supporting the expansion of marine renewables energy in the area. It will aim to maximise the benefits to the local economy by adopting a more targeted, but still flexible, approach to identifying business and industrial land. It will build on the work carried out as part of the [North Highland Onshore Vision](#) which identified land use planning actions to support the growth of the marine renewables industry. Part of this included a call for suitable sites. We have assessed the site suggestions received and where appropriate, included them within this Plan.

3.5 CaSPlan can also play an important role in developing the tourist sector through identifying key locations for development and recognising existing strategies such as the [John O'Groats Masterplan](#). Assets such as the North West Sutherland Geopark will also be considered.

3.6 As well as providing support for the renewables and tourist sectors, CaSPlan needs to identify a range of opportunities for employment uses more generally.

3.7 Much of the Plan area, particularly in Sutherland, is centred on more traditional industries such as land management, particularly agriculture, aquaculture, fishing, estate management and forestry. CaSPlan supports the growth of skills and employment opportunities within these industries. Proposals in more rural areas will be mainly assessed against the [Highland-wide Local Development Plan](#) which sets general policies to ensure that the sectors grow in balance with protection of the wider environment.

3.8 Partnership working is essential to support existing businesses grow, attracting new businesses to the area and maximising inward investment. Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), the Caithness and Sutherland Regeneration Partnership (CNSRP) and the North Highland Initiative (NHI) are of particular importance.

3.9 The [Dounreay Planning Framework](#) provides a land use development brief against which to regulate and control future decommissioning and restoration works. We think this should continue, with CaSPlan indicating the main principles of the Framework. Options for future use of land within or adjoining the Dounreay site will be limited due to the previous activities and ongoing decommissioning. The framework suggests some potential uses. We have not identified specific future uses in this Main Issues Report but we remain open minded to considering suggestions of uses particularly ones that would support the economic regeneration of the area.

Issue 3 - How should CaSPlan support a strong and diverse economy

Option 1 – The Preferred Approach

To deliver this Outcome we think this Plan should:

- 1 Identify a range of business and industrial sites within SDAs and other key locations which are geared towards the likely requirements of the marine renewables sector.
- 2 Recognising the uncertain future needs of the marine renewables sector we may consider suitable proposals on non allocated sites.
- 3 As well as providing support for renewables and tourist sectors, identify a range of opportunities for employment uses more generally.
- 4 Be supportive of appropriate proposals for employment uses which meet the criteria contained within the Growing Settlements policy.
- 5 Identify a range of sites for tourism development.
- 6 Use the [Dounreay Planning Framework](#) to guide decommissioning of the site.

Reasons:

- There is evidence that Caithness and Sutherland is still over dependant on the nuclear industry.
- There is a need to support alternative forms of employment while building on the area's strengths in existing employment. This should focus on allocated employment areas but it is recognised that certain industries may have particular needs which are not identified within SDAs.
- Tourism is an important sector and in some areas it is underdeveloped and undersold.

Option 2 - An Alternative approach

We could instead:

- Only allow employment development on suitable allocated sites.
- Not allocate business land, but allow businesses to locate and expand wherever they feel is best, guided only by the general policies in [HwLDP](#).

Question 3

Do you agree with the preferred approach to delivering the Employment Outcome?

Do you have any other suggestions?

4. Growing Communities

A' Fàs Choimhearsnachdan

Outcome: A network of successful, sustainable and socially inclusive communities where people want to live, which provide the most convenient access to services, education, training and employment and are the primary locations for inward investment.

Challenge: Our [Monitoring Statement](#) shows that many communities in Caithness and Sutherland are losing population and as a consequence key services and facilities are at risk. CaSPlan must manage development in a way that strengthens and supports communities.

Issue 4 – Strengthening and supporting communities

4.1 It is also important that CaSPlan considers how new development can be best linked to the community facilities and services that local people regularly use. An ongoing challenge for more rural areas is retaining its existing facilities while also attracting additional ones which may be required. This includes services for both retaining young people and to support both families and an ageing population. The planning system cannot provide these facilities directly. However, it can help to ensure that appropriate sites are identified and that other, supporting development is directed to the right places.

4.2 We will ensure that CaSPlan reflects the priorities of other council services and our partner organisations within the Highland Public Services Partnership. However, we also want CaSPlan to aid communities to develop their own local facilities and support networks.

4.3 We feel that CaSPlan should, therefore, highlight possible projects within settlements to provide a guide for managing any future funding or additional investment that may arise. These resources could for example, be linked to community gain funding from renewable energy developments.

4.4 We also recognise the key role of settlement centres in serving wider communities. In particular the centres of Brora, Dornoch, Golspie, Thurso and Wick play key roles within these communities and their surrounding rural areas. Recognising these locations are suffering from loss of retail presence, we feel that CaSPlan could build footfall, for example by encouraging the conversion of redundant retail units to residential and community based uses. We therefore propose to include a policy in the Plan for "Promoting and Protecting Settlement Centres". Suggested boundaries for the Settlement Centres of Thurso and Wick are shown within the Settlement Plans chapter. We would welcome your comments on these and your suggestions for centre boundaries for Brora, Dornoch and Golspie.

Issue 4 - How can we make sure communities have the services, jobs and facilities they need?

Option 1 – The Preferred Approach

To deliver the outcome for Growing Communities we think this Plan should:

- 1 Locate new housing development in areas which can help to sustain important community facilities and services.
- 2 Include a policy in the Plan for promoting and protecting settlement centres (see below).
- 3 Highlight possible projects within communities which help to direct investment and unlock funding.
- 4 Encourage the conversion of redundant retail space in town centres to residential and community uses.

Proposed Policy - Promoting And Protecting Settlement Centres

The Council will support a diverse range and mix of uses for land and buildings in settlement centres, to strengthen their vitality and viability.

In support of the settlement centres of Brora, Dornoch, Golspie, Thurso, and Wick [as to be identified on maps in the Proposed Plan], the Council will not support any proposal for development that is likely to have an adverse effect on the vitality and viability of those settlement centres.

Developers of proposals that generate footfall (visits by the general public) should consider potential sites for their development in a sequential manner. This means considering sites within the settlement centre boundary first before looking at other locations within the settlement. This includes considering what opportunities exist for regeneration through the reuse or redevelopment of existing sites and buildings. If the Council considers that a proposal may result in an adverse impact on the vitality and viability of any of these centres then the developer will be required to produce a sequential assessment. In such cases we will only support the development proposal if this assessment demonstrates no adverse impact.

Reasons:

- Having access to relevant facilities and services is essential to sustain a varied and healthy community.
- Settlement centres form the heart of communities and serve a range of social, cultural and economic functions. It is important to limit the factors which challenge centres and promote the opportunities which exist in these locations.

Option 2 - More Flexible Approach

Do not include the settlement centre policy in the Plan and do not define settlement centres, but instead rely on existing [HwLDP](#) general policies to guide decision making (more flexible approach) – such as [HwLDP](#) Policy 34 (Settlement Development Areas), Policy 28 (Sustainable Design) and Policy 40 Retail Development.

Option 3 – More Rigid Approach

Identify centre boundaries for all settlements.

Question 4

Do you agree with the preferred approach to delivering the Growing Communities outcome?

Do you agree with the preferred approach to promoting and protecting settlement centres?

Do you have any other suggestions?

5. Connectivity and Transport

Comas-ceangail agus Còmhhdhail

Outcome: Enhanced communications, utilities and transport infrastructure that supports communities and economic growth, with development anchored to existing or planned provision.

Challenge: It is important that CaSPlan considers the links between communities. The planning system cannot deliver new transport links, utilities or communications developments directly. However, development in the right locations can support and develop these networks.

Issue 5 – Getting around and staying connected

5.1 The CaSPlan area shows a particular pattern of connections:

- The ground transport network is of a relatively low capacity depending on twin or single track roads and the single tracked Far North Rail Line.
- Some of the key economic growth sectors within the plan area, for example, renewable energy, could place the greatest pressure on the road transport network.
- Some areas lack suitable water, sewerage and broadband connections.

5.2 Travel within the more rural parts of the CaSPlan area is highly dependant on car ownership. Those without a car face difficulties in accessing services, education, training and employment. Improving broadband can help address some of these challenges and we will work with partners such as HIE to deliver superfast broadband.

5.3 Whilst we recognise that access to a car is important, we want to provide more travel choices, including the choice to walk or cycle. CaSPlan could provide details of a number of potential projects to improve travel choice within the spatial strategy. These could be used as targets for investment from community gain and developer contributions.

5.4 We also want CaSPlan to reflect the strategies of our partners who provide travel services. We would establish these connections through linking to the Highland [Local Transport Strategy](#). Strategic improvements will also be delivered by partners such as Transport Scotland, for example at Berriedale Braes on the A9.

5.5 There is an existing network of [Core Paths](#) in the plan area and we must ensure that these core paths are safeguarded from inappropriate development. The Proposed Local Development Plan will show [Core Paths](#) which are in or adjacent to settlements which have Settlements Development Area (SDAs) and will provide developer requirements to safeguard and/or enhance the Core Path network. There may also be opportunity to show aspirational paths.

5.6 Having reviewed these issues, we want to direct development to locations which are easily linked into existing connections in both the transport network utilities and communications infrastructure. It is also possible that development in these locations will attract investment to upgrade these networks.

We cannot directly deliver improved infrastructure and transport connections but can ensure development takes place in the right areas to support these links.

Issue 5 - How should CaSPlan help with people getting around and staying connected?

Option 1 – The Preferred approach

To deliver the outcome for Connectivity and Transport we think this Plan should:

Provide a land use framework which ties development into existing or planned transport, utilities and communications infrastructure by:

- Concentrating major development in existing towns and villages;
- Providing a list of projects for developer contributions and community gain to secure the infrastructure for greater travel choices; and
- Create links between the development plan and the [Local Transport Strategy](#) policies, priorities and projects.

We will also work closely with partners such as HIE to deliver superfast broadband.

Reasons:

This option is preferred because:

- The strategy to concentrate development in existing settlements, and to provide superfast broadband, will help to reduce the need to travel.
- The use of existing infrastructure minimises the need for new infrastructure.
- The general approach complements the direction of the plan towards developing existing towns and villages, avoiding isolated new development without a particular locational need.

Option 2 – The alternative

No alternative approach is proposed.

Question 5

What do you think about the suggested approach to getting around and staying connected?

Do you have any other suggestions?

6. Environment and Heritage

Àrainneachd agus Dualchas

Outcome: High quality places where the natural, built and cultural heritage is celebrated and valued assets are safeguarded.

Challenge: Caithness and Sutherland has a diverse natural environment, spectacular scenery and a rich built and archaeological heritage. CaSPlan can build on these resources to support economic and community development, but not at the expense of their unique character and quality.

Issue 6a - Ensuring high quality places are delivered

6.1 Scottish Planning Policy supports positive change in the natural and built environment. In Caithness and Sutherland the natural environment is rich, from internationally recognised World Heritage Sites, to locally valued Special Landscape Areas. Dramatic landforms, important natural habitats and a diverse cultural heritage provide opportunities for CaSPlan to benefit the economy and local communities, whilst also putting in place appropriate safeguards.

6.2 Previous local plans managed the built and natural environment through existing protective designations. CaSPlan will continue this approach and review the extent of this protection. We propose a review of Special Landscape Area (SLA) boundaries in CaSPlan to ensure key designated landscape features are not severed and that distinct landscapes are preserved. We will also be mindful of the recently identified [Wild Land Areas](#) and any further information that is made available by Scottish Natural Heritage.

6.3 We also propose to review current conservation area boundaries over the coming years to ensure they give required protection, and may also consider possible new conservation areas.

6.4 Beyond designated areas of protection, we also think that CaSPlan should promote quality redevelopment of the existing heritage at a local level. It will also encourage high standards of design in all house building and provision will be made for open space in residential developments.

6.5 CaSPlan will look for opportunities to help create and maintain green networks – networks of fit for purpose green spaces and corridors in and around settlements which link into the wider countryside. Green Networks provide benefits to communities by enhancing quality of life and sense of place. They also benefit wildlife and habitats by enhancing biodiversity.

Issue 6a - How should CaSPlan help deliver high quality places?

Option 1 – The Preferred approach

- 1 Review existing conservation area designations and investigate designating new conservation areas. We will use the policies of [HwLDP](#) and prepare Supplementary Guidance on Residential Design and Layout.
- 2 We will use Open Space standards as set out in [HwLDP](#).
- 3 We will seek to highlight where the Green Network can be enhanced across the plan area, including particular focus within the Thurso-Wick and Dornoch-Helmsdale corridors identified within Figure 10 of the [HwLDP](#).

Reasons:

This option is preferred because:

- Existing natural, built and cultural heritage is a resource that could be enhanced by appropriate future protection as well as development.

Option 2 – The alternative

We have not identified a reasonable alternative option.

Question 6a

Do you agree with the suggested approach to delivering high quality places?

Do you have any other suggestions?

Issue 6b - Special Landscape Areas

6.6 During the preparation of the [HwLDP](#), locally and regionally important landscapes called Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) were identified using a robust method that we remain confident in. SLA boundaries in [HwLDP](#) were defined at a strategic level. Preparing CaSPlan enables us to refine these boundaries to ensure they make sense and that appropriate protection is afforded to whole landforms and features that complement each other. SLA boundaries are not being reviewed to include buffers because the existing policy safeguards SLAs from unacceptable indirect and cross-boundary impacts.

We should keep the SLAs as identified in [HwLDP](#), but refine existing boundaries in [CaSPlan](#).

Issue 6b - What approach should CaSPlan take to reviewing Special Landscape Areas?

Option 1 – The Preferred approach

- 1 Examine all SLA boundaries and make amendments as appropriate, as described below and illustrated in the following maps.
- 2 Having examined all the existing SLAs within the CaSPlan area we consider the following SLAs should remain unchanged from the boundaries shown in [HwLDP](#):
Duncansby Head SLA; the Flow Country and Berriedale Coast SLA;
Ben Griam and Loch Nan Clar SLA; Ben Kilbreck and Loch Choire SLA, and the Loch Fleet, Loch Brora and Glen Loth SLA.
- 3 We intend to refine the boundaries of the following SLAs to better reflect the criteria above:
Oldshoremore, Cape Wrath and Durness SLA; Eriboll East and Whiten Head SLA; Farr Bay, Strathy, Portskerra SLA; Dunnet Head SLA.

Maps and supporting text outlining our proposed changes for these SLAs are included below.

Reasons:

This option is preferred because:

- Existing SLA boundaries could benefit from finer-scale revision.
- We think that SLA boundaries should follow definite landforms and avoid severing self contained landscape features. They should enclose adjacent areas of similar or complementary landscapes following the [SLA citations](#) and [Landscape Character Assessments](#) that describe their qualities and characteristics. We don't think SLA boundaries should be extended as buffers.
- SLA boundaries should relate to landscape features and fully enclose areas of similar landscape character and quality.

Option 2 – An alternative

Carry forward all the SLAs unchanged from the [HwLDP](#).

Reasons:

This option is not preferred because we think we should take the opportunity to refine the SLA boundaries at a local level, providing more effective safeguard to valued landscapes.

