

# Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan Strategic Environmental Assessment

## Plana Leasachaidh Ionadail Ghallaibh agus Chataibh Measadh Buaidh air Àrainneachd

October 2018

**Post-Adoption Statement**

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## Introduction

This is the Post-Adoption Statement for the Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan (CaSPlan) which was adopted on 31 August 2018 by The Highland Council which is the Responsible Authority. It has been prepared in accordance with Section 18 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005.

It explains:

- how environmental considerations have been integrated into the Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan;
- how the Environmental Report has been taken into account;
- how the opinions expressed in response to the consultations on the Environmental Report have been taken into account in the preparation of the Local Development Plan;
- the reasons for choosing the Local Development Plan, as approved, in the light of other reasonable alternatives; and
- the measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of implementation of the Local Development Plan.

The Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan and the accompanying Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) can be viewed online at:

<http://www.highland.gov.uk/casplan>

The SEA includes a Finalised Environmental Report (published in October 2018) which includes updates to take account of the comments which were raised by consultation authorities since the publication of the Revised Environmental Report (published October 2018). Consequently, this Post-Adoption Statement makes reference to and includes extracts from the Finalised Environmental Report.

## Strategic Environmental Assessment Process

The table below summarises the key stages in both the preparation of the Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan (CaSPlan) and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process which accompanied and influenced the content of the Plan:

Timescales	CaSPlan Stages	Strategic Environmental Assessment process
From 2011	Publication of the updated Development Plan Scheme	Prepare a Scoping Report and send to the Consultation Authorities
Autumn 2013	Call for Sites	Gathering variety of information on sites and more strategic issues.
2013/2014	Preparation of Topic Papers	Identifying key environmental issues and priority outcomes
Autumn 2013 – Summer 2014	Pre Main Issues Report (MIR) Engagement	Regular meetings with key agencies
Oct 2014	Publish Main Issues Report	Publish Environmental Report and submit to SEA Gateway
13 Weeks	Consultation on MIR and SEA	
Spring/summer 2015	Consider representations. Prepare Proposed Plan and Action Programme	Consider responses from key agencies. Appraise environmental implications of Proposed Plan and undertake HRA. Make appropriate amendments to Environmental Report
January 2016	Publish Proposed Plan and Proposed Action Programme	Publish revised Environmental Report and draft HRA and submit revised Environmental Report to SEA Gateway
8 Weeks	Consultation on Proposed Plan	
Spring/Summer 2016	Consider representations. Prepare Summary of unresolved Issues and Report of Conformity with Participation Strategy.	Consider responses
September 2016	Publish Modified Proposed Plan	Publish Addendum to Revised Environmental Report
Winter 2016/17	Consider representations. Prepare Summary of unresolved Issues and Report of Conformity with Participation Strategy.	Consider responses
April 2017	Submit Modified Proposed Plan, Action Programme and Report of Conformity to Scottish Ministers to trigger Examination. Advertise submission of Plan.	Submit HRA record to Ministers
April 2018	Examination of Proposed Plan	

	concludes.	
August 2018	Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan adopted by the Highland Council	Publish Post Examination Addendum to Revised Environmental Report and submit to SEA Gateway.
October 2018	Publication of the adopted CaSPlan	Publish Post Adoption SEA Statement and submit to SEA Gateway.
November 2018	Approval of Action Programme by local committees	
From adoption onwards	Put plan into place and monitor our progress	

## Addressing Environmental Considerations in CaSPlan

This section of the Post Adoption Statement sets out how environmental considerations have been taken into consideration when producing CaSPlan. It contains information on how the following has been addressed in the Plan:

- Environmental Problems
- Significant negative effects
- Significant positive effects
- Mitigation

**[The following is from the section “Environmental Problems” on pages 19-20 of the Finalised Environmental Report]**

The table below sets out the sites which are in the adopted plan which have been identified as having a significant effect (either positive or negative) on the environment (sites that were in the Proposed Plan but are not in the adopted plan have been removed from this table – for further information see the Revised Environmental Report). Also included is the relevant SEA question(s) which is significantly effected:

SEA Issue	Potential Environmental Impact resulting from Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan	Implications for Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan
<b>Biodiversity, flora, fauna</b>	Stress on biodiversity and loss of habitat resulting from development. Conflicts between designated areas and economic development. Vulnerability of rare and endangered flora and fauna to changes in climate. Loss of native, ancient, long established and semi-natural woodland cover. Loss of habitats and roosts for protected species. Potential for cumulative impacts on protected species. Potential indirect effects on designated sites.	The local development plan needs to ensure a balance between the demand for development while protecting the quality and character of the environments.
<b>Population and human health</b>	Potential for development to put increased pressure on the natural environment in terms of water and waste water capacity, energy supply and transport links. Limited opportunity for active travel in more remote parts of Highland.	The local development plan will identify mitigation measures for each allocation and its alternative (where appropriate) to ensure key infrastructure provision as detailed does not impact on the natural environment to a negative extent.
	An ageing population is likely to result in housing needs of the population diversifying. It may also put different pressures on services in more rural areas.	The local development plan will look at accommodation where a higher level of assistance is sought to be located close to local services.

<b>Soil</b>	Erosion. Potential contamination from waste storage. Impact of loss of good quality soils (including those identified as prime agricultural and/or carbon rich) through development. Generation of waste soils.	The Local Development Plan will seek to deliver development in line with the policy approaches as set out in SPP and the Highland-wide Local Development Plan.
<b>Water</b>	Flooding, drainage and erosion resulting from infrastructure and changing climate. The need to sustain water supply and sewage treatment. Tidal, pluvial and fluvial flood risk to new and existing development. Reduced quality of watercourses and the coastal environment.	The local development plan will promote the development of sites which will lead to the sustainable use of resources, including water. It will seek not to allocate sites which substantial sections of the site are at a medium to high flood risk and where sites are allocated to put in place mitigation.
<b>Climatic factors</b>	Lack of sustainable design. Impact of sea level rising. Movement of species in the face of climate change.	The local development plan should seek to allocate sites which will aid the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions through development of mixed use sites, and better active travel connections, where appropriate, will be identified as a requirement of development on sites. Ensure allocations avoid sites at risk from sea level rising or which might prejudice coastline management measures to respond to sea level rising.
<b>Material assets</b>	Increase travel/energy needs. The challenge of managing access to the natural environment.	The local development plan will allocate sites which link well with active travel opportunities. Ensure protection of paths and safeguarding of access rights. The local development plan will identify sites for the provision of waste management facilities within existing business and industrial areas. Land allocations will, where appropriate, contain requirements for the provision of recycling facilities.
<b>Cultural heritage</b>	Stress on the historical environment resulting from development.	The Local Development Plan will protect the historic environment through the application of the policy framework in the Highland wide Local Development Plan and avoid development which may have an adverse impact on historic environment features.
<b>Landscape</b>	Wind farm developments affecting scenery and wildlife/ impact on landscape character and cumulative impacts. Development of new housing and infrastructure. Poor siting and design eroding the quality	The local development plan should encourage responsible development of all landscapes (as per the European Landscape Convention). Development should be sited and designed to fit with the landscape

of both townscapes and landscapes. Negative impact of development on traditional crofting settlement character. Loss of local landscape character. Attrition of wild land and wildness qualities. Impact of development on isolated coast.

character, whilst local distinctiveness and identity are retained and/or enhanced as detailed within the relevant Landscape Character Assessment. In crofting areas, developments should respect the character of the crofting settlements, particularly with regard to siting, scale and design. Through the HwLDP Wild Land Areas will be identified and will be safeguarded through policy.