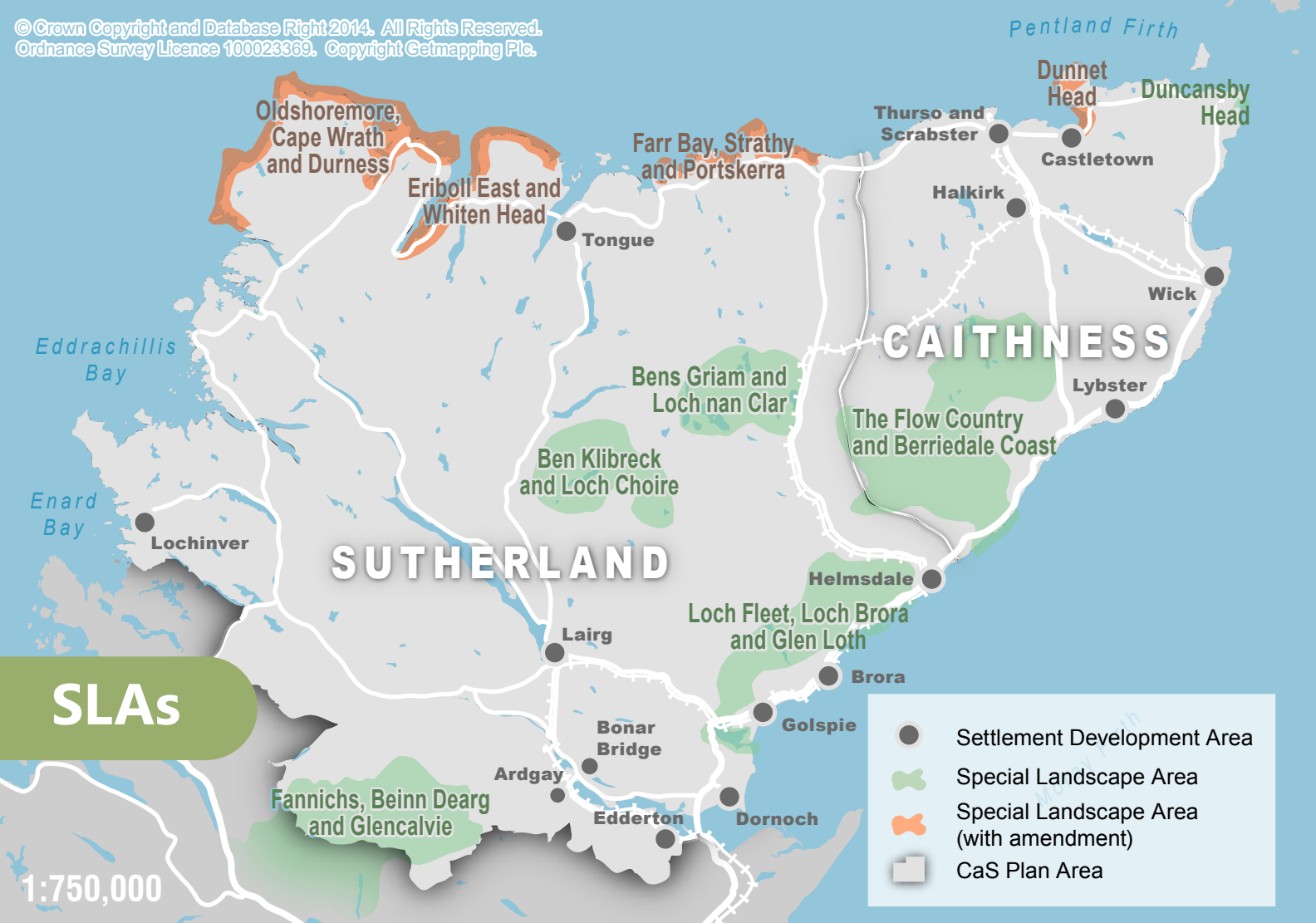
Further details on the proposed amendments to the SLA boundaries are shown on the following pages and more detailed maps on our website.

Question 6b

Do you agree with the suggested approach to Special Landscape Areas?

Do you have any other suggestions?

Further details are set out on the following pages.



Special Landscape Areas - Caithness

Dunnet Head SLA

Preferred Amendment 1:

Extend the western boundary of Dunnet Head SLA to include all of Dunnet bay.

This option is preferred because the current boundary bisects Dunnet Bay, a self contained landscape feature within the SLA.

Special Landscape Areas - Sutherland

Oldshoremore, Cape Wrath and Durness SLA

Preferred Amendment 2:

Extend the eastern boundary to include: the promontory at Rispond; Rispond Bay, and Eilean Cluimhrig and An Dubh-sgeir islands.

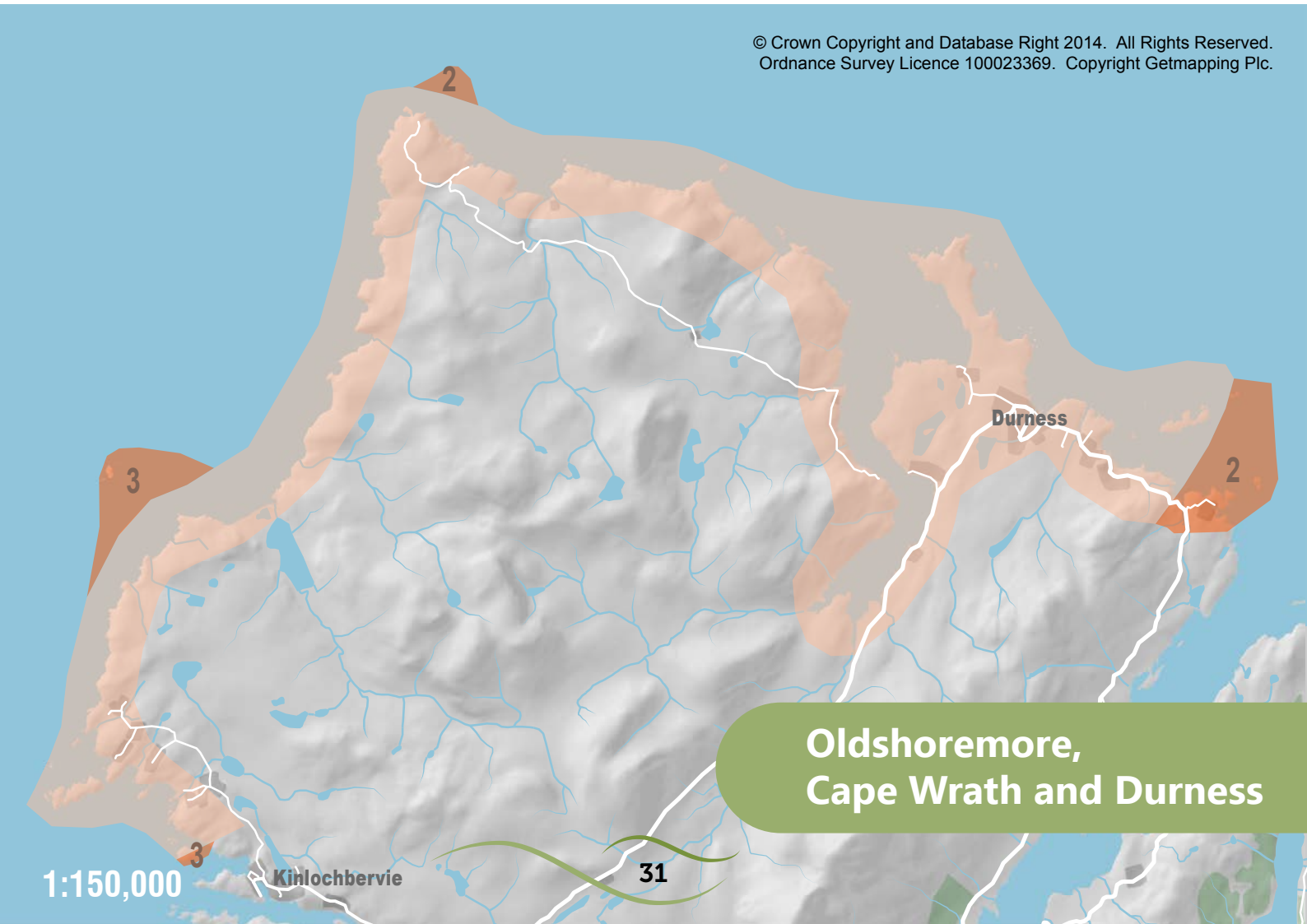
This option is preferred because:

- The current boundary bisects the beach Traigh Allt Chailgeag.
- The preferred extension incorporates key landscape and visual characteristics described in the SLA citation: rocky promontories, skerries and lower lying sheltered bays.
- The coastline changes at the southeast edge of the preferred extension.

Dunnet Head



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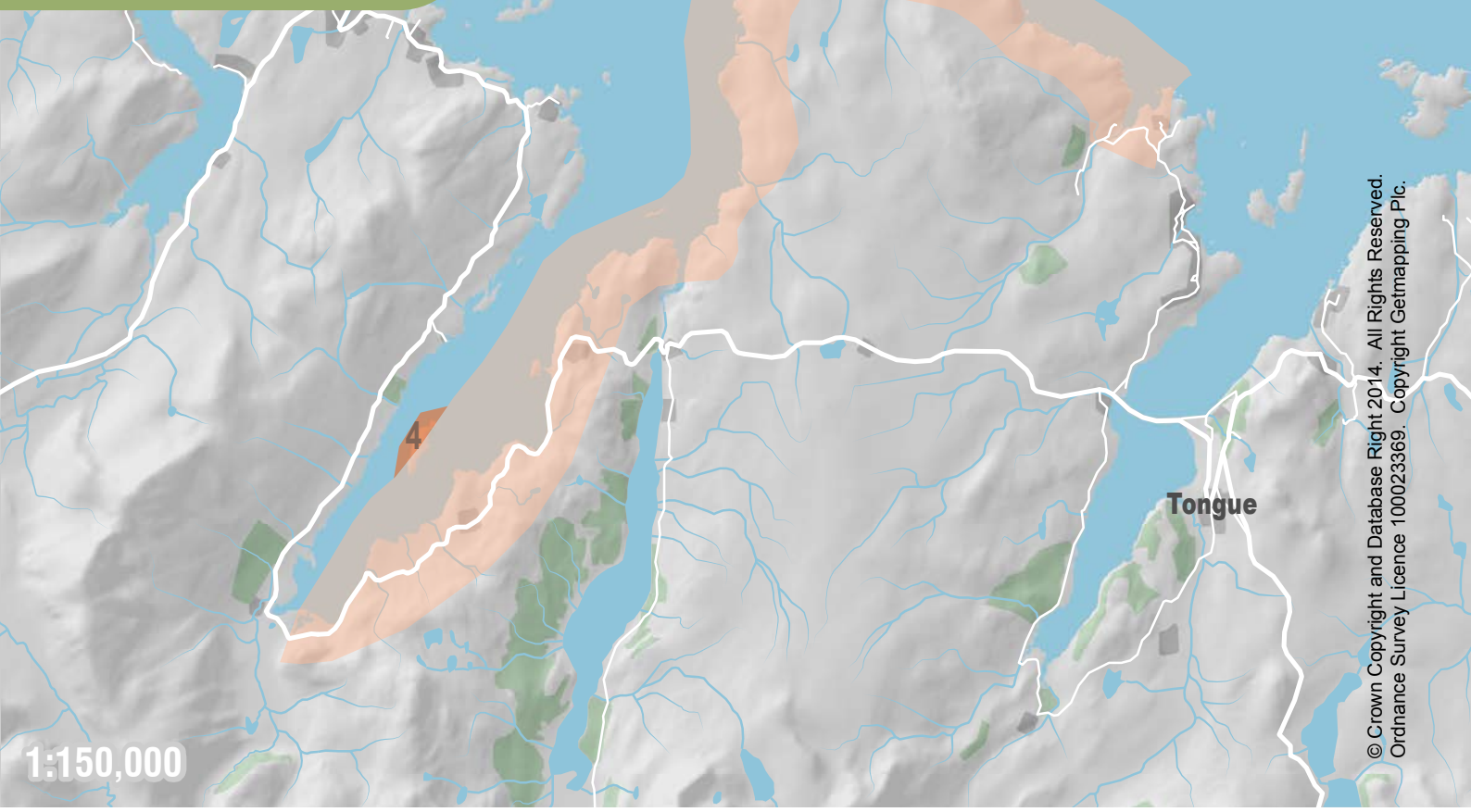
Oldshoremore, Cape Wrath and Durness

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Kinlochbervie

31

Eriboll East and Whiten Head



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Farr Bay, Strathy and Portskerra



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Preferred Amendment 3:

Include important landscape features in the seascape (Duslic off the coast at Cape Wrath; Am Baig off the coast at Am Buachaille, and Eilean a' Chonnaidh).

This option is preferred because the extension incorporates key landscape and visual characteristics described in the SLA citation, skerries. It also avoids severing Eilean a' Chonnaidh, a self contained landscape feature within the SLA.

Eriboll East and Whiten Head SLA

Preferred Amendment 4:

Extend the western extent of the SLA boundary to include the entire island Eilean Choraiddh.

This option is preferred because the current boundary bisects the island, a self contained landscape feature within this SLA.

Farr Bay, Strathy, Portskerra SLA

Preferred Amendment 5:

Extend the eastern SLA boundary to include Rubh Bra promontory and Melvich Bay.

This option is preferred because:

- Melvich Bay shares landscape characteristics with Armadale and Strathy Bays which both lie within this SLA.
- Melvich Bay reflects a key landscape and visual characteristic of the SLA citation, "fine sandy beaches in the largest and most sheltered bays which form foci that contrast in colour, form and texture to the rocky coastal cliffs".
- The land between the SLA boundary and bay reflects one of the key landscape and visual characteristics of the SLA, "elevated areas on the intervening high ground between the bays close to the sea provide expansive views both along the coast and out to sea".
- Beyond the preferred extended boundary there is a change in the character of the coastline so this would provide a more appropriate boundary for this SLA.

7. Settlement Plans

Planaichean Tuineachaidh

7.1 Section 2 of this MIR describes the proposed approach to managing growth in the Caithness & Sutherland area and to guide new development towards the most suitable locations.

7.2 This section deals with the places considered to be most suitable to accommodate some level of development over the next 20 years. For each place we have suggested the issues and "Placemaking Priorities" that we think should guide what development can happen in these locations. In addition, for the settlements where a greater level of growth is proposed we have highlighted specific sites and uses that we feel will best fit with those priorities. These are shown on accompanying maps for each place.

7.3 We would like people's views on the issues, priorities and development options in each settlement. For example, if you think that a site is unsuitable then tell us about alternative sites that you think are more suitable for development. You may feel that certain issues need to be addressed to enable development to happen. This could include new or improved services and facilities such as transport, shops and schools. We will also be working with people that deal with providing such services to discuss what improvements might be required.

7.4 To help you use this section of the document, we have arranged it so that the Caithness settlements are together followed by all the Sutherland settlements.

Issue 7 - What should the settlements in Caithness and Sutherland be like in the future?

Option 1 – The Preferred option

The issues and placemaking priorities for each settlement are our preferred criteria for guiding future development. The preferred sites and uses are shown in **green**.

Option 2 – Alternatives

The alternative sites and uses are shown in **amber**. There are no alternative issues or placemaking priorities.

Option 3 – Non-preferred

The non-preferred sites and uses are shown in **red**. There are no non-preferred issues or placemaking priorities.

Question 7

What do you think about the suggested issues, priorities and development options for each settlement?