### Minimising and/or Maximising the Significant Effects

The table below sets out the sites which were identified, as part of the site assessment process, as having a significant effect (either positive or negative) on the environment.

**[The following is from the section “Minimising and/or Maximising the Significant Effects” on pages 31-33 of the Finalised Environmental Report]**

Settlement	Proposed Plan Site Reference	SEA Question(s)	Significant Positive Effect Pre-mitigation	Significant Negative Effect Pre-mitigation	Significant Positive Effect Post-mitigation	Significant Negative Effect Post-mitigation
Bonar Bridge	BB02	3a		X		
Brora	BR02	11a, 11d	X		X	
Brora	BR04	11a, 11d	X		X	
Brora	BR08	11c		X		X
Castletown	CT01	5d		X		
Castletown	CT01, CT02, CT03, CT04, CT06	11c		X		X
Castletown	CT07	11a, 11d	X		X	
Dornoch	DN01	11c		X		X
Dornoch	DN03	3a		X		
Dornoch	DN03	16b			X	
Dornoch	DN04	7a			X	
Dornoch	DN04	8b, 10b	X		X	
Dornoch	DN04	11c, 12b		X		X
Edderton	ET01	16a		X		
Edderton	ET02	11c, 16a		X		
Golspie	GP03	6a			X	



Settlement	Proposed Plan Site Reference	SEA Question(s)	Significant Positive Effect Pre-mitigation	Significant Negative Effect Pre-mitigation	Significant Positive Effect Post-mitigation	Significant Negative Effect Post-mitigation
Golspie	GP03	11c		X		X
Golspie	GP03	11d	X		X	
Golspie	GP05	7b		X		X
Halkirk	HK03	12b		X		X
Helmsdale	HD01	11a, 11d	X		X	
Helmsdale	HD02	7a			X	
Helmsdale	HD02	11c		X		X
Helmsdale	HD04	5f			X	
Helmsdale	HD05	11c		X		X
Lairg	LA01	11c		X		X
Lairg	LA03	11a	X		X	
Lochinver	LV01	6a	X		X	
	LV02	11c		X		X
Lochinver	LV03, LV09	9b, 11c, 12a		X		
Lochinver	LV04, LV05, LV06	6a		X		
Lochinver	LV04, LV05, LV06	11a	X		X	
Lochinver	LV07	5a		X		
Lochinver	LV07	10c, 10e			X	
Lybster	LY02, LY03	11c		X		
Thurso	TS01	11c		X		X
Thurso	TS02	10b	X		X	
Thurso	TS02	10e			X	
Thurso	TS02	11c		X		X
Thurso	TS04(Land NW)	10a, 10b, 10c, 10d, 10e	X		X	
Thurso	TS04 (Land NW)	11c, 12b		X		X
Thurso	TS04 (Land W)	11c		X		
Thurso	TS04 (Land W)	12b		X		X
Thurso	TS05	10c, 10d, 10e, 15a, 15b, 16c,			X	

Settlement	Proposed Plan Site Reference	SEA Question(s)	Significant Positive Effect Pre-mitigation	Significant Negative Effect Pre-mitigation	Significant Positive Effect Post-mitigation	Significant Negative Effect Post-mitigation
		16d				
Thurso	TS05	11a	X		X	
Thurso	TS07	6a		X		
Thurso	TS07, TS08	11a	X		X	
Thurso	TS10	10b			X	
Thurso	TS10	11c		X		X
Thurso	TS16, TS17, TS03	2a, 7a		X		
Thurso	TS16, TS17, TS03	11c		X		X
Tongue	TG01, TG02, TG03, TGO4	11c		X		X
Wick	WK19, WK02, WK03	11c		X		X
Wick	WK04	16a		X		
Wick	WK05	11a, 11d	X		X	
	WK06	10a, 10c, 10d, 10e		X		
Wick	WK07	11c		X		X
Wick	WK07	16a		X		
Wick	WK11	11a	X		X	
Wick	WK11	15a, 15b, 11d			X	
Wick	WK12	11a, 11d, 15a, 15b	X		X	
Wick	WK15	15a, 15b	X		X	
Wick	WK18	11c		X		X
Wick	WK18	12a		X		
Wick	WK20, WK21	11a, 11d	X		X	
Wick	WK22	4a		X		
Wick	WK22	8a, 11a	X		X	

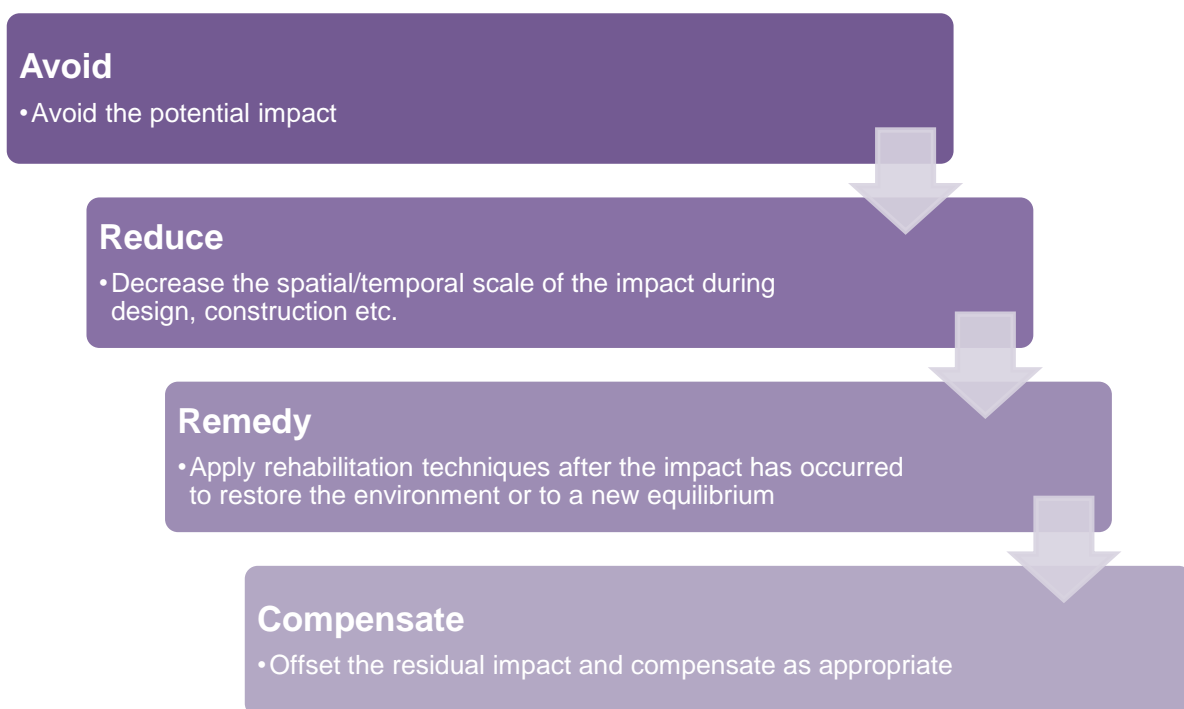
We have been able to minimise and/or maximise significant effects by, where possible, identifying additional mitigation measures and through our site preference approach. Significantly negative impacts may result in listing mitigation measures which will avoid,

reduce, remedy or compensate or if these cannot be secured then our non-preference for the site. Significantly positive effects may be maximised through additional enhancement mitigation such as siting and design requirements and identifying environmental features which can be made into positive features within the development.