Do the priorities reflect what you think this place should be like in the future? Tell us about any issues that need to be addressed to make development acceptable. If you don't like certain sites tell us what alternative(s) you prefer.



Caithness Area

Settlement Development Areas

Castletown	36
Halkirk	38
Lybster	40
Thurso/Scrabster	42
Wick	47

Growing Settlements

Dunbeath	52
Dunnet	53
John O'Groats	54
Keiss	55
Latheronwheel	56
Reay	57
Watten	58

Economic Development Areas

Dounreay	50
Gills Harbour	50

Sutherland Area

Settlement Development Areas

Ardgay	59
Bonar Bridge	59
Brora	62
Dornoch	64
Edderton	66
Golspie	68
Helmsdale	70
Lairg	70
Lochinver	74
Tongue	76

Growing Settlements

Bettyhill	78
Portskerra	83
Durness	79
Scourie	84
Embo	80
Kinlochbervie	81
Melvich	82

Settlement Development Areas - Caithness

Castletown

Much of Castletown was planned on a grid pattern and built during its time at the centre of a thriving flagstone industry in the 19th Century. The shore front at Castlehill was pivotal to production and transport of the flagstone which was exported all over the world. In 2007 the Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment, in consultation with the local community, prepared the [Castletown Village Masterplan](#) which included proposals to reconnect the village with the historic shorefront. The preferred strategy below reflects some of these key proposals which included housing, business and tourism opportunities together with important green corridors being protected from development. The former Ictech site has remained vacant since its closure in 2013 and offers a range of business and industrial opportunities.

Placemaking Priorities

- Promote opportunities for redevelopment, renovation and infill development within the village centre and other brownfield sites.
- Reconnect the village with Castlehill through mixed use expansion extending from the centre of Castletown connected via a new green corridor.
- Develop high quality leisure and tourism facilities along the shore front which could provide an anchor for further development.
- Additional housing development to the east of Castletown and linked with new access routes.
- Enhance access to green corridors surrounding the village and protect these from development.

Preferred Sites	Use(s)
CT01: Land between Castletown and Castlehill	Mixed Use (housing, retail, business, community)
CT02: Land at Castlehill Gardens	Mixed Use (housing, community, business)
CT03: Castletown Mill	Mixed Use (housing, community, business)
CT04: Land north of Harland Road	Mixed Use (housing, community, business)
CT05: Old Reading Room site and land to the west	Mixed Use (housing, community, business)
CT06: Site south east of Coronation Place	Mixed Use (housing, business, community)
CT07: Woodside Garden Centre	Business
CT08: Former Castletown Quarry	Industrial
CT09: Former Ictech site	Mixed Use (industry, business)

Reasons:

Land at Castlehill has an existing permission for housing (34 units) and commercial (1 unit) development. Longer term development of CT01 should include a link road from Traill Street.

The derelict sites along the shore front are ideal for leisure and tourism uses because of their local historic value.

Land north of Harland Road benefits from being relatively easy to develop and opportunities for improved access arrangements have been identified.



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Protect green corridors surrounding village

Dunnet Beach

Castletown

Business and industrial opportunities at vacant brownfield sites

Mixed use expansion to the north and east



Reuse/redevelop the former Icetek site for business and industrial uses due to it being a long established employment site with good road links.

Continue to allocate former Castletown Quarry for industrial uses due to its brownfield nature.

Alternative Sites	Use(s)
CT10: Land south east of Castletown Primary School	Housing
Reasons:	
Potential for an additional housing allocation on the south east edge of the village. However it is on prime agricultural land and there are sufficient housing allocations identified elsewhere in the village.	

Non-preferred Sites	Non-preferred Use(s)
CT11: Land at west Dunnet Beach	Mixed Use (business and industrial)
CT12: Land at east end of Stangergill Crescent	Housing
Reasons:	
Potential for an additional housing allocation on the south east edge of the village. However it is on prime agricultural land and there are sufficient housing allocations identified elsewhere in the village.	

Halkirk

Halkirk is one of Scotland’s oldest planned villages, established on a grid-iron pattern. Despite additional guidance in the existing Local Plan (2002) development over recent decade has been haphazard and inconsistent.

Although the village has experienced relatively high levels of housing development recently just a few site options were suggested to us during the Call for Sites. Several suggestions were not considered suitable and we would therefore encourage additional sites to be submitted for consideration, particularly a more coordinated response for land West of Bridge Street.

The River Thurso runs through the village and is an important feature which must be safeguarded from development. Opportunities may exist to improve access along the riverfront as there is limited recreational space in the village. The local waste water treatment works has very limited supply due both increased housing development and surface water drainage issues. This could restrict development in the future.

Placemaking Priorities

- Continue to focus development towards infill opportunities East of Bridge Street to help consolidate the village.
- Improve access along the riverside for recreational purposes while safeguarding the area from intrusive development.
- Avoid uncoordinated and fragmented expansion on the fringes to help protect the setting of the village.
- Consider the preparation of more detailed ‘Supplementary Guidance’ for Halkirk (Council led or community led) to address specific issues such as development opportunities, amenity land, servicing, design and layout.

Halkirk

HK01
Comlifoot

HK03
Burial Ground

HK04

HK05

HK06

Large number of
infill opportunities
remain

Works
HK02

HK07

Avoid uncoordinated
backland development

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Preferred Sites	Use(s)
HK01: South of Comlifoot Terrace	Housing
HK02: Site at Camilla Street	Industrial

Reasons:

The site at Comlifoot is an existing housing allocation and has live planning permission for 32 houses.

Continue to allocate the site at Camilla Street for industrial uses as it is an established employment site and to encourage job opportunities within the village.

Alternative Sites	Use(s)
HK03: Glebe land at Halkirk Old Parish Church	Housing

Reasons:

Previously safeguarded land north east of Halkirk Old Parish Church may have potential as a housing site due to the lack of alternatives in the village.

Non-preferred Sites	Non-preferred Use(s)
HK04: Land west of Commercial Hotel	Housing
HK05: Land west of Auld House	Housing
HK06: Land west of Pollock House	Housing
HK07: Land north of railway line	Housing

Reasons:

Avoid individual, uncoordinated and fragmented back land development along the west side of Bridge Street to help preserve the traditional pattern of development. A more strategic expansion West of Bridge Street may be appropriate if adequate land is suggested.

Remove the existing industrial allocation north of the railway line due to high risk of flooding and potential visual impact.

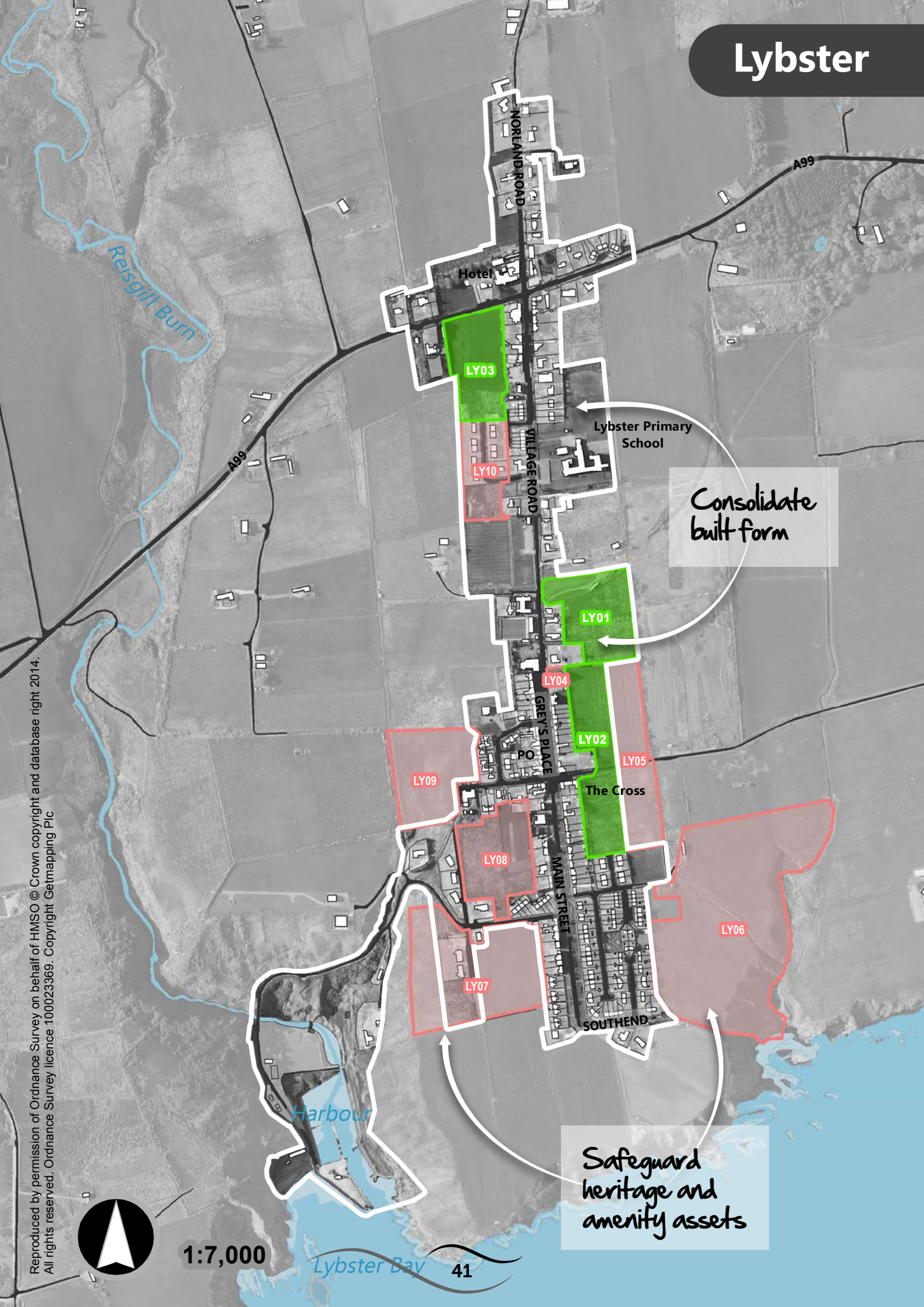
Lybster

Lybster is an early 19th Century planned village that has a coherent structure. The traditional centre is a designated conservation area and there is a distinct linear street layout that characterises the settlement. Recent development has been focused near the historic harbour, a key asset, and in back lands. Future development should compliment and add to the distinct built form and help to promote the tourist, cultural and heritage assets, given the settlement's strategic tourist location on the A99. Development will be restricted in certain areas which have had issues with flooding in the recent past.

Placemaking Priorities

- Direct growth of the settlement to the existing built-up area to consolidate the built-form, and safeguard the amenity of the surrounding area.

Lybster



Consolidate
built form

Safeguard
heritage and
amenity assets

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Lybster Bay

Preferred Sites	Use(s)
LY01: South of Golf Club House	Mixed Use (business and tourism)
LY02: East of Main Street	Mixed Use (housing and business)
LY03: West of old Police Station	Housing

Reasons:

Promote the business and tourism potential of Lybster by creating development opportunities in the centre of the settlement.

Consolidate the built form, and retain the linear structure and street pattern by directing development to the land east of Main Street.

Encourage development of the land west of the old police station to round off the settlement, and to conclude development of a part-complete site.

Non-preferred Sites	Non-preferred Use(s)
LY04: Former church	Housing
LY05: West of the golf course	Mixed Use (housing, business and employment)
LY06: Land at Shalligoe	Mixed Use (business and industry)
LY07: South of Harbour Road	Housing
LY08: North of Harbour Road	Housing
LY09: North west of Russel Street	Housing
LY10: South west of old Police Station	Housing

Reasons:

Remove the former church allocation as redevelopment is already underway.

Prevent development that would cause skylining and impact the harbour's amenity value by not preferring sites upslope and east of the harbour, and by revising the SDA boundary.

Focus future housing development to town centre locations that compliment the existing linear settlement form by not preferring sites that encroach into surrounding countryside.

Thurso/Scrabster

Thurso is the principal market, service and social centre for West and Central Caithness and an area reaching into North Sutherland. It sits at the mouth of River Thurso and the south of Thurso Bay. Despite the river setting being one of its greatest assets, some of the uses along it detract from its amenity. Redevelopment opportunities exist which would help open up the riverfront for the enjoyment of residents and visitors.

Thurso has experienced relatively high levels of development since the adoption of the Caithness Local Plan (2002) with many of the allocated sites now having been fully built out. The Local Plan set a strategy for long term expansion of the town to the West of Thurso which included safeguarding a route for a bypass. With the recently designated Scrabster Renewable Energy Enterprise Area it continues to be the logical direction of growth for the town. Nevertheless land uses which compete with town centre businesses and risk impacting on the vibrancy and vitality will be restricted.

It is apparent that there has been a desire for a larger supermarket in the town. Planning permission was granted for a supermarket at the former mart site but it is uncertain whether this will ever be built. We are therefore considering whether to allocate land for a supermarket elsewhere, for example at Pennyland.

Placemaking Priorities

- Promote and support the growth of employment uses relating to the marine renewables industry through the allocation of strategically important business and industrial sites.
- Identify sufficient land for the long term western expansion of the town.
- Designate a Settlement Centre Boundary to encourage all footfall generating uses towards the town centre to help enhance its vitality and vibrancy.
- Ensure that sufficient land is identified within the Plan that allows for the delivery of a supermarket.
- Regeneration and redevelopment of Thurso harbour area for commercial, tourism and recreational uses including new high quality water sports facilities.
- Relocate industrial uses along the riverfront and replace them with residential and mixed use development to make the most of the river corridor setting.



Our preferred strategy for Thurso and Scrabster reflects the results of the 'Thurso Charrette'. This was an interactive design workshop held in the town over the course of a week in February 2013. Urban designers, architects, planners and the public came together to explore ideas and aspirations for Thurso's future. This fed into a detailed Masterplan and Charrette Report. To view all the ideas and issues please see our website for the [Masterplan and Charrette Report](#).

Preferred Sites	Use(s)
TS01: Land at Scrabster Mains Farm	Industrial
TS02: Scrabster Harbour	Industrial
TS03: Land north west of Thurso Business Park	Mixed Use (business, industrial)
TS04: Land north west of Provost Cormack Drive	Mixed Use (housing, business, open space, community)
TS05: Land west of Bishops Drive	Housing
TS06: Land west of Pennyland House	Mixed Use (housing, business, community, open space)
TS07: Thurso Harbour	Community (recreation related only)
TS08: Former mart site	Mixed Use (housing, retail, business, community)
TS09: Viewfirth Park	Community
TS10: Former mill site at Millbank	Mixed Use (retail, community, business, tourism, housing)
TS11: Land at Juniper Bank	Housing
TS12: Land at Sir Archibald Road	Mixed Use (housing, business, retail)

TS13: Land at Bridgend	Mixed Use (community, housing, retail, business)
TS14: Site at Mountpleasant	Housing
TS15: Land north of Scrabster Community Hall	Mixed Use (community, housing)

Reasons:

Land at Scrabster Mains Farm has recently been identified as an [Enterprise Area for Renewables Energy](#) by the Scottish Government and is needed to support the growth of Scrabster Harbour. Planning permission has recently been granted for creation of serviced industrial plots and new access road from the A9. TS03 provides longer term business and industrial opportunities and will benefit from the new access link from the A9.

Sites in Thurso West form part of the long term direction of growth. TS04 is relatively poor agricultural land and benefits from being close to existing facilities. Wolf Burn should be made into a positive feature to protect and enhance wildlife and improve access and recreation. There is also potential to create a large area of community woodland to the south west of the bypass. TS05 will be a natural rounding off of housing development, particularly if the bypass is constructed.

TS06 reflects the outcomes of the Thurso Charrette which supports mixed use development at Pennyland but due to its prominent location we consider that development must be low density and have a green buffer maintained alongside the main road.

The former mart site (TS08) is preferred for a mix of uses as it currently has live planning permission for housing and a supermarket. Despite its central location and good transport links the site has lain vacant for many years and therefore we would also consider a wider range of uses.

Sites at the riverside are preferred for mixed use due to being centrally located, brownfield and potential visual improvements from redevelopment.

Alternative Sites	Use(s)
TS16: Land north west of Dunbar Hospital	Mixed Use (housing, business)

Reasons:

Potential to carry forward an existing mixed use allocation north west of Dunbar Hospital but sufficient land is already identified and there has been no development activity on the site over the previous plan period.

Non-preferred Sites	Non-preferred Use(s)
TS17: Thurso East Expansion	Mixed Use (housing, employment)
TS18: Land north of Pennyland House	Mixed Use (business, tourism, community)
TS19: Land north of Scrabster Mains Farm	Housing
TS20: Land at Holborn Place	Housing

Reasons:

Large scale housing development to the east is non-preferred due to being removed from future employment sites and would have wider landscape impacts.



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Thurso/Scrabster

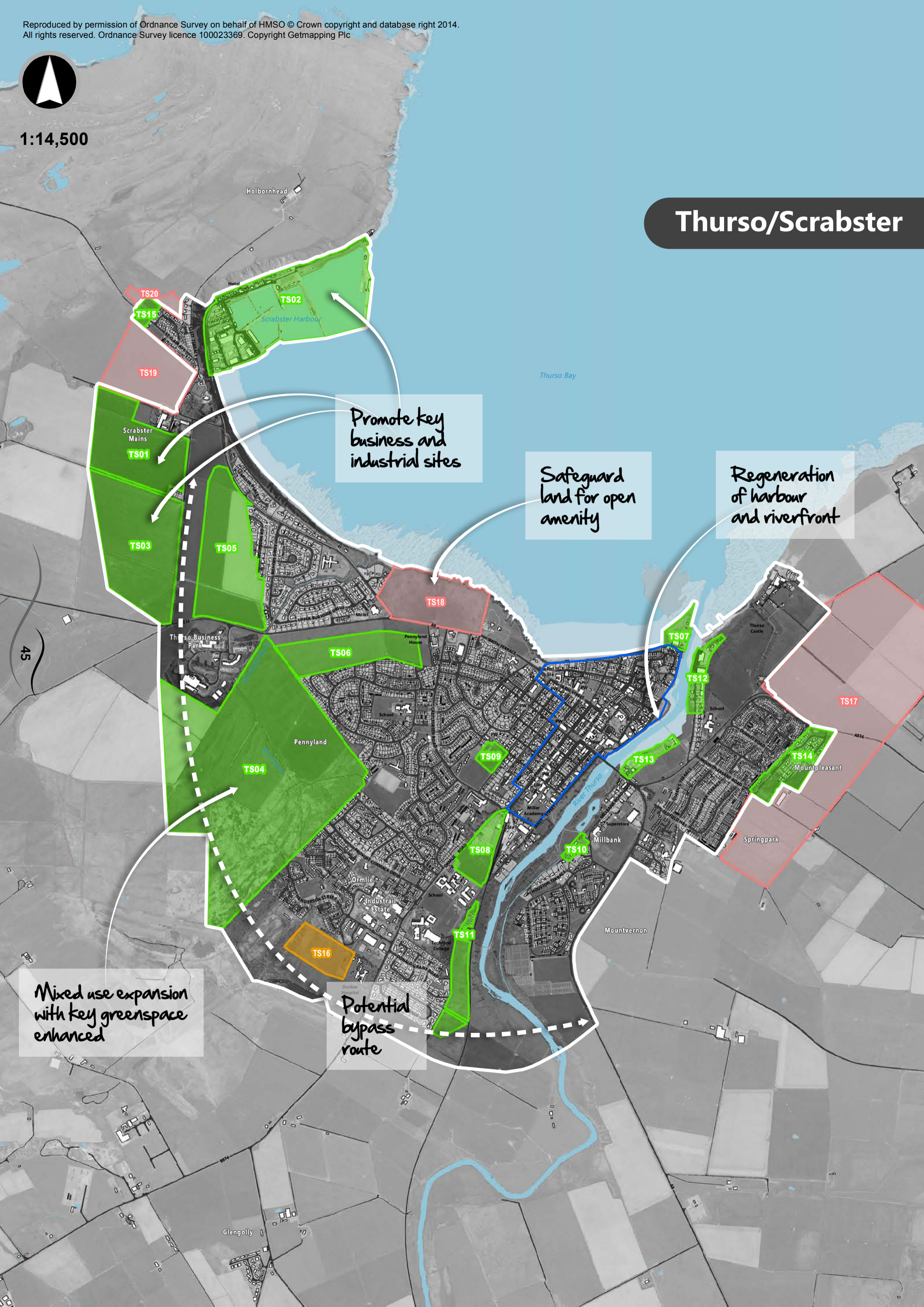
Promote key business and industrial sites

Safeguard land for open amenity

Regeneration of harbour and riverfront

Mixed use expansion with key greenspace enhanced

Potential bypass route





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Wick

Encourage further business and industrial uses at established areas

Football-generating uses directed towards town centre

Support expansion of harbour facilities

Consolidate housing expansion



Wick

Wick is a regional service and shopping centre and provides the main administrative and medical functions for the wider North Highland area. Despite this the economy has struggled which has resulted in relatively low development pressure over the last decade. As a result the town suffers from a large number of vacant and derelict buildings and many previously allocated sites remain undeveloped.

Over recent years there has been renewed focus on the harbour and its role in supporting the growth of the renewable energy sector. The need for the harbour to upgrade and expand its facilities to meet the needs of the industry is also noted in the [Monitoring Statement](#). This is reinforced by the recent announcement that Wick will serve as the service base for the construction and operation of the Beatrice offshore windfarm.

Renewed investment in the harbour may have real opportunities to regenerate the central area of the town, particularly within Pulteneytown. Many of its historical buildings are ideal for not only tourism uses but also for business and housing.

Another important issue is the need to help strengthen the role of the town centre. Designating a Settlement Centre Boundary would help to direct footfall generating uses towards the centre and would restrict competing uses in other areas. Proposals for town centre regeneration and riverside rejuvenation, including greater accessibility, were also identified during the charrette.

Placemaking Priorities

- Consolidate the town by identifying sites which round off or infill rather than expanding Wick in any particular direction.
- Encourage all footfall generating uses towards the town centre to help enhance its vitality and vibrancy.
- Support the expansion of Wick Harbour to attract renewable energy opportunities to help revitalise the local economy.
- Enhance Lower Pulteneytown through building on the vibrant uses which already exist together with the regeneration of vacant and derelict sites.
- Employ a more flexible approach to encourage the reuse/redevelopment of surplus Council owned buildings.
- Conserve and promote the history and heritage of the town and surrounding area to help create a positive image for the town and attract more visitors.



Our preferred strategy for Wick reflects the results of the Wick 'Charrette'. This was an interactive design workshop held in the town over the course of a week in February 2013. Urban designers, architects, planners and the public came together to explore ideas and aspirations for Wick's future. This fed into a detailed Masterplan and Charrette Report. To view all the ideas and issues please see our website for the [Masterplan and Charrette Report](#).

Preferred Sites	Use(s)
WK01: North of Wick Business Park	Business
WK02: Wick Business Park	Business
WK03: Wick Airport	Business
WK04: Land southeast of Wick Airport Terminal Building	Mixed Use (business, industrial, community)
WK05: Land north of Wick North Primary School	Industrial
WK06: Land north of Wellington Avenue	Mixed Use (business, industrial)
WK07: Wick Harbour	Industrial
WK08: Wick Industrial Estate	Industrial
WK09: Old Pulteney Distillery	Industrial
WK10: Land at Shore Road	Mixed Use (tourism, business, housing)
WK11: Lower Pulteneytown	Mixed Use (housing, business, community, retail, industrial)
WK12: Land east of Wick Burial Ground	Community (cemetery)
WK13: Land north of Green Road	Mixed Use (housing, business)
WK14: Hillhead Primary School	Mixed Use (business, community, housing)
WK15: Wick High School Building	Mixed Use (business, housing, community)
WK16: Land at Rhind House	Mixed Use (housing, community)
WK17: Land at Francis Street	Mixed Use (housing, business)
WK18: Land west of Coronation Street	Housing
WK19: Land at Hill of Man	Housing
WK20: Site south of Kennedy Terrace	Housing
WK21: Site east of Carnaby Road	Housing
WK22: Land south of Roxburgh Road	Mixed Use (business, community, housing)
WK23: Land east of Murray Avenue	Housing
WK24: Land northwest of Seaview House Nursing Home	Housing
WK25: Site west of former garage, George Street	Mixed Use (housing, business)
WK26: Land at Robert Street	Housing

Reasons:

Allocations at Wick Business Park (WK01 and WK02) and Wick Industrial Estate (WK04, WK05 and WK08) benefit from being on or adjacent to established employment sites, are well serviced and have good access links.

Other employment business and industrial sites have been identified due mainly to them being brownfield and close to transport key links (WK06, WK07 and WK11).

Mixed use sites have been allocated at Lower Pulteneytown and on the north of the River (WK10) to encourage reuse of vacant and derelict brownfield sites and due to their central location.

Consolidate the town by identifying housing development sites which round off or infill rather than expanding Wick in any particular direction (WK18, WK22).

Allocate for a range of uses key Council owned buildings which are or will shortly become vacant (WK14, WK15 and WK22).

Land at Rhind House has planning permission for children’s home and allotments.

Preferred sites WK19, WK20 and WK21 have been supported due to existing housing planning permissions. These have also been considered to round off the south east Wick.

Alternative Sites	Use(s)
WK27: Land at Broadhaven Farm	Housing

Reasons:

Although there is already sufficient housing land allocated in Wick the land at Broadhaven Farm provides an additional housing option and could help round off north east Wick.

Non-preferred Sites	Non-preferred Use(s)
WK28: Land at Broadhaven Farm	Housing
WK29: Land west of Miller Avenue	Housing
WK30: Land south of Thurso Road	Housing
WK31: Land south of Hill of Man	Housing
WK32: Land east of Police Station	Mixed Use (industrial, business, housing)
WK33: Land north of March Road	Housing
WK34: Land east and south of Seaview Farm	Housing
WK35: Land surrounding Elzy Road, Staxigoe	Mixed Use (Housing, employment)
WK36: Land south of Pilot Row, Papigoe	Housing
WK37: Land northeast of Mowat Place, Papigoe	Housing

Reasons:

Many of the non-preferred housing sites are not considered as rounding off or infill and would have significant visual impacts (WK28, WK29, WK30, WK33).

Land at the railway station is non preferred due to the size of the site and potential range of opportunities. Our preference is to leave it within the SDA which will allow for development to be assessed on its own merits.

Sites at Staxigoe and Papigoe are detached from the town and key facilities and would also have impacts on the landscape.

Economic Development Areas – Caithness

Dounreay

Issues

- The Dounreay Nuclear Research Facility is being decommissioned to what is known as the Interim End State by around 2025.
- The Council has a role in regulation and control of the decommissioning and restoration works.
- Options for future use of land within or adjoining the Dounreay site will be limited due to the previous activities and ongoing decommissioning.

Placemaking Priorities

- We think CaSPlan should use the [Dounreay Planning Framework 2 \(DPF2\)](#) to guide decommissioning of the site. The main principles of DPF2, which we consulted on through preparation of the [HwLDP](#) and DPF2, are:
 - the timely, safe and environmentally acceptable decommissioning, restoration and after-use of the Dounreay site;
 - phasing through to the interim end point, setting out the developments required for decommissioning and restoration towards achieving the site end state, including new build, adaptation, demolition and remediation;
 - sufficient flexibility to respond to changing constraints whilst not placing undue restrictions on the site operator;
 - indication of potential new interim uses and end uses for parts of the site in support of economic development of the area; and
 - developer requirements that were identified when we prepared the [Highland-wide Local Development Plan \(HwLDP\)](#).
- DPF2 suggests some potential future uses. We have not identified specific future uses in this Main Issues Report but we remain open minded to considering suggestions of uses particularly ones that would support the economic regeneration of the area.

Gills Harbour

Issues

- Gills Harbour is well placed to become an important service base for the marine renewables sector in the coming years but to attract marine renewables business the harbour will likely need to invest in upgrading and expanding the services which it can offer.
- Steep slopes on the landward side of the harbour limit terrestrial development.
- Potential access constraints due to topography depending on uses at the harbour.

Placemaking Priorities

- Improve harbour facilities to help support the growth of the marine renewables sector.
- Protect the surrounding landscape from inappropriate development including unsuitable land uses and poor layout and design.

Dounreay

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Gills Harbour

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Growing Settlements – Caithness

Dunbeath

Issues

- Steep terrain has resulted in a disjointed settlement pattern. Key services are split across the south and north sides of the A9.
- A range of community facilities are concentrated along Portormin Road, and the small harbour is a key asset and focus for visitors to the settlement.
- Capacity at Dunbeath waste water treatment works is limited to 17 housing units.

Placemaking Priorities

- Natural heritage features along the north bank of Dunbeath Water should be safeguarded from development to maintain the setting of the settlement.
- The unique wooded strath along Dunbeath Water is an important heritage and recreational asset and should be protected and enhanced.
- The strategic A9 location should be capitalised on to maximise the benefits of the settlement's cultural and heritage tourism potential, particularly at the harbour
- There is potential for reuse of brownfield land at the old quarry on the north bank of Dunbeath Water.
- There may be scope for housing development along the east side of Neil Gunn Road.

Dunbeath



Dunnet

Issues

- Continuation of ribbon and ad hoc housing development to the west of Dunnet.
- Development to the west has mostly been in ribbon form and resulted in some traffic problems due to the narrow, single track roads and a lack of pavements for pedestrians, especially on the road to Dwarwick.
- Drainage issues westwards of the A836 and the prevalence of soft rush vegetation suggests wider drainage issues include along the B855.
- Access constraints for former commercial allocation between the A836 and the playing fields.

Placemaking Priorities

- Focus future development close to the traditional settlement centre at the A836 cross roads.
- Protect and enhance the setting of the A-listed Dunnet Parish Church.
- Restrict development further southwards to protect the setting of Dunnet Beach.
- Exploit the potential economic benefits of Dunnet's strategic position along the main John O' Groats – Land's End route.



John O'Groats

Issues

- A renowned tourist attraction which suffered from a lack of investment and coordination during the second half of the 20th Century.
- Significant investment in the area is transforming it into a high quality visitor destination with award winning architectural design.

Placemaking Priorities

- Support appropriate expansion of the John O' Groats tourist site in line with the principles set out in the [Highlands and Islands Enterprise \(HIE\) masterplan \(2009\)](#) which include providing a diverse range of uses and activities, improving and expanding local public services and creating a pedestrian friendly environment.
- Future development of the tourist destination needs to be well integrated with the local community to create a sustainable community rather than resulting in a detached and standalone facility.