**[The following is from the section “Mitigation Measures” on pages 33-34 of the Finalised Environmental Report]**

## Mitigation Measures

An important feature of the Strategic Environmental Assessment is to assess any environmental impacts from development and identify relevant mitigation. Schedule 3 paragraph 7 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 requires an explanation of “the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme.” Our approach to mitigation is based on the following recognised hierarchy:



In the first instance the Plan seeks to **avoid** significant adverse effects on the environment. This represents the cheapest and most effective form of impact mitigation. It has mainly been achieved through either not preferring particular uses on a site or not preferring the site as a development opportunity. Where this is has not been achieved, the provision of the Plan seeks to **reduce** the severity of impact, identify ways to **remedy** or restore the environment, as the last resort, **compensate** for the adverse effect so there is no net loss. An additional approach has been to identify potential mitigation which will **enhance** the environment and achieve a net positive gain.

By undertaking a detailed site assessment for each of the site options outlined in the Plan, we have been able to identify mitigation measures required for each specific site.

Some of the most common mitigation measures identified through this SEA are highlighted below. The Site Assessments have been beneficial in highlighting mitigation measures such as:

- Undertaking flood risk assessments and avoiding areas at risk of flooding
- Undertaking of protected species surveys for sites where protected species are known to be present
- Undertaking of archaeological survey work where sites are known to have archaeological interest
- Compensatory planting where a site involves loss of trees
- Maximising of active travel links to reduce reliance on car use
- Minimising waste, both during construction and operational phases
- Sensitive design and layout to avoid negative impact on the settings of Listed Buildings
- Appropriate buffers/setbacks to maintain the integrity of natural heritage designations
- Design to take advantage of passive solar gain
- Setting requirements for development setbacks from particular features or constraints.

The mitigation measures identified have helped inform the developer requirements set out for site allocations in the Plan. In all cases standard mitigation which is set out in policies of either the Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan or the Highland-wide Local Development Plan will be secured to ensure that the negative environmental effects can be minimised and the positive environmental effects can be maximised.

## Consideration of Consultation Responses

The following key stages in the preparation of the SEA have been published and consulted on with the exception of the Post Examination Addendum (Aug 2018) and Finalised Environmental Report which is for information and reference going forward:

- Environmental Report (Oct 2014)
- Revised Environmental Report (Jan 2016)
- Addendum to Revised Environmental Report (Sept 2016)
- Post Examination Addendum (Aug 2018)
- Finalised Environmental Report (Oct 2018)

Below are the tables that record the consideration of comments on the versions.

[The following is from sections “Appendix 1”, “Appendix 3”, “Appendix 5” and “Appendix 6” of the Finalised Environmental Report]

### Appendix 1 - Responses to Post Examination Addendum

#### Introduction

This report sets out the responses from the Consultation Authorities to the Post Examination Addendum which accompanied the Intention to Adopt Version of the Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan and the response by the Planning Authority.

#### Response by Consultation Authority:

##### Historic Environment Scotland

Comment	Planning Authority Response
Thank you for sending this one for information and we can confirm that we are content with the updates to the Environmental Report.	Noted.

##### SNH

Comment	Planning Authority Response
We understand that the post-examination addendum to the Environmental Report has been shared as a means of providing clarification on changes arising from the examination of the Proposed Plan. We are content with the approach taken.	Noted.

##### SEPA

Comment	Planning Authority Response
I note that the submission is for information only. I can confirm that I welcome the clarification and explanation provided by the addendum and am content with the approach	Noted.

taken.	
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## Appendix 3 - Responses to the Addendum to Revised Environmental Report

### Introduction

This report is intended to set out the responses by the Consultation Authorities to the Revised Environmental Report Addendum which accompanied the Caithness and Sutherland Modified Proposed Local Development Plan and how the comments will be taken on board by the Planning Authority.

### Next Steps

Following examination of the Local Development Plan any factual errors in the Environmental Report will be corrected. Following adoption of the Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan by The Highland Council, a Post Adoption Statement will be produced and published in due course.

### Response by Consultation Authority:

#### Historic Environment Scotland

Comment	Planning Authority Response
<p>Thank you for your consultation which we received on 29 September about the above and its Environmental Report (ER). We have reviewed these documents in relation to our main area of interest for the historic environment. The first part of this response relates to the modified plan, with part two focusing upon its environmental assessment.</p> <p>Part 1: Modified Proposed Plan</p> <p>The modifications to the proposed plan in Thurso are noted and we can confirm that we have no comments to offer regarding the removal of these sites from the proposed plan.</p> <p>Part 2: Environmental Report</p> <p>We welcome the clarity provided regarding the list of amendments to be made to the finalised Environmental Report. We are content with the approach proposed and therefore have no further comments to offer. None of the comments contained in this letter constitute a legal interpretation of the requirements of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. They are intended rather as helpful advice, as part of our commitment to capacity-building in SEA.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>

SNH

Comment	Planning Authority Response
Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed updates to the Environmental Report that accompanies the proposed Caithness & Sutherland LDP. As the proposed updates reflect the revisions required in the LDP, we do not have any comments to make on the updates.	Noted.

## SEPA

Comment	Planning Authority Response
<p>Thank you for your Addendum Environmental Report (ER) consultation submitted under the above Act in respect of the Caithness and Sutherland Modified Proposed Plan. This was received by SEPA via the Scottish Government SEA Gateway on 29 September 2016.</p> <p>We thank you for providing an update regarding the proposed modifications to the Proposed Plan and how these will be addressed in the finalised ER. We can confirm that we do not consider that the modifications will have significant effects in relation to our interests and that we are content with the approach you intend to take.</p>	Noted.

## Appendix 5 - Responses to the Revised Environmental Report

### Introduction

This interim report is intended to set out the responses from the Consultation Authority to the Revised Environmental Report which accompanied the Caithness and Sutherland Proposed Local Development Plan and how the comments will be taken on board by the Planning Authority.

### Next Steps

Following examination of the Local Development Plan any factual errors in the Environmental Report will be corrected. Following adoption of the Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan by The Highland Council, a Post Adoption Statement will be produced and published in due course.

### Response by Consultation Authority

#### Historic Environment Scotland

Comment	Planning Authority Response
Thank you for consulting Historic Environment Scotland on The Highland	Noted.