John O'Groats



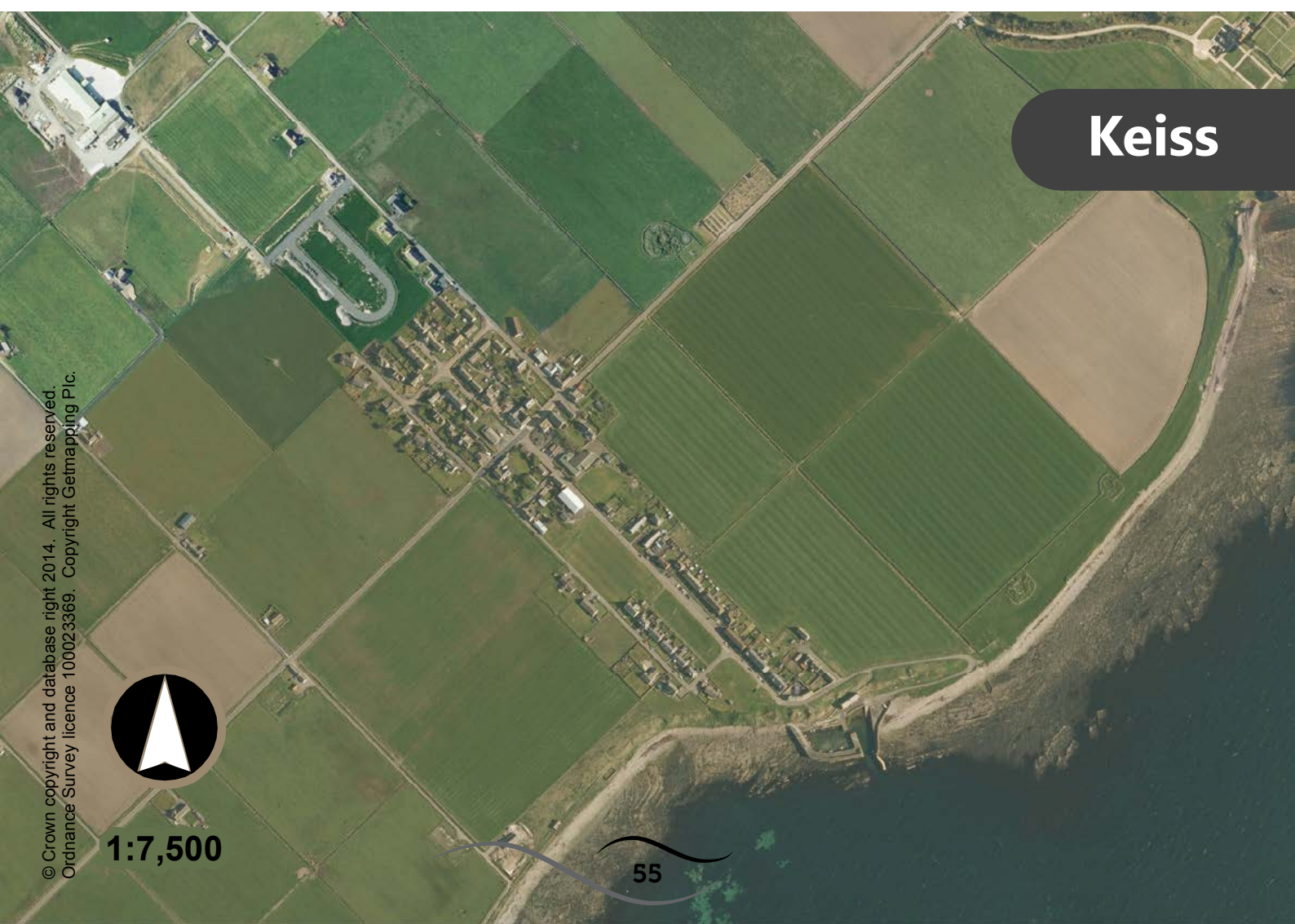
Keiss

Issues

- Reasonable level of existing services within the village.
- Lack of local employment opportunities.
- Significant housing development taken place in wider crofting community rather than within Keiss.
- Cultural and natural heritage are important features to the setting and character of the village.
- Limited waste water treatment capacity may restrict future development.

Placemaking Priorities

- Exploit the potential economic benefits of Keiss's strategic position along the main John O' Groats – Land's End route.
- Focus future development within or close to the existing village to safeguard the surrounding croftland from ad hoc development.
- Protect and restrict further built encroachment along the strand line of Sinclair's Bay at Stain.



Keiss



Latheronwheel

Issues

- Latheronwheel is a distinct settlement on the A9 comprised of a single linear built form leading south from a small cluster of buildings along the A9, including B and C listed, to a small harbour at the shore.
- Older buildings at the north end of the settlement create a sense of enclosure and lead to an open street layout of more modern buildings south.
- The settlement of Latheron is approximately 1km north, and is well linked by the A9 road and footpath. Latheron and Latheronwheel share some services and community facilities but for most the community must travel to neighbouring settlements.
- There is limited road capacity, and access at the A9 junction is constrained.
- Current wastewater treatment capacity is for an additional 20 housing units.

Placemaking Priorities

- Focus future development towards the west of the existing settlement.
- Encourage growth that supports existing services and community facilities.
- Promote the range of tourist and heritage assets present and take strategic advantage of the settlement's position on the A9 tourist corridor.

Latheronwheel



Reay

Issues

- Lack of local employment opportunities.
- The village has benefitted from relatively high levels of renovation of historical buildings in recent years.

Placemaking Priorities

- Opportunities for better interpretation of historical and archaeological assets in and around the village.
- Exploit the village's strategic location between Caithness and Sutherland for the economic benefit of the community.
- Sustain and expand the range of services and facilities, including those available to tourists.
- Safeguard the edges of the village and the south side of the road between New Reay and Old Reay to protect the character of the area.
- To ensure road safety maintain the need for house developments to have shared access onto the main public road.



Watten

Issues

- Limited development over recent years (7 new houses built since 2001).
- There has been ribbon development along the B870 which is not of particularly high quality siting or design and is disjointed from the village.
- Reasonable range of existing services within the village but need to consider how best to sustain these.
- Limited waste water capacity (up to 35 additional housing units). Further development should await completion of sewage treatment works.
- Low water pressure in some areas.

Placemaking Priorities

- Safeguard the countryside around the village which is relatively high quality agricultural land.
- Seek to maintain and enhance the hedgerows in and around the village.
- Protect the setting of Loch Watten and improve recreational facilities and tourist appeal.
- Prohibit further linear development along the B870 past Henderson Square.
- Housing opportunities on the east side of Station Road, north side of the A882 and east of Bain Place.

Watten



Settlement Development Areas - Sutherland

Ardgay

Ardgay sits within the Dornoch Firth National Scenic Area. It is situated on the A867 and the Far North railway line and benefits from a train service to Inverness. Piecemeal development between Ardgay and Lower Gledfield will be discouraged.

Placemaking Priorities

- Focus housing development beside the primary school.
- Provide choice of sites for business uses.

Preferred Sites	Use(s)
AG01: Adjacent to Primary School and north of Church Street	Housing
AG02: Ardgay Railway Station Yard North	Business
AG03: Ardgay Railway Station Yard South	Business

Reasons:

AG01 will promote active travel (walking). AG02 and AG03 are previously used land. All sites are existing allocations in the Sutherland Local Plan which remain effective.

Bonar Bridge

Bonar Bridge sits on the east side of the Kyle of Sutherland within the Dornoch Firth National Scenic Area. The New Migdale Hospital is now open on the Cherry Grove site and opportunity for redevelopment of the Old Migdale Hospital exists. Development at South Bonar Industrial Estate will be confined to industrial uses on previously developed areas and will be subject to Flood Risk Assessment and appropriate mitigation measures. The garden ground and open space between the road and the Kyle of Sutherland are of particular importance in retaining the character of the village and development here will be resisted. Linear development along the A836 is discouraged.

Placemaking Priorities

- Develop remainder of Cherry Grove site before identifying other land for housing.
- Reinforce economic development at South Bonar Industrial Estate.
- Protect settlement setting.

Preferred Sites	Use(s)
BB01: Cherry Grove	Mixed use (housing, community)
BB02: South Bonar Industrial Estate	Industrial

Reasons:

BB01 is central and well connected to rest of settlement while BB02 is an established industrial estate with potential for further consolidation.

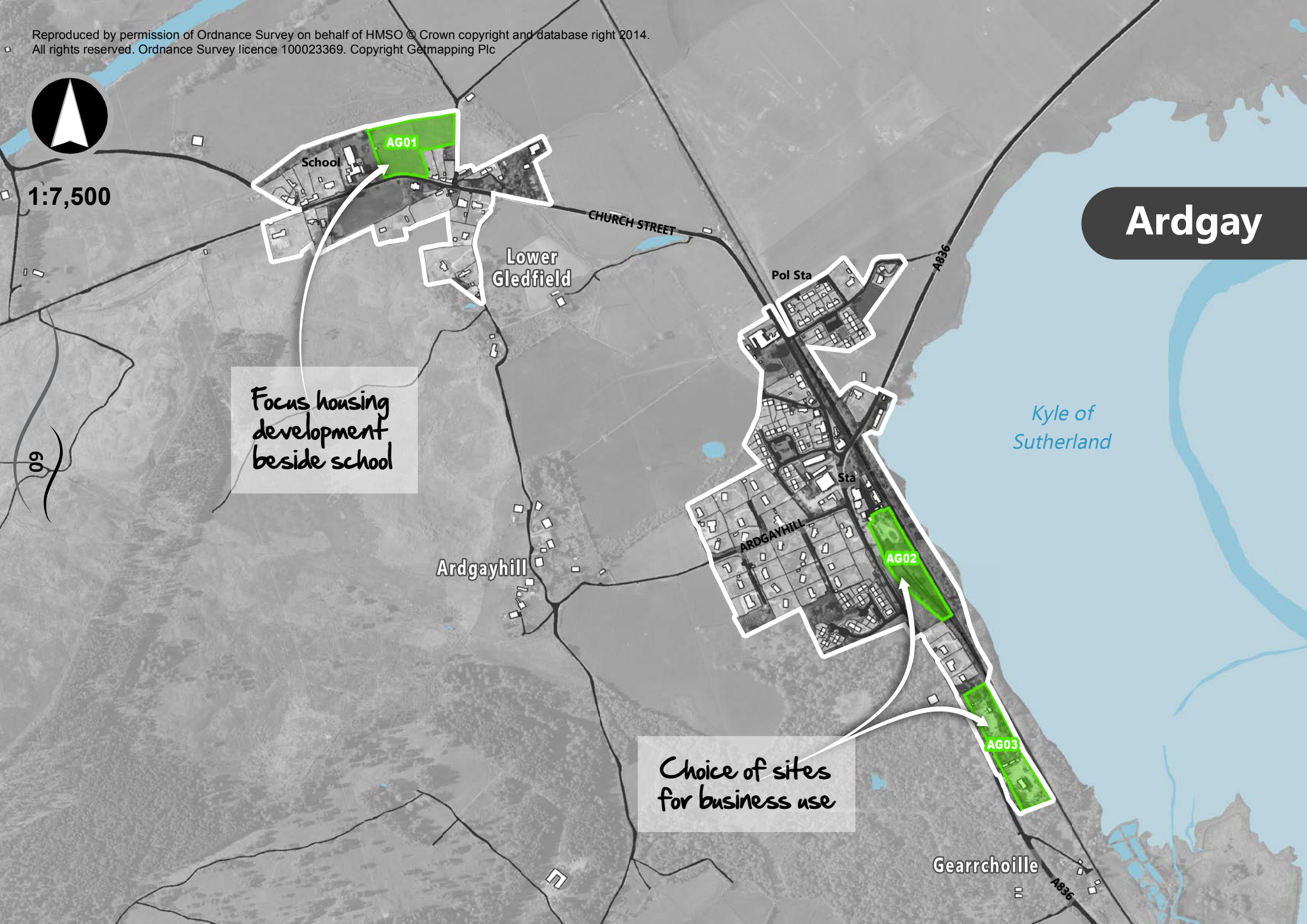


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Ardgay

Focus housing
development
beside school

Choice of sites
for business use



Bonar Bridge



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South Bonar Industrial Estate

BB02

Wastewater Treatment Plant

Consolidate industrial estate

Tulloch Farm

Carn Mor

Pol Sta

Hospl BB01

School

Hospl

Sworddale

Develop remainder of site - well connected to settlement

Ordan



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Brora

Brora lies on the A9 trunk road and is situated on the far north railway line and provides key services for the surrounding area. It sits on the coast adjacent to the Moray Firth SAC and straddles the River Brora which provides an attractive backdrop to the settlement. Regeneration of the town centre is a key priority, with some prominent vacant buildings that could be redeveloped. Redevelopment opportunities for tourism/recreational related activities also exist at the former Radio Station site, which could be linked in with paths along the coast. Land at the former River Fascally recreation area is at high risk of flooding and is therefore unsuitable for most forms of development. However there may be opportunity for improvements to the existing recreational area such as new changing rooms. All development proposals in Brora should have regard to the potential presence of former coal mining activity.

Placemaking Priorities

- Regenerate town centre.
- Focus housing growth around central area, including previously used land at Rosslyn Street, Former MacKay's Garage, and Old Woollen Mill.
- Regenerate former Radio Station site for tourism uses.
- Provide choice of sites for business and industrial uses.

Preferred Sites	Use(s)
BR01: East Brora Muir	Housing
BR02: Rosslyn Street	Housing
BR03: Old Woollen Mill	Housing
BR04: Former Radio Station	Mixed Use (tourism, recreation)
BR05: Scotia House	Mixed Use (business, housing)
BR06: Former MacKay's Garage	Mixed Use (housing, business)
BR07: Adjoining Industrial Estate	Industrial

Reasons:

BR01 East Brora Muir is further away from centre but it provides additional housing land choice.

Development at BR02 Rosslyn Street and BR06 Former MacKay's garage could improve the appearance of the southern entrance into Brora. Existing permission at Rosslyn Street.

BR03 Old Woollen Mill is partially developed.

BR04 Former Radio Station is previously used land which would benefit from regeneration.

BR07 Adjoining Industrial Estate is a logical extension of existing industrial estate.

Alternative Sites	Use(s)
BR08: West of Masonic Hall	Housing

Reasons:

Potential alternative housing site instead of East Brora Muir.

Brora

Choice of housing sites - majority on previously used land

Regeneration of town centre

Choice of business or industrial sites



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Non-preferred Sites	Non-preferred Use(s)
BR09: Carrol House	Mixed Use
BR10: Tordale	Housing
BR11: Former River Fascally recreation area	Housing

Reasons:

Land at Carrol House is proposed to remain within the SDA – small infill site with planning permission.

Land at Tordale feels removed from remainder of settlement.

Not supportive of development at former River Fascally amenity area due to high flood risk and separation from rest of settlement, with no footpath link.

Dornoch

Dornoch functions as a service centre for the local area providing schools, retail and employment and is a priority for housing in The Council's [Housing Strategy](#). Tourism is a major source of income for the area. A Conservation Area covers the historic core of Dornoch and a town centre boundary will be identified. The Square would benefit from environmental improvements. The former abattoir site would benefit from redevelopment, in particular the northern end around the existing buildings; land to the south of the abattoir is at risk of flooding but may be suitable for limited development such as car parking.