<p>Council's Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan Proposed Plan Environmental Report which was received in the Scottish Government's SEA Gateway on 18 December 2015. This response is in the context of the SEA Act and our role as a Consultation Authority. Our focus in reviewing the report is on the potential for significant environmental impacts on the historic environment that may arise from the plan. This response should be read in conjunction with our response to the first Environmental Report dated 27 January 2015.</p>	
<p>We welcome that our comments made in response to the previous Environmental Report (ER) have been acted upon and particularly welcome the section of the revised ER that summarises the consultation responses and actions carried out. Overall the assessment is robust and we are content to agree with this findings presented. In light of this we only wish to offer the following comments.</p>	Noted.
<p><b>Site Assessments</b> We are content to agree with the updated findings of the site assessment. The following comments relate to a small number of sites that have the potential for significant effects on the historic environment.</p>	Noted.
<p><b>WK04: North of Coghill Street</b> We welcome the updating of the assessment here in line with our comments at the previous ER stage. The requirement for a minimum 20 metre buffer from the scheduled monument The Pap, broch 350m E of Hillhead (Index no. 578) is welcomed as is the recognition to consider the setting of the monument through sensitive siting and design.</p>	Noted.
<p><b>WK07: Land at Broadhaven Farm</b> We note the assessment here for this Long Term Site and welcome that our previous comments haven been acted upon in that the mitigation for impact of this site on the scheduled monument The Pap, broch 350m E of Hillhead (Index no. 578) should mirror that of WK04.</p>	Noted.
<p><b>ET01: North-East of Haven</b> We welcome the revised findings of the assessment here and the identification of the need for sensitive design in response to the scheduled monument Carriblair stone circle &amp; cist (Index No. 2971), particularly in relation to access requirements for the site.</p>	Noted.



<p><b>ET02: West of Station Road</b></p> <p>The recognition of the need to retain the line of site from the stone circle noted above and the scheduled monument Clach Chairidh, symbol stone (Index No. 1673) to the hills to the west and south west is welcomed. In order to minimise the impact on the visual relationship between these monuments any housing in the field adjacent to the standing stone should be sensitively located and designed.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p><b>Monitoring</b></p> <p>In terms of monitoring the effects of the plan we note that the proposed monitoring framework for the historic environment is based on Buildings at Risk numbers. It should be noted that the Buildings at Risk Register is no longer maintained by the Scottish Civic Trust but by Historic Environment Scotland. However, we would suggest that further consideration be given to identifying an appropriate way to monitor the effects of the plan. It is unlikely that the monitoring of BAR data alone would provide for a meaningful reflection of the performance of the plan. Consideration could be given to indicators that reflect whether or not the mitigation identified for individual site assessments has been carried through to consented applications. For example, where identified significant effects on the historic environment and their mitigation are brought through to developer requirements for the delivery of sites, monitoring the successful implementation of these requirements would be beneficial in monitoring the performance of the plan.</p>	<p>Noted. The implications of collecting this data will be considered before determining whether it is appropriate.</p>

**SEPA**

Comment	Planning Authority Response
<p>We are generally supportive of the approach your Council takes to SEA and consider that the general comments we made in our response to the previous consultation equally apply here. We have however provided further detailed comments on your assessment of sites and these can be found in the attached Annex. Most of our detailed comments unfortunately relate to issue we brought up previously not being full addressed. Based on Appendix 1 then the specific example sites we highlighted previously have been addressed but other</p>	<p>Noted.</p>

<p>sites where the comments equally apply have not been amended.</p>	
<p>Please note, this response is in regard only to the adequacy and accuracy of the ER and our comments on the Plan itself have been provided separately. As the Plan is finalised, The Highland Council as Responsible Authority, will be required to take account of the findings of the Environmental Report and of views expressed upon it during this consultation period. As soon as reasonably practical after the adoption of the plan, the Responsible Authority should publish a statement setting out how this has occurred. We normally expect this to be in the form of an "SEA Statement" similar to that advocated in the <a href="#">Scottish Government SEA Guidance</a>. A copy of the SEA statement should be sent to the Consultation Authorities via the Scottish Government SEA Gateway on publication.</p>	<p>Noted. These steps are intended to be undertaken following Examination of the Plan.</p>
<p><b>Assessment of sites</b> Please note that there seems to have been a mix-up in the naming and referencing of sites in Wick; sites WK10 and WK14 are not explicitly included, the naming of some sites in the ER do not match the name in the Plan and there seems to be three assessments for site WK22. It would be helpful if the Post Adoption Statement addressed this issue.</p>	<p>Noted. This anomaly will be corrected in the finalised environmental report.</p>
<p><u>Q1b - direct physical impacts on water environment</u> We generally agree with the assessments presented and welcome the mitigation measures when they are outlined. There are still a number of sites where comments are made about potential pollution issues (i.e. in relation to foul drainage) or flood risk rather than concentrating on direct physical impacts and it would have been good to have seen this issue addressed.</p>	<p>Noted. This will be corrected in the finalised environmental report. However we do not believe this will result in any material changes to the assessments within the environmental report.</p>
<p><u>Q1c - existing water supplies within 250m</u> A number of sites still have the questioned answered as "X - Not Applicable" which we presume is a mistake. We presume that in cases where there is no known water supply within 250 m of the site the pre-mitigation score should be zero.</p> <p>We highlight that TS04 in Thurso does not identify the use of the Wolf Burn for water supply for the nearby distillery. As outlined in our response to the Plan appropriate mitigation should be outlined.</p>	<p>Noted. This will be corrected in the finalised environmental report. However we do not believe this will result in any material changes to the assessments within the environmental report.</p> <p>TS04 - This will be corrected in the finalised environmental report. Dependant upon the outcome of the Plan's Examination a developer requirement may be added as mitigation. However we do not believe this</p>

	will result in any material changes to the assessments within the environmental report.
<p><u>Q3a - flood risk</u> We generally agree with the individual assessments outlined however please note that there are a small number of assessments where either (1) the need for flood risk assessment has been identified in the assessment but this mitigation has not be brought forward into the Plan or (2) we have now identified the need for flood risk assessment. Please see our response to the Plan for examples.</p>	Noted - dependant upon the outcome of the Plan's Examination the site assessments listed in the response to the Proposed Plan may be amended to reflect this comment.
<p><u>Q9b - connection to public water supply and waste drainage</u> We note that it has been determined since the MIR stage that site AG04 is currently served by a private foul drainage system. The proposed mitigation suggests that a new private foul drainage system to land would be acceptable. In line with your own Highland wide Local Development Plan new development within settlements served by a public foul drainage system should connect to that system. As a result, and in line with our response to the Plan, the appropriate mitigation should be connection to the public sewerage system.</p>	Dependant upon the outcome of the Plan's Examination this mitigation will be amended. However we do not believe this will result in any material changes to the assessments within the environmental report.
<p><u>Q11a - use of brownfield land</u> There are still a number of sites where it is not clear why they have been scored as zero as the scale or type of development unlikely to affect brownfield land. It would seem to us that they should have been scored "X - N/A no brownfield land on site". They include sites LY02 and LY03 in Lybster and sites TS02, TS11 and TS15 in Thurso.</p>	Noted – this will be corrected in the finalised environmental report.
<p><u>Q11b - contaminated soils</u> There are still a number of sites where it seems to be incorrectly stated that the scale or type of development is unlikely to be affected by contaminated land. These include, for example, WK07 and HK05. We presume the pre-mitigation score should have been that there was or was not potentially contaminated land on site.</p> <p>We presume that the pre-mitigation score for site BR02 and WK12 should have been negative as a positive score can only be achieved with mitigation.</p>	Noted – this will be corrected in the finalised environmental report.
<p><u>Q11c - loss of greenfield land</u> There are still a number of assessments which are scored to state that the scale or</p>	Noted – this will be corrected in the finalised environmental report.

<p>type of proposal means that it's unlikely to result in a loss of greenfield land, however, it seems that "no greenfield land" or "small sale use of greenfield land" would be more appropriate. Examples include TS05, TS08 and TS11 in Thurso.</p>	
<p><u>Q12a - disturbance of carbon rich soils and wetlands</u> We are generally in agreement with the assessment presented but query whether peat has been identified on site TS2 and WK18 by mistake.</p>	<p>Noted – this will be corrected in the finalised environmental report.</p>
<p><u>Q13a - meeting Zero Waste Plan targets</u> As outlined previously it seems that an inconsistent approach has been taken in determining whether allocations require recycling facilities with some settlements, such as Dornoch, being identified as requiring a number of different new facilities and other settlements, not requiring any.</p> <p>We previously suggested you should discuss each settlement with your waste colleagues and deciding (1) whether additional collection facilities are required for the settlement and (2) if so, where should they be located. We note that although the requirement for a recycling facility is included at mitigation for a number of allocations no mention of recycling facilities is included in developer requirements within the plan. How this issue has been addressed should be outlined in the Post Adoption Statement.</p>	<p>Noted. The site assessments will be corrected in the finalised environmental report. It is considered that this would be addressed by compliance with HwLDP policy 70 and associated Supplementary Guidance.</p>
<p><u>Q13b - minimise demand for primary resources</u> As outlined previously, we note that this question has mainly been answered to suggest that development is unlikely to have any significant impact on demand for natural resources. However there are some sites, such as HD03 and HD05 in Helmsdale, where it is thought that the development will result in an increase used of primary resources. The reasons why these sites are different in not clear.</p>	<p>Noted – this will be corrected in the finalised environmental report.</p>

## SNH

Comment	Planning Authority Response
<p>Our advice is that the SEA will need some relatively minor revisions to take account of our advice on the Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) for the proposed LDP. Our</p>	<p>We will ensure that the finalised environmental report correlates with the HRA.</p>

<p>separate response to you on the HRA record (same date, our reference CPP139914) contains more detail on our advice in relation to this issue. Rather than repeat that here, we refer you to that response. Provided the relevant revisions are made to the Environmental Report in relation to Natura sites, we consider that the other key environmental issues have been correctly identified, and the assessment of likely significant effects on the environment has been carried out adequately.</p>	
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## Appendix 6 – Response to Environmental Report Comments

*Note: Any site references refer to MIR site references and not Proposed Plan site references.*

### Historic Scotland

Comment	THC Response
<p><b>Vision/Strategy and Policy Assessments</b> The assessments of the preferred vision and policies and their reasonable alternatives is clearly laid out in Appendix 4 of the Environmental Report and we are content to agree with the scorings for these assessments.</p>	Noted.
<p><b>Influence of SEA on each settlement</b> This summary outlining the influence of the assessment on the spatial strategy decision making process is particularly welcome.</p>	Noted.
<p><b>General comments on Spatial Strategy</b> The rigorous approach to the assessment of the spatial strategy is welcome. A clear understanding of the historic environment baseline is evidenced and it is particularly welcomed that this understanding has been brought through to the discussion of settlement context that is contained within the Main Issues Report itself.</p>	Noted.
<p>As we have previously discussed the framework utilised for the site allocations assessments does have one disadvantage in that the assessment criteria discusses both setting and access but does not allow for a +/- score. This has led to a number of assessment scores that we do not agree with. I note that the assessment question 16h relates to the historic environment. When</p>	<p>The assessment criteria was agreed with the Consultation Authorities and whilst it has become apparent through doing the assessments that a +/- score would be useful, the assessment database has been created. This comment has however been noted and West Highland and Islands LDP has taken this on board and included a +/- score in their site assessment scoring.</p>

<p>updating the Environmental Report at Proposed Plan stage you may wish to use this question to consider access while solely considering the relative impacts on historic environment assets and their setting through assessment questions such as 16a. This would enable the assessment to more accurately reflect the impacts on setting and access.</p>	<p>The use of questions 16a and 16h is noted.</p>
<p><b>Edderton ET01</b> As noted in the assessment, this allocation contains the scheduled monument Carr Blair stone circle and cist. Given the issues associated with accessing this site we consider that the site should be scored as a significant negative effect prior to mitigation, with the delivery of appropriate mitigation lessening this impact.</p>	<p>Pre-mitigation score has been changed to “-“. Mitigation now includes a requirement for sensitive access to site, with post mitigation score changed to “-“ to reflect the impact of development on setting.</p>
<p><b>Edderton ET03</b> We consider that the scoring for this site prior to mitigation should be for a significant negative effect. The mitigation outlined within the assessment of the impact on the setting of the scheduled Clach Chairidh symbol stone is particularly welcomed and should serve to mitigate the significance of the effect to one that is minor negative in nature. We would therefore disagree with the post mitigation scoring of a positive effect. The positive element of an improvement of access to and interpretation of the site is noted and would therefore agree with the scoring at 16h. However, we consider that the scoring of 16a should reflect questions of setting (as access and interpretation are dealt with by 16h) and while accepting that the mitigation will lessen the setting impact it cannot be seen as a positive impact against the monuments current setting.</p>	<p>Pre-mitigation score has been changed to “-“. Post mitigation score changed to “-“ to reflect the impact of development on setting.</p>
<p><b>Wick WK24</b> This allocation contains the scheduled monument The Pap, broch 350m E of Hillhead (Index no.578). We consider that the assessment should score the development of this site as a significant negative effect prior to mitigation. The appropriate delivery of the mitigation outlined in the assessment should serve to lessen this impact but we would not agree that this should be considered to be positive. As in the comments above relating to Edderton ET03 an improvement of access does not mitigate setting impacts.</p>	<p>Pre-mitigation score has been changed to “-“. Post mitigation score changed to “-“ to reflect the impact of development on setting.</p>
<p><b>Wick WK27-28</b></p>	<p>Pre-mitigation score has been changed to “-“</p>

Given the proximity of the scheduled broach discussed above we consider that the assessment provided for these two sites should mirror that of WK24.	-“. Post mitigation score changed to “-“ to reflect the impact of development on setting.
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## SNH

Comment	THC Response
<p><b>Main Report</b></p> <p>Page 18 – Landscape table – it would be informative (as for nature conservation areas) if the % extent of the plan area covered by these features was added as a column (i.e. NSAs – 23.8%; SLAs – 20.0%; Wild Land Areas – 49.0%).</p>	Noted and included.
Page 20 – for landscape, the implications for CaSPlan of the existing environmental problem of attrition of wild land and wildness qualities is not discussed. Development plans should identify and safeguard the character of wild land areas (SPP, para 200).	Noted and included.
Pages 21-22 and 25-29 – it is rather unclear why only a few of the main issues (preferred approach and alternatives) are discussed or assessed here. Issues 2a, 2b (i) (managing new growth), 2c, 2d, 3, 5 and 6a are not discussed or assessed; although for some of these, no alternative is identified. Issues 3 however (Economy) does have alternative approaches.	<p>We took the approach of only assessing policies and policy tools and their alternatives. The other chapters (issues) are there to embellish the thinking behind the vision (outcomes) and spatial strategy and therefore are covered by the assessments for the vision.</p> <p>The revised ER will however include an assessment for the hinterland boundary policy tool.</p>
Page 24 – the table of SEA Objectives and Site Assessment Questions appears not to match the numbering used in Appendix 6. We think for our interests it should read as follows – SEA Objective 1 (Biodiversity, flora and fauna) - 5a, 5b, 5c, 5d, 5e, 5g SEA Objective 2 (Population and Human Health) (re open space, paths and green network) – 10a, 10b, 10c, 10d, 10e SEA Objective 3 (Soil) (re carbon rich soil and geodiversity) – 5f, 12a SEA Objective 8 (Landscape) – 14a, 14b, 15a, 15b	This has been corrected.
Pages 33-35 Summary of Site Assessment Findings – please see our detailed comments under Appendix 6 below for some other instances where we think a significant negative effect pre-mitigation could be identified.	Noted.
Page 38 – the discussions of how SEA has influenced site selection for each settlement is very	The discussion of each settlement has been updated to reflect the allocations