Placemaking Priorities

- Encourage new housing development to meet The Council's priority for housing by identifying a range of sites.
- Provide choice of housing sites well related to existing settlement.
- Redevelop key brownfield sites.
- Improve community facilities.

Preferred Sites	Use(s)
DN01: Dornoch North	Mixed Use (housing, retail, employment)
DN02: Dornoch South Abattoir	Mixed Use (student accommodation, employment, community, open space)
DN03: Dornoch Business Park	Business and Light Industrial
DN04: Bishopsfield	Housing
DN05: Meadows Park Road	Housing
DN06: Adjacent to Dornoch Academy	Community
DN07: Meadows Park	Community

Reasons:

Approved masterplan for DN01 Dornoch North site with phased development which indicates a layout sympathetic to existing contours and open space in areas shown to be at risk of flooding.

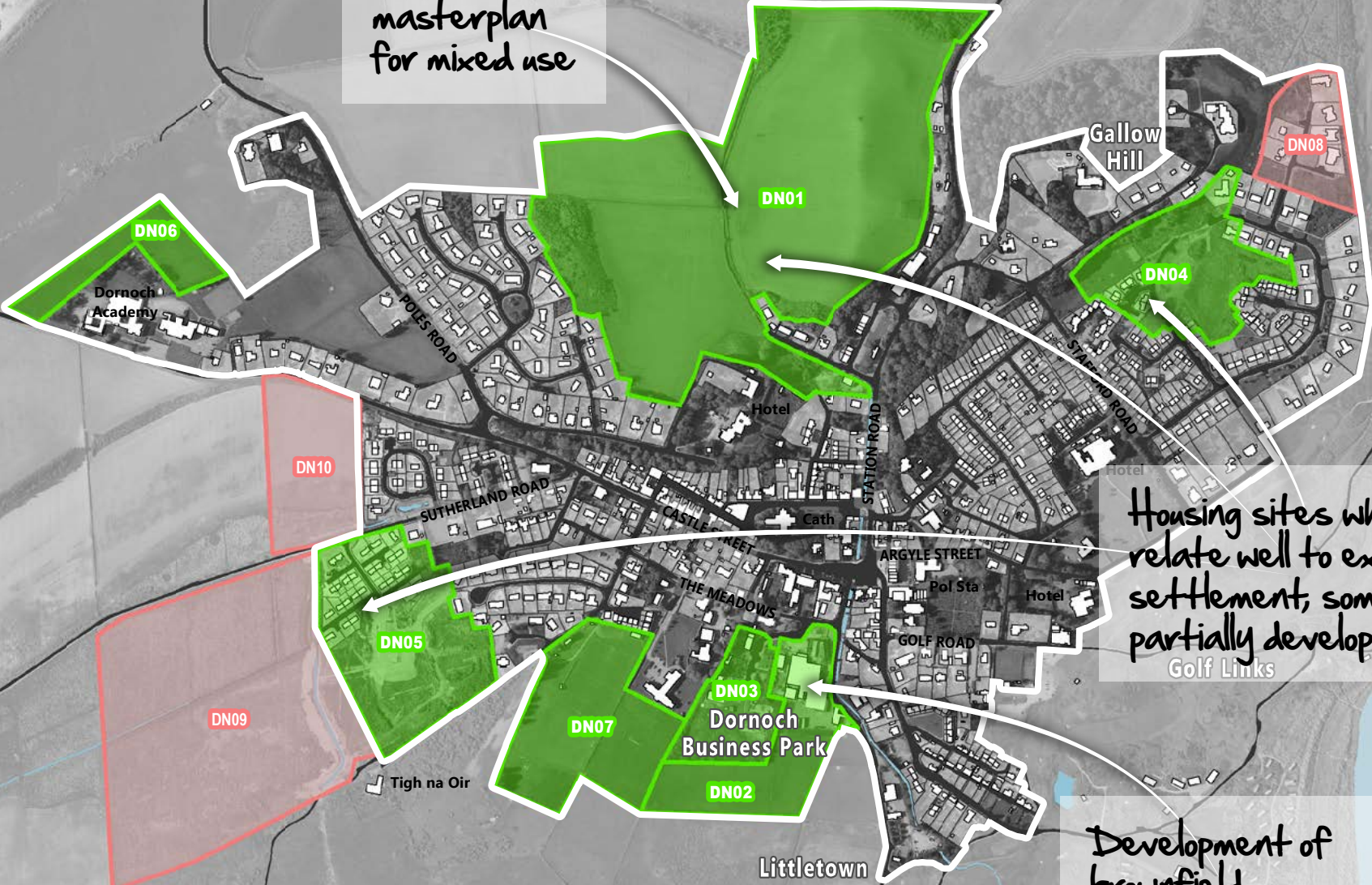
DN02 Former abattoir site suitable for development at northern end around existing buildings. Southern end of site at high risk of flooding. Built development on areas shown to be at risk from flooding will be discouraged. Development will be subject to a Flood Risk Assessment.



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Dornoch

Approved masterplan for mixed use



Housing sites which relate well to existing settlement, some partially developed
Golf Links

Development of brownfield abattoir site close to historic core

65

DN03 Dornoch Business Park is an established site.

Small amount of development has happened at DN04 Bishopsfield.

Development has commenced at DN05 Meadows Park Road site.

Extra drop off points at school campus (DN06).

Non-preferred Sites	Non-preferred Use(s)
DN08: Earl's Cross	Housing
DN09: West of Meadows Park Road	Housing
DN10: West of Sutherland Road	Housing

Reasons:

Site at DN08 Earl's Cross is almost built out, but proposed to remain in SDA.

Choice and quality of housing sites already available through other sites without further elongating the settlement. DN09 and DN10 may be suitable in the longer term once other sites have been built out.

Edderton

The settlement boundary is defined to exclude the smallholdings towards the centre of the village in order to protect an intrinsic part of the character of the village. Regard needs to be taken of the proximity of the Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet Special Protection Area and Ramsar site, Dornoch Firth and Morrich More Special Area of Conservation, Dornoch Firth SSSI and the Dornoch Firth National Scenic Area. Two Scheduled Monuments sit within the settlement (the Clach Chairidh and the Carriclair stone circle).

Placemaking Priorities

- Provide choice of housing land that will consolidate the settlement.
- Restrictions to amount and location of housing at West of Station Road and Balleigh Road.
- Safeguard natural assets in and around settlement.

Preferred Sites	Use(s)
ET01: Northeast of Haven	Housing
ET02: Adjacent to Glebe Cottage	Mixed Use (business/homeworking units)
ET03: West of Station Road and Balleigh Road	Mixed Use (housing, community, retail, open space)

Reasons:

Planning application for land at ET01 North-east of Haven.

ET03 west of Station Road and Balleigh Road, planning permission for part of site.

Non-preferred Sites	Non-preferred Use(s)
ET04: Edderton Glebe	Housing

Reasons:

Sufficient quantity and choice of housing land with preferred sites. Issues with railway line.

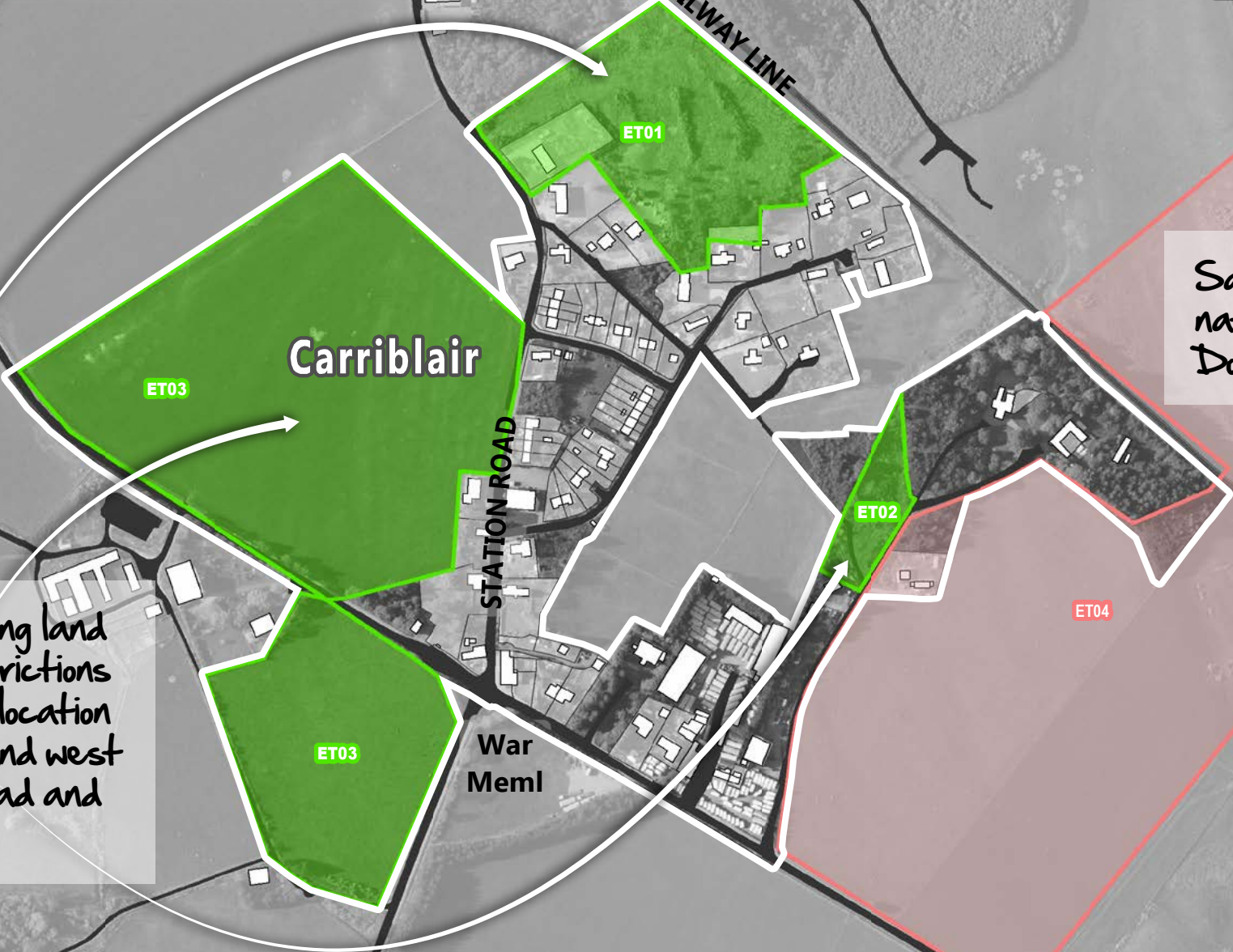
Edderton



1:4,500

A836

RAILWAY LINE



Safeguard natural assets of Dornoch Firth

Choice of housing land with some restrictions on amount and location of housing at land west of Station Road and Balleigh Road

Balblair Farm House



Golspie

Golspie plays an important role in providing a variety of retail and service uses to a large part of Sutherland; a town centre boundary will be identified for Golspie. The historic core may merit formal Conservation Area status. Further land for employment uses is important and existing and new sites have been identified. Appropriate tourist facilities that would support the mountain bikes trails should be encouraged. Open space around the pier should be maintained.

Placemaking Priorities

- Choice of housing sites which relate well to existing settlement.
- Assist and promote economic development.
- Additional tourist facilities.
- Phased development at Drummuie.

Preferred Sites	Use(s)
GP01: Drummuie	Mixed Use (housing, business, industrial)
GP02: Golspie Business Park	Business
GP03: West of existing Business Park	Business
GP04: Mackay House Hostel site	Mixed Use (housing, business)
GP05: Woodland Way	Housing
GP06: Sibell Road	Housing
GP07: Rhives	Mixed Use (tourism)

Reasons:

Existing development brief for GP01 Drummuie.

GP02 Golspie Business Park is an established site which is partially developed.

GP03 West of Existing Business Park would be an extension of the existing Business Park; retail use is not preferred as it is on the edge of the settlement.

GP04 Mackay House Hostel site is previously used land.

Planning permission for housing at GP06 Sibell Road.

Caravan/camping and associated uses at GP07 Rhives to support tourism; presumption against housing.

Non-preferred Sites	Non-preferred Use(s)
GP08: Rhives Farm Steading	Housing
GP09: Ferry Road	Housing
GP10: South Argo Terrace	Housing

Reasons:

GP08 is proposed to stay within the SDA as infill development.

GP09 elongates settlement; potential longer term site once more central sites have been developed.

GP10 is identified as open space in existing local plan and proposed to remain so.



1:11,000

Golspie

Key tourism opportunity

Rhives Farm GP07
GP08

GP06
GP10

GP01
Drummuie
Council Offices

GP02
Golspie Business Park
GP03

GP09

GP05
GP04
School and Library

Choice of housing sites that relate well to existing settlement

Choice of land for employment uses



Helmsdale

Helmsdale is a main centre at the convergence of the A9 and Far North Railway Line. It centres on an original planned village with a formal grid pattern that may merit future Conservation Area status. There are key assets along Helmsdale River and at its historic bridge, as well as around the old and new harbours at the mouth of the river. There is potential for Helmsdale to further improve its strategic location as a service and tourism hub on the A9 corridor.

Placemaking Priorities

- Focus on taking forward existing allocations in the Sutherland Local Plan.

Preferred Sites	Use(s)
HD01: St John's Church	Housing
HD02: East of Industrial Estate	Industry
HD03: North of Rockview Place	Housing
HD04: Shore Street	Mixed Use

Reasons:

Promote the redevelopment of St John's Church.

Encourage industrial expansion by identifying land adjacent to the existing industrial estate.

Encourage housing expansion in the west of the settlement to consolidate the built form.

Alternative Sites	Use(s)
HD05: Simpson Crescent	Housing

Reasons:

The preferred sites have better connectivity to the settlement. Site is used for informal access and development could impact on key amenity views.

Non-preferred Sites	Non-preferred Use(s)
HD06: Helmsdale Harbour	Industry

Reasons:

Safeguard settlement character, setting and road infrastructure by preventing development that would increase/direct heavy traffic into the harbour area.

Lairg

Lairg functions as a service, transport and employment centre for central Sutherland. Expanded tourist facilities in Lairg would be beneficial to consolidate its role, especially with the loss of facilities at Falls of Shin; tourist footfall around the Ferrycroft Centre should be encouraged. Environmental improvements would be welcomed on the site of the Former Sutherland Transport and Trading Company on the corner of Main Street and the A836. Land to the south of Main Street needs to be developed via a masterplan and take account of the site at the Former Sutherland Arms. The Former Laundry site has become mainly residential at the entrance; further residential use to the north east of the site should be discouraged and business use promoted.



1:6,500

Helmsdale

Well-connected site for housing and employment growth

Promote community and tourism uses that compliment the harbour and riverside setting



Placemaking Priorities

- Decrease the amount of housing land and focus housing development around the central area of Main Street
- Assist and promote economic development
- Additional tourist facilities

Preferred Sites	Use(s)
LA01: Old Sutherland Arms site	Mixed Use (retail, tourism, community, housing)
LA02: Southwest of Ord Place	Business
LA03: Northwest of Ferrycroft	Community (recreation)
LA04: Former laundry	Mixed Use (business, housing)
LA05: West of Church Hill Road	Business
LA06: Opposite Fire Station	Housing
LA07: Southwest of Main Street	Housing

Reasons:

Old Sutherland Arms site (LA01) is a key entrance site to Lairg and is previously used land.