welcome. We suggest the discussion for Lochinver would be worth expanding to include LV03 and LV07, given the effects on the environment that development of these sites raises.	identified in the Proposed Plan.
Page 42 – Monitoring – Biodiversity – there should also be monitoring of any loss of woodland and the degree to which (in accordance with Control of Woodland Removal Policy) this is matched by compensatory planting. If the green network is identified for the East Coast Settlements and for Thurso/Wick (existing and aspirational), monitoring can include the impact of development on the green network, e.g. any fragmentation or any improvement of connectivity.	The monitoring section has been updated to reflect a more pragmatic approach to monitoring.
Page 43 – Monitoring – Soil – any development on carbon rich soil should also be monitored.	The monitoring section has been updated to reflect a more pragmatic approach to monitoring.
Page 45 – Monitoring – Landscape – any development in Wild Land Areas should also be monitored.	The monitoring section has been updated to reflect a more pragmatic approach to monitoring.
<b>Appendix 1 – How earlier comments have been taken into account</b> No comments.	Noted.
<b>Appendix 2 – Baseline data, information and maps</b> Biodiversity, flora and fauna – baseline environmental information on protected species – reference to the SNH website could more specifically refer to the interactive map on SNHi – <a href="http://www.snh.gov.uk/publications-data-and-research/snhi-information-service/map/">http://www.snh.gov.uk/publications-data-and-research/snhi-information-service/map/</a>	Included
Maps of Marine Protected Areas and designated seal haul-out sites can now be added (the latter is listed under Landscape, but would more appropriately be listed here).	Information added.
Soil – spatial data on carbon rich soil, deep peat and priority peatland habitat will shortly be available (primarily to inform wind energy spatial frameworks) – see – <a href="http://www.snh.gov.uk/planning-and-development/advice-for-planners-and-developers/soilsand-development/cpp/">http://www.snh.gov.uk/planning-and-development/advice-for-planners-and-developers/soilsand-development/cpp/</a>	Noted
Landscape – Descriptions Reports for Wild Land Areas will be available in due course, so reference can then be added to these.	Noted.
<b>Appendix 3 Outline of vision, spatial strategy and general policy approaches</b> See comment under Appendix 4.	Noted
<b>Appendix 4 – Vision/Strategy and Policy Assessments</b> As already noted, it is unclear why only some of the issues and options are assessed here. It would be helpful if the reason for this could be	We took the approach of only assessing policies and policy tools and their alternatives. The other chapters (issues) are there to embellish the thinking behind the vision and spatial



provided. Issue 3 for example ('How should CaSPlan support a strong and diverse economy?') would appear to warrant assessing, given that the preferred approach includes the Council potentially considering suitable marine renewables proposals on non-allocated sites, and given that one of the alternatives is not to allocate business land, but to allow business to locate and expand wherever they feel is best, guided only by HwLDP policies.	strategy and therefore are covered by the assessments for the vision.
<b>Appendix 5 – Cumulative Assessment</b> In terms of this cumulative assessment, and the scenario of 100% take-up of allocated sites, it may be worth considering Dornoch in particular. This settlement is adjacent to a number of protected areas (NSA, SAC, SPA/Ramsar). However we appreciate that cross-reference is made here to the eventual Habitats Regulations Appraisal of the plan, which will consider in-combination effects as regards European sites.	The comment is welcomed and we have continued to use the same cumulative assessment approach.
<b>Appendix 6 – Settlement Assessment</b> General - the answers to Q5g do not relate to habitat connectivity, although the analysis does.	It is noted that the answers do not relate to habitat connectivity however this was spotted after the matrix had been finalised. For Q5g the scoring has been completed in the knowledge that the accompanying text is incorrect. The comments and mitigation do however relate to habitat connectivity. This error has been noted by the Development Plans Team and has been corrected for future use of the assessment matrix in other LDPs.
Brora BR10 (non-preferred) – Q10e – the '+' score for green networks is unclear, as there is no commentary/mitigation text.	The post mitigation score has erroneously been put where the mitigation comment should be. The mitigation comment which should have been shown is: "Provide path linking into adjacent roads/paths".
Brora BR11 (non-preferred) – Q10a/b – re open space this is scored '0' but given the MIR indicates a (non-preferred) use of housing, and given from a desk appraisal this appears to be an amenity area, a '-' or even '- -' score would have been expected.	The pre and post mitigation score has been changed to "- -" in recognition of the potential loss of open space if site is used for housing.
Castletown CT01/03 – Q12a – here it says that the site is in an area of blanket peat coverage, but this should be checked for accuracy, as it is not included in the draft SNH carbon-rich soil map.	The pre and post mitigation score has been changed to "- -" in recognition of the mistake.
Castletown CT12 (non-preferred) – Q5d – re woodland this site appears from a desk survey to be wholly within inventoried woodland, which would indicate a '- -' rather than a '-' score.	Pre mitigation scored changed to "- -" and post mitigation to "- -" as site wholly within inventoried woodland.
Castletown CT04 – Q10b – re open space provision it is unclear why this is scored '++' as	Pre-mitigation changed to "+"

opposed to '+' (as in the case of CT01) – do the proposed masterplans of these two potential large allocations differ in their open space requirements?	
Castletown CT05 – Q5e – given reference in Q5d to possible felling of large mature trees, a bat survey may be required.	"Bat survey may be required" added to mitigation. And Pre-mitigation score changed to "-".
Castletown CT11 (non-preferred) – Q5c and Q5f – given location of this site wholly within Dunnet Links (geological and biological) SSSI, a '-' rather than a '-' (5c) and '0' (5f) score would have been expected.	Q5c. Pre and post mitigation scores changed to "- -" to reflect impact on designations  Q5f. Pre and post mitigation scores changed to "-" to reflect potential geological impact
Dornoch DN01 and DN09 – Q5b – given proximity to several Natura sites, a '-' score pre-mitigation rather than '0' would seem more logical, pointing to the need for further assessment as part of the HRA (as has been done for other housing sites in Dornoch).	Pre-mitigation score changed to "-" for both sites.
Edderton ET03 – Q15a – this is scored '-' pre-mitigation and '0' post-mitigation but no mitigation is set out to result in this; presumably it is the same mitigation as for Q15b.	Q15a has been given the same mitigation as Q15b to explain in the change in score between pre and post mitigation.
Golspie GP03 – Q15a – this question re landscape character is scored as '+' pre-mitigation but it is then noted that it is included in an area in the Sutherland Housing Landscape Capacity Study that is unlikely to be suitable for development due to value of scenic resource. It would seem more logical for the pre-mitigation score (as for Q15b) to be '-', with mitigation at best leading to a '0' score.	Scoring changed to "-" pre mitigation and "0" post mitigation..
Golspie GP09 (non-preferred) – Q5e – re protected species there is a typo here – the reference to the coast and watercourse and hence the need for an otter survey is put under Q5f (geodiversity).	Typo noted and amended.
Golspie GP10 (non-preferred) – Q10a/b – given this site would result in loss of an open space area zoned in the current Sutherland Local Plan, a '-' rather than a '-'/'0' score for these questions re open space would have been expected.	Scoring changed to "- -"
Halkirk HK01 – Q5b – this omits to refer to proximity to River Thurso SAC – it should be scored as '-' given need for safeguarding of water quality; Q5e – this also omits to consider location adjacent to a river, so need for otter survey should be noted; Q5g – also given adjacency to river, habitat connectivity should be considered, with mitigation being a buffer zone between housing and the river environs. We	HK Q5b. Scoring changed to "-" pre mitigation and "0" post mitigation.  Q5e. Pre mitigation score changed to "-" and otter survey added to mitigation.  Q5g. Pre mitigation score changed to "-" and buffer zone added to mitigation.