Land north west of Ferrycroft (LA03) is unsuitable for most forms of built development due to high flood risk; however it may be suitable for recreational uses.

LA04 Former laundry is previously used land.

LA05 West of Church Hill Road is an established site.

Land to the rear of Main Street (LA07) would consolidate the existing built environment and would not have a major impact on landscape. It is close to facilities and has access onto Main Street.

Alternative Sites	Use(s)
LA08: Southwest of Main Street	Housing
LA09: North of Manse Road	Housing
LA10: East of Manse Road	Housing

Reasons:

Section of South West of Main Street site that runs along the A836 could be removed to help focus growth on section of site parallel to Main Street. This land could still be developed in the longer term.

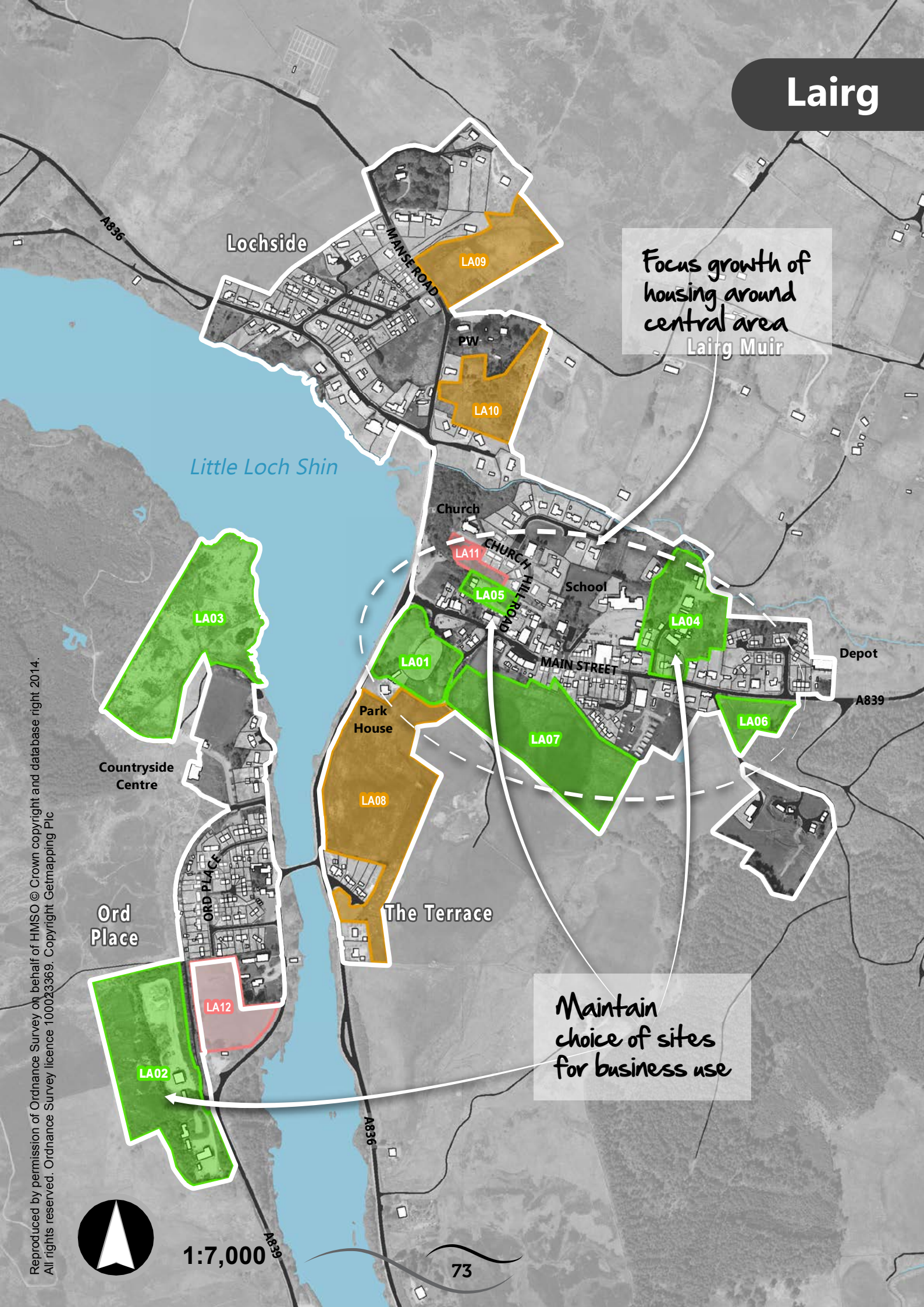
Sites on Manse Road have been allocated for a number of years, with no development. Can potentially remain within SDA. Potential exists for development in longer term.

Non-preferred Sites	Non-preferred Use(s)
LA11: North of Lairg Industrial Estate	Housing
LA12: Ord Place	Housing

Reasons:

LA 11 is difficult to access, potential infill opportunities. LA12 has potential for housing in longer term once more central sites have been developed.

Lairg



Focus growth of housing around central area
Lairg Muir

Maintain choice of sites for business use

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1:7,000

Lochinver

Lochinver is the main service, employment and tourist centre for south west Sutherland and is a priority for housing in The Council's [Housing Strategy](#). Business focus is at the fishing port and deep water berth. It is within the Assynt-Coigach National Scenic Area and therefore the landscape is sensitive to development.

Placemaking Priorities

- Encourage new housing development to meet the Council's priority for housing by identifying a range of sites.
- Support and promote economic growth by identifying a range of sites for business and tourism-related uses.

Preferred Sites	Use(s)
LV01: Former sheep pens north of Inver Park	Housing
LV02: Cnoc A Mhuillin	Housing
LV03: Canisp Road	Housing
LV04: West of Coast Guard Station	Business
LV05: Culag Harbour	Industry
LV06: Land adjacent to Assynt Leisure Centre	Industry
LV07: Woodland huts in Culag Wood	Mixed Use (community and tourism)

Reasons:

Sites at the former sheep pens north of Inver Park (LV01) and Cnoc a Mhuillin (LV02) are sensitive to the unique landscape setting.

Encourage housing growth by identifying new land at Canisp Road (LV03).

Support economic development by identifying land for harbour-related uses at LV04, LV05 and LV06.

Support community and tourism growth by identifying land for mixed uses at LV07.

Alternative Sites	Use(s)
LV08: East of Main Street	Housing

Reasons:

A large portion of this site has a challenging terrain to develop. Other housing options within the settlement have fewer constraints.

Non-preferred Sites	Non-preferred Use(s)
LV09: Assynt and Stoer Glebe	Housing

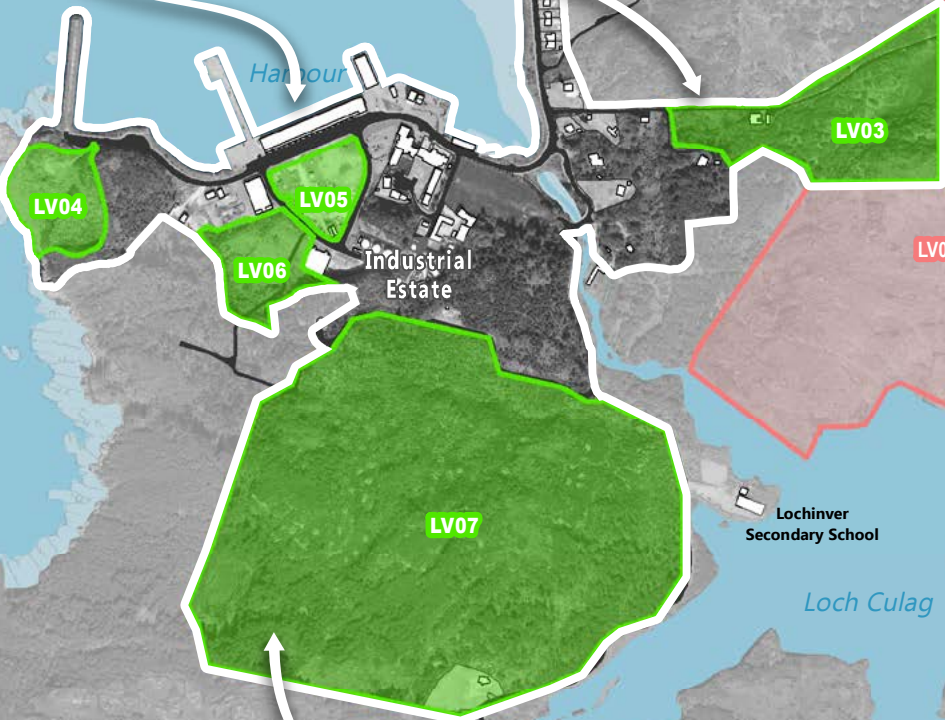
Reasons:

Protect the unique landscape setting by preventing development encroaching into the countryside.

Lochinver



Employment growth at harbour and a range of housing options



Unique tourism and community uses that are sensitive to woodland setting



Tongue

Tongue is the strategic service and tourist centre for NW Sutherland. The settlement is within the Kyle of Tongue National Scenic Area and therefore any proposed development will require careful consideration. Future development should reinforce and compliment the existing village setting, support community growth and safeguard the quality of the multiple natural and built heritage designations.

Placemaking Priorities

- Promote housing development by providing a range of options in the north and south of the settlement.

Preferred Sites	Use(s)
TG01: South of Loyal Terrace	Housing
TG02: West of Varrich Place	Housing
TG03: South of St Andrew's Church	Housing

Reasons:

Consolidate development within the existing settlement by identifying land south of St Andrew's Church.

Encourage housing expansion that is coherent with the existing built form west of Varrich Place.

Alternative Sites	Use(s)
TG04: East of the Fire Station	Housing

Reasons:

Provide new options for housing to the east of the Fire Station. This is an alternative because we think development at this site will have greater impact on the designed landscape than other sites. This site is more constrained by steep sloping topography than the preferred sites.

Non-preferred Sites	Non-preferred Use(s)
TG05: Tongue Glebe	Housing
TG06: Fire Station	None

Reasons:

Prevent sprawl of housing development into the surrounding countryside and safeguard good quality croft land from development by not allocating a large glebe site, the majority of which is disconnected from the existing settlement.

Site TG06 is essentially built out, hence no further development potential is identified for it.

Tongue

Safeguard unique setting

Hall

Tongue Primary School

Tongue Hotel

VARICH PL

LOYAL TERR

TG05

TG04

TG06

TG03

TG02

TG01

A range of options for housing growth

Rhian Burn

A838

A838

1:4,500

77

Inchberry

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Growing Settlements – Sutherland

Bettyhill

Issues

- Settlement provides a centre for local services, including Farr Primary and High Schools.
- Landscape designations lie to the west and east of the settlement; nearby beaches and natural and cultural heritage features provide key attractions for visitors.
- Built form is sparse and irregular, fragmented by significant changes in ground level.

Placemaking Priorities

- Focus future development within the existing settlement to consolidate the built form.
- Ensure future development is sensitive to Farr Bay, Strathy and Portskerra Special Landscape Area.
- Capitalise on the tourism potential provided by the settlement's location and proximity to nearby natural and cultural heritage features.



Bettyhill



Durness

Issues

- Services for the wider area are concentrated in Durness, including Durness Primary School and a range of service and tourist related businesses.
- The settlement is situated on level cliff top terrain and has a dispersed development pattern along the A838 road and around its junction with the road to Balnakeil.
- Multiple natural heritage designations surround the settlement including Durness Special Area of Conservation, and is within the Oldshoremore, Cape Wrath and Durness Special Landscape Area.

Placemaking Priorities

- Ensure future development is sensitive to the Oldshoremore, Cape Wrath and Durness Special Landscape Area.
- Support the role of the settlement as a local and visitor service centre.
- Support the role of Balnakeil Craft village as a tourist attraction and local centre for business and employment.
- Support the potential for a recreational harbour facility on the west banks of Loch Eriboll.



Durness



Embo

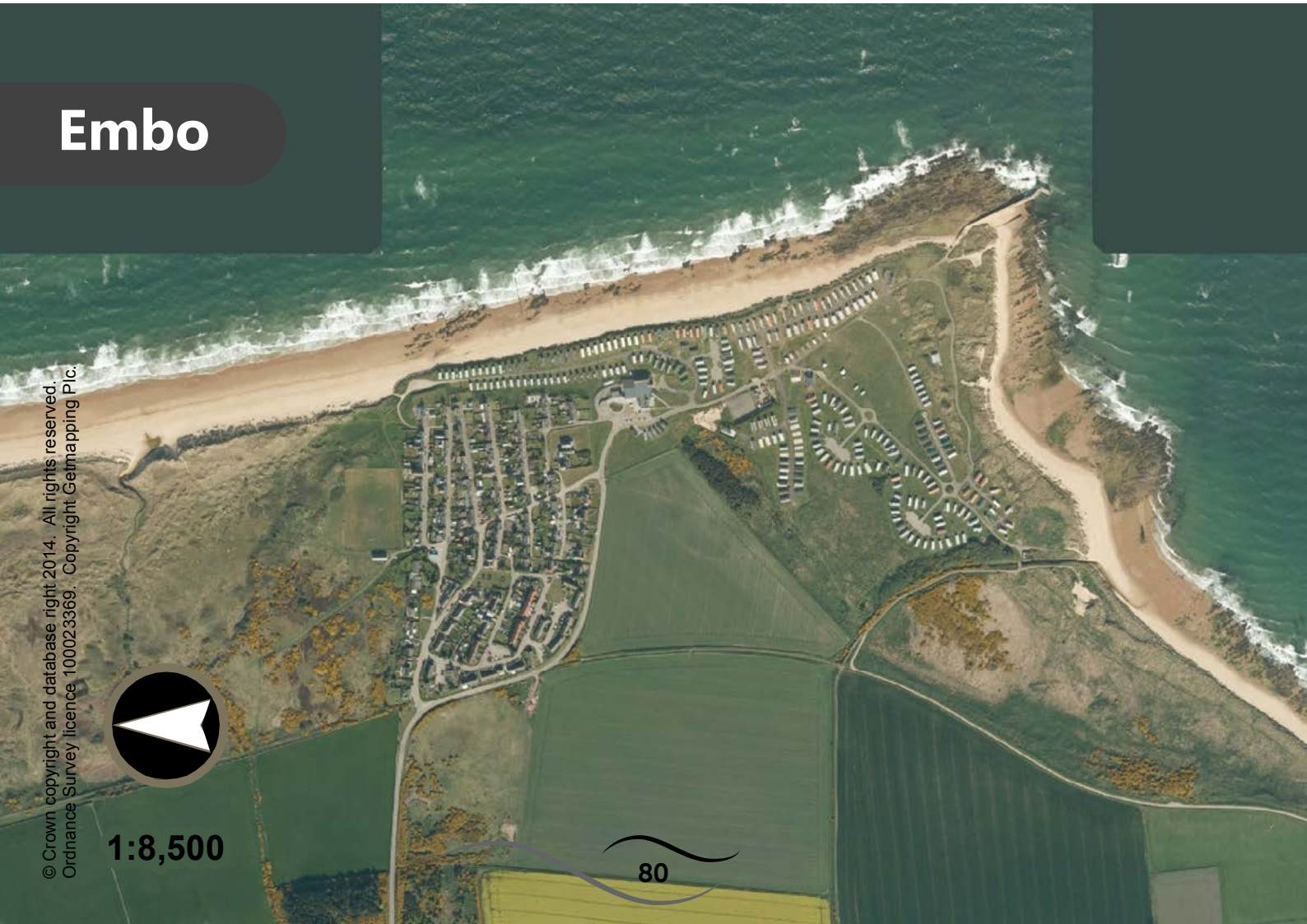
Issues:

- Improvements to the Dornoch-Embo road is a priority for the community.
- Increased pressure on road network during operational period of caravan park.
- Potential for development of new crofts as part of a community-led initiative.
- Limited development for Embo Street until significant realignment and widening of existing road and junction with Dornoch-Embo Road.