<p>suggest assessment for these three factors should be as for HK03 (although we note it already has a live planning permission).</p>	
<p>Halkirk HK07 (non-preferred) – Q5f – it is unclear why this site has been scored as ‘++’ for this question re geodiversity. We suspect this is a typo, and it should be ‘0’ instead; Q12a re carbon-rich soil is marked as ‘not applicable to type or location of development’, which does not seem appropriate given location to south of Halkirk.</p>	<p>Q5f. Pre and post mitigation scores changed to “0”</p> <p>Q12a. Pre and post mitigation scores changed to “-”</p>
<p>Halkirk HK04/05/06 – Q5b – given relative proximity to River Thurso SAC this should be marked as ‘0’ rather than ‘X (N/A)’.</p>	<p>Q5b Pre and post mitigation scores changed to “0”</p>
<p>Helmsdale HD05 – Q15b – this question re visual impact is marked as ‘X’ (N/A) but this is presumably a typo because the MIR notes development here could impact on key amenity views. Hence a ‘-’ or even a ‘--’ score would have been expected for this (alternative housing) site re visual impact.</p>	<p>Q15b Pre mitigation score changed to “-” and comment notes the potential for development to impact amenity views. Post mitigation score changed to “0” and mitigation added: “Any development would require careful consideration of the important amenity views from Simpson Crescent through careful siting, design and landscaping to minimise visual impacts.”</p>
<p>Lairg LA06 – Q12a – this question re carbon-rich soil is scored as ‘X’ (N/A) but this does not seem appropriate for this (greenfield housing) site, unless an explanation is added.</p>	<p>Scoring has been changed to “0”</p>
<p>Lochinver LV01, LV02, LV08 – Q5e – this question re protected species is answered ‘N/A no designations apply’, which seems inappropriate – for other sites this question is answered with a phrase like ‘0 – unlikely to be any impact on protected species’.</p>	<p>Scoring has been change to “0”</p>
<p>Lochinver LV03/LV09 – Q5c – the text here refers to the NSA, whereas this question relates to any impact on SSSIs (NSAs are covered by Q14a); Q5d – from the aerial photograph, it would appear that there is woodland adjacent to the Canisp Road at the western end of this area – this should be considered as part of this question, along with the semi-natural habitat generally of this large area, e.g. retention of trees as much as possible should be included as mitigation; Q12a – much of (non-preferred) site LV09 is carbon-rich soil on the draft SNH map, so given size of site could be scored ‘-’ rather than ‘-’; Q14a – although mitigation refers to scaling back the development to focus on the area closest to Lochinver, the SE part of (preferred site) LV03 in the MIR appears to go onto higher more rugged ground, thus making it less apparent that the original ‘-’ score re impact on the NSA can at this stage be</p>	<p>Q5c score changed to “N/A”</p> <p>Q5d score changed to “-” pre-mitigation to account for NWSS native wood, and with mitigation post-mitigation score is “0”</p> <p>Q12a pre-mitigation score “--”</p> <p>Q14a/ 15a/ 15b mitigation now includes ‘avoiding areas of higher ground’ and ‘retaining as much woodland as possible to screen development’</p> <p>Q14b comment now acknowledges the proximity to a wild land area.</p>

adjusted to '0'; Q14b – Canisp Road leads to a Wild Land Area some 2km to the east of (non-preferred) LV09, and so a '-' score seems more applicable than '0'; Q15a and 15b – see comments under Q14a – again if the SE part of (preferred site) LV03 in the MIR does indeed include higher more rugged ground, it does not seem that mitigation is sufficient at this stage to reduce the '-' score to '0' in terms of landscape character and visual impact. There is also no mention as mitigation here of retention of trees as much as possible to screen any new housing.	
Lochinver LV04 – Q5e – an otter survey should be added as mitigation, to move a '-' score to a '0' score post-mitigation.	Score adjusted and mitigation updates
Lochinver LV07 – Q15a – we suggest this should be scored '-' initially, given impact on local landscape character of any woodland removal here, with mitigation added as for other questions (e.g. Q14a) to bring score up to '0'.	Score adjusted
Lybster LY01/LY02 – Q5b – this is scored as 'X (N/A) No designations apply', but consideration should be given to East Caithness Cliffs SPA and SAC (this can be picked up as part of the HRA of the plan).	Score adjusted to "0" and comments now acknowledge SPA and SAC
Lybster LY04 (non-preferred) – Q5e – given this is an old church building, a bat survey may be required.	Comments and mitigation updated to reflect potential for bat presence
Lybster LY06 (non-preferred) – Q5b – this site includes part of East Caithness Cliffs SAC and SPA. We agree it should be scored '-' pre-mitigation. However in the absence of setting out what any mitigation would be at this stage (apart from setback from cliffs), we consider it is premature to then score it as '0' post-mitigation. If this site is changed from non-preferred to preferred in the preparation of the Proposed Plan, this will need careful further consideration as part of the HRA of the plan; Q5c – Dunbeath to Sgaps Geo SSSI is protected for maritime cliff vegetation – as for the SAC and SPA, given that this site intrudes into the SSSI it should be scored '-' pre-mitigation.	Site remains non-preferred, but post-mitigation scoring amended to "--"
Lybster LY07/LY08/LY09 (non-preferred) – Q5b – rather than mark this as 'N/A no designations apply', mention should be made of East Caithness Cliffs SAC and SPA; Q5e – given proximity of watercourses (especially re LY09) an otter survey could be required.	East Caithness Cliffs SAC and SPA and otter survey included in comments and mitigation.
Thurso TS04 – Q5c – this is scored '0' because the site is downstream of Newlands of Geise Mire SSSI. However we believe that ground water in this area is linked to the SSSI (which is a ground water dependent wetland). Therefore there is connectivity	Q5c. Pre mitigation score changed to "--" and "Preparation of a Groundwater Protection Plan to accompany any planning application to demonstrate no adverse effect on the SSSI" added to