Placemaking Priorities:

- Developments to reinforce existing street layout e.g. principal elevation facing the road, similar design/materials.
- Re-use of old school for community uses is encouraged.
- Maintain open space to north of village at football field.
- Significant developments to be accompanied by a recreational management plan to assess any likely increased pressures from recreational access of the sand dunes or disturbance to wintering or breeding birds.
- Regard to Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet SPA, Ramsar site and Moray Firth SAC.
- Regard to chambered cairn Scheduled Monument at front entrance of caravan park.

Embo



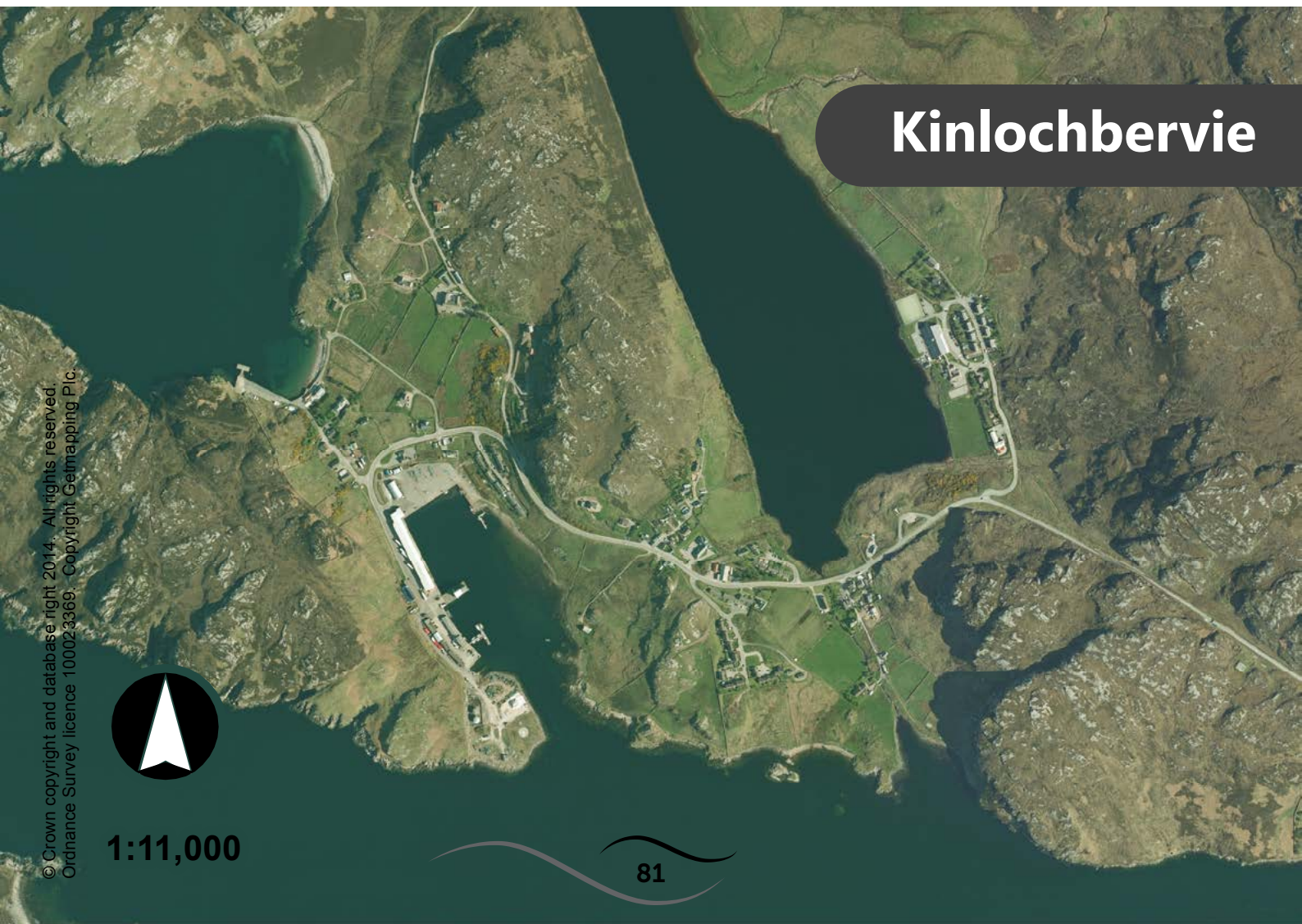
Kinlochbervie

Issues

- Settlement is a key centre for services for NW Sutherland.
- Fishing and tourism provide a focus for employment.
- Complex topography and road pattern around lochs have contributed to a fragmented pattern of development.
- Previous Local Plan drew SDA wide around Loch Clash and Loch Bervie to support future marine-related development.
- Almost half of housing completions were outwith previous Local Plan settlement boundary on non-allocated sites.

Placemaking Priorities

- Continue to support the role of marine industries (including tourism) in the local economy.
- Focus future development to infill sites, and prevent sprawl of the settlement.



Melvich

Issues

- Melvich shares local services and facilities with neighbouring Portskerra, but both settlements are discrete and situated at the mouth of River Halladale.
- The rigs that run from the road east to the coast are on the boundary of the Strathy Coast SSSI. The settlement overlooks the North Caithness Cliffs SPA, and the Farr Bay, Strathy & Portskerra Special Landscape Area lies to the north.
- The built form is dispersed and linear along the A836 road, with a small back land housing cluster adjacent to the industrial estate.
- There is capacity for less than 10 housing units at Portskerra Waste Water Treatment Works.
- Four housing completions have occurred in the period 2001-2010, three of these were within the settlement boundary of the previous local plan.

Placemaking Priorities

- Support use of the industrial estate that still has capacity for further small units.
- Support potential for use of industrial estate as an office hub for small businesses currently working from home and for remote working.
- Any proposed development should have regard to the nearby natural heritage designations.



Melvich



Portskerra

Issues

- Portskerra shares local services and facilities with neighbouring Melvich, but both settlements are discrete and situated at the mouth of River Halladale.
- The western half of the settlement is within the Farr Bay, Strathy & Portskerra Special Landscape Area, and the rigs to the east running to the coast are on the boundary of the Strathy Coast SSSI and near the North Caithness Cliffs SPA.
- The settlement features traditional highland forms concentrated around the junction from the A836 and the junction to the School, with more dispersed dwellings in the north to Berrigoe and at Shore Street.
- There is capacity for less than 10 housing units at the Portskerra wastewater treatment works.
- Six housing completions have occurred in the period 2000-2013, and all of these were within the settlement boundary of the previous Local Plan.

Placemaking Priorities

- The traditional pattern of rigs associated with houses should be maintained.
- Any proposed development should have regard to the nearby natural heritage designations.



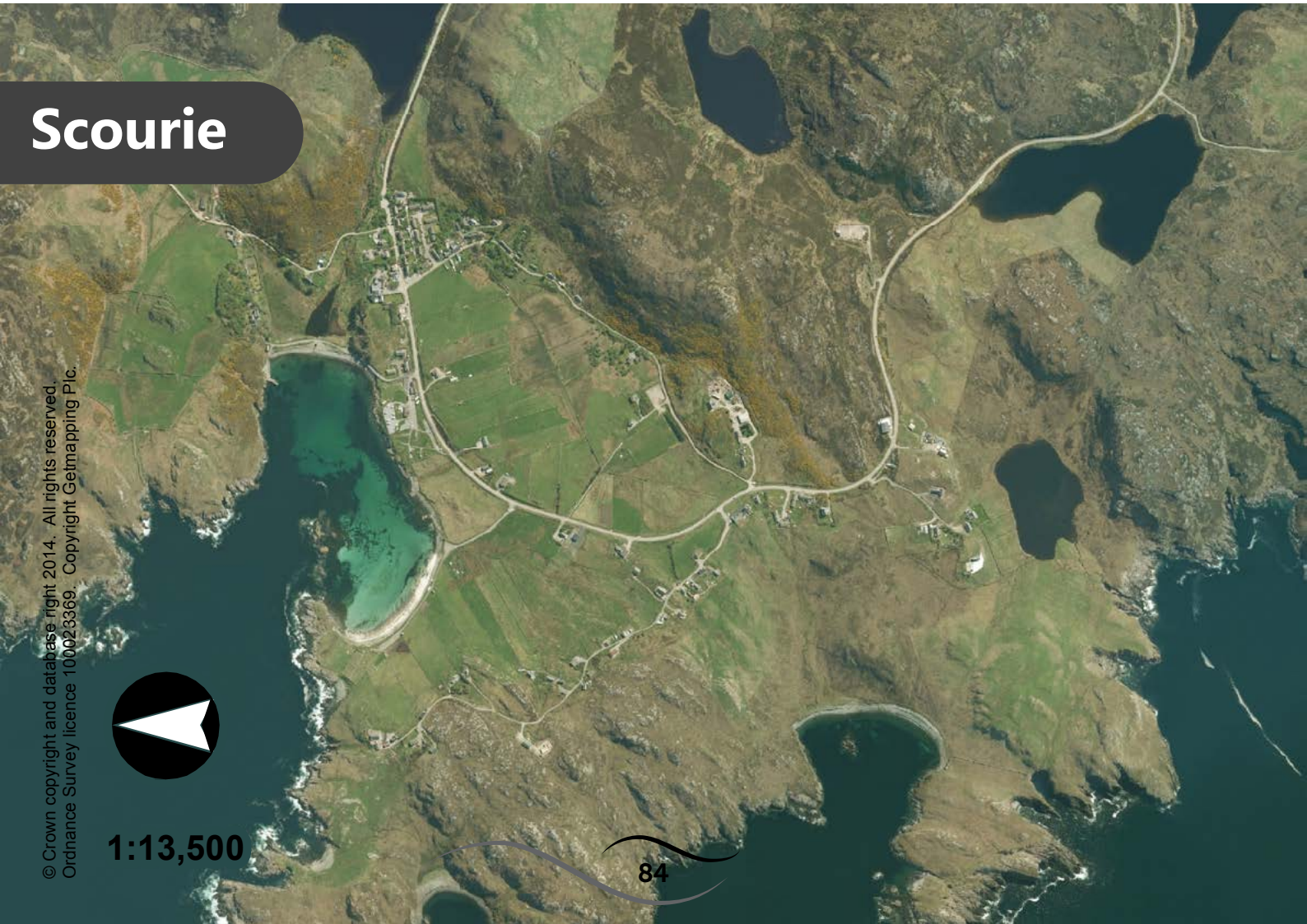
Scourie

Issues

- Scourie is a key village in NW Sutherland, providing key services including Scourie Primary School.
- The settlement has retained a range of traditional highland forms, as well as some more recent developments.
- The settlement has retained its traditional crofting rigs, which, alongside playing fields, make up the open-space centre of the settlement.
- Scourie also serves the NW coast tourism industry and is surrounded by natural heritage designations including Handa Special Protection Area and Scourie Coast SSSI.
- Development at Scourie More should be sensitive to the risk of skylining along the ridge.
- Capacity for Waste Water Treatment is limited to 10 housing units at Scourie Village Septic Tank, and less than 10 at Scourie Handa Septic Tank.

Placemaking Priorities

- Support future development to help sustain existing services, including Scourie Primary School.
- The traditional crofting landscape should be safeguarded in the centre of the village (bounded by the A894 road to the north and west, and by the road linking the settlement in the northeast to the playing fields in the southeast).
- The land stretching from the village hall to the Caravan and Camping site should be safeguarded from development to help retain good croft land and the amenity of the coastal views across Scourie Bay.



Scourie



Settlement Plans

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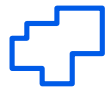
Legend

Iuchair

Potential Settlement Development Area (SDA)*



Suggested Settlement Centre Boundary



Preferred Site



Alternative Site



Non-Preferred Site

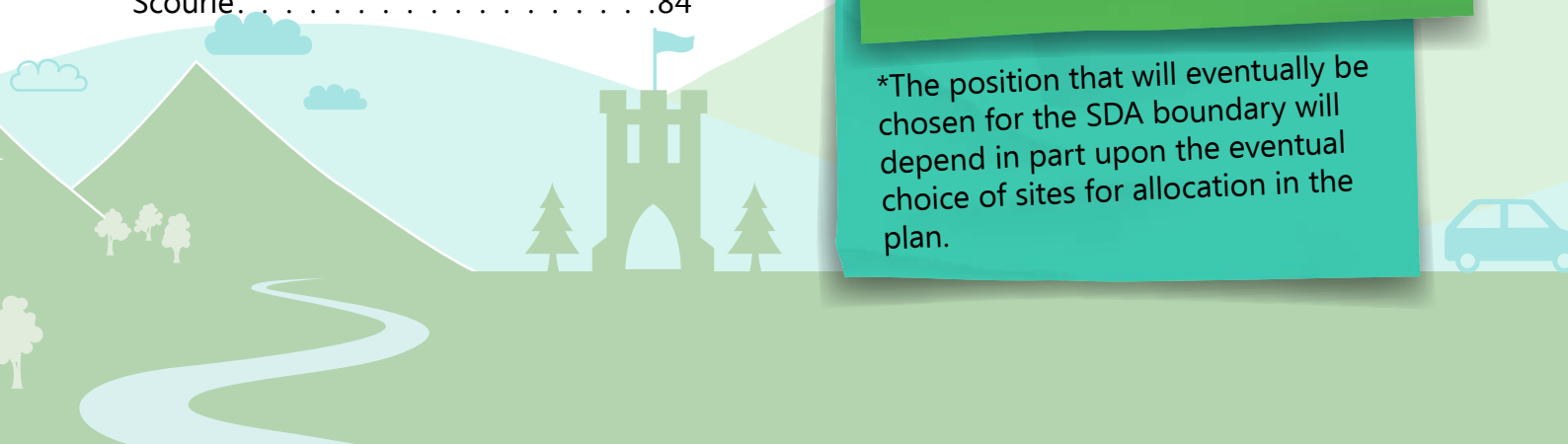


Notes:

Colours of sites may appear slightly different from those shown in the legend because of the colour of the underlying aerial photograph.

Unless otherwise stated, maps are orientated with north to the top of the page. Rotated maps are always shown with north orientated to the left of the page.

*The position that will eventually be chosen for the SDA boundary will depend in part upon the eventual choice of sites for allocation in the plan.



CAS Plan

Caithness
and Sutherland
Local Development Plan



www.highland.gov.uk/casplan