<p>between TS04 and the SSSI, which should be reflected in the SEA. Hence we advise a ‘-’ or even a ‘--’ score would be more appropriate, with mitigation identified to be taken across to the Proposed Plan. Such mitigation could be preparation of a Groundwater Protection Plan to accompany any planning application to demonstrate no adverse effect on the SSSI; Q5e – the aerial photograph indicates that the southern part of this site includes less-managed land (noted as heather moorland in the Environmental Report) than the northern part. A species survey should therefore be added as mitigation. This should include an otter survey, given the burn that runs through the site.</p>	<p>mitigation.</p> <p>Q5e. Pre mitigation score changed to “--” and “Species survey may be required. This should include an otter survey, given the burn that runs through the site.” added to mitigation.</p>
<p>Thurso TS10 – Q5b – given this site is just 80m from the River Thurso SAC across open ground (and not downstream of the SAC as stated in the SEA) we consider this question should be scored as ‘-’ rather than ‘0’ pre-mitigation, and then with standard pollution prevention measures for mitigation to score it as ‘0’.</p>	<p>Pre mitigation score changed to “--” and standard pollution prevention measures added to mitigation.</p>
<p>Thurso TS12 – Q5b – given this site is adjacent to the River Thurso, albeit just downstream of the SAC, rather than adjoining the designation as stated in the SEA, as well as connection to the public sewer, another mitigation measure should be avoidance of sediment or pollution run-off.</p>	<p>“Avoidance of sediment or pollution run-off” added to mitigation.</p>
<p>Thurso TS13 – Q5b – given proximity to River Thurso SAC (immediately upstream of the site) we suggest this is scored ‘-’ pre-mitigation rather than ‘0’, with measures such as connection to the public sewer, SUDS and avoidance of siltation/pollution run-off noted as mitigation, to result in the ‘0’ score post-mitigation.</p>	<p>Pre mitigation score changed to “--” and suggested mitigation added.</p>
<p>Thurso TS05 – this appears to be missing (with TS20 included twice).</p>	<p>TS05 ‘Land West of Bishops Drive’ – was assessed together with TS01 and TS03. The sites were included as part of the Environmental Report. They form part of groups and the full site name may not have been visible.</p> <p>TS20: Land North of Scrabster Mains Farm should have been numbered TS19. This mistake has now been corrected.</p>

<p>Tongue TG01 – Q5e – re protected species, given (from a desk appraisal) trees, scrub and small watercourse on this site, we consider this should be scored ‘-’ pre-mitigation, with the requirement for a species survey and mitigation plan if necessary resulting in the ‘0’ score post-mitigation.</p>	<p>Mitigation updated to include species survey and mitigation plan</p>
<p>Tongue TG05 (non-preferred) – Q14a, Q15a and Q15b – re these questions on NSA, landscape character and visual impact, it says that this site would not significantly extend the built area of Tongue. However it also says that the majority of the site is outwith the Settlement Development Area. The MIR also states that this site would result in sprawl of housing development into the surrounding countryside, and is disconnected from the existing settlement. We therefore consider the text here should be amended to be clearer about negative landscape effects.</p>	<p>Comments and mitigation updated to clarify.</p>
<p>Tongue TG06 – this appears to be missing.</p>	<p>Site TG06 is built out and was included in the MIR in error.</p>
<p>Wick WK25 and WK34 – Q5e – both pre- and post- mitigation scores are ‘0’, but mitigation is included re need for protected species survey and mitigation plan if needed, because of features such as watercourses and old buildings. We suggest in order to highlight this mitigation that the pre-mitigation score should be amended to ‘-’.</p>	<p>Pre-mitigation score changed to “-“ as suggested.</p>
<p>Wick WK07 Sites at South Head – Q5g, Q15a, Q15b – it is unclear how the assessment considers possible effects on the whole shoreline area from say Salmon Rock to South Head. The aerial photograph indicates this is relatively natural, with paths as well as the former quarry road. The assessment could be more cautious pre-mitigation as regards habitat connectivity, landscape character and visual impact, as well as noting the negative effect on protected species (otter), open space and paths. Given this part of the site is presently zoned for amenity in the Caithness Local Plan, with proposals for enhanced recreation, the assessment of harbour-related industrial use should consider how this will be compatible (especially as this is not spelt out in the MIR).</p>	<p>Suggested amendments have been made to Q5g (impact on habitat connectivity), 15a (landscape) and 15b (visual impact).</p>

Wick WK22 – Q5g – the minor watercourse through the centre of the site provides a focus for a habitat corridor and maintenance of connectivity to the south; this is not reflected in the assessment ('0') and we suggest a '-' score is given pre-mitigation, with the '0' score being post-mitigation (i.e. protection for watercourse and its corridor, to be part of the green network of the area).	Suggested amendments have been made to Q5g
Wick WK01, WK05, WK09, WK12 and WK31 – these appear to be missing.	The sites were included as part of the Environmental Report. They form part of groups and the full site name may not have been visible.
<b>Appendix 7 – Site Assessment and SEA Checklist</b> No comments.	Noted.

## SEPA

Comment	THC Response
<p><b>General Comments</b></p> <p>We consider that the main ER document provides a good summary of the detailed assessments which have been carried out. The use of clear tables, such as those used to explain the relationship between the SEA Objectives and Site Assessments and the table on pages 33-35 highlighting the significant effects for the site assessments are especially useful.</p>	Noted.
We are content with the range of alternatives that were considered and the assessment of them.	Noted.
We are also generally in agreement with the results of the site assessments, although there is some slight inconsistency in how different sites are scored and we think there are some sites where effects were maybe missed.	For the Revised ER we will try to ensure that any inconsistencies in scoring are rectified and that all effects are noted and mitigation provided as appropriate.
Our detailed comments below concentrate on the assessments themselves and proposed mitigation measures, all of which should be brought forward into the Plan. Further more detailed comments are also provided for you to consider in your revised ER.	Noted.
<p><b>Assessment of the Vision and Policies</b></p> <p>We agree with the assessment of the preferred vision that it can at best only have mixed effects on the environment as it does not make either explicit or implicit reference to</p>	The vision and outcomes have been revised following comments from the MIR consultation and the SEA assessments have been revised accordingly.

<p>issues such as soil, land, waste and water. We note that the proposed mitigation is that the Vision be revised when the Plan is next revisited in 2012. However, as outlined in our response to the MIR, now that you have identified this limitation we would encourage you to take steps to address it now.</p>	
<p>We generally agree with the assessments for the Policies and Special Landscape Areas and their alternatives.</p>	Noted.
<p><b>Cumulative Assessment</b> Assessing cumulative effects is difficult and we consider your approach of comparing different development rates an interesting way of doing so. We are content with the assessments presented.</p>	Noted.
<p><b>Assessment of Sites</b> We welcome the detailed assessments carried out of preferred, alternative and non-preferred sites and as outlined above are generally content with the assessment. All the mitigation measures outlined in the assessments should be brought forward into the Plan.</p>	Noted.
<p>Below we have provided some assessment-specific and site-specific comments where we think there is value in doing so. We highlight that sites CT07, TS05, TS19, WK05, WK09 and WK12 do not seem to have been assessed.</p>	<p>The sites were included as part of the Environmental Report. They form part of groups and the full site name may not have been visible.</p> <p>TS20: Land North of Scrabster Mains Farm should have been numbered TS19. This mistake has now been corrected.</p>
<p><u>Q1b - direct physical impacts on water environment</u> We generally agree with the assessments presented and welcome the mitigation measures when they are outlined. There are a number of sites however where the following issues were noted and could be considered further:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comments are made about potential pollution issues (i.e. in relation to foul drainage) or flood risk rather than concentrating on direct physical impacts;</li> <li>• Smaller watercourses run through the site or they are adjacent to water features and are identified as not having an effect, where we would consider that a pre-mitigation score might better relate to a potential localised negative effect. In some cases, such as WK22 in Wick, we would suggest that specific mitigation</li> </ul>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>WK22 changed to include suggested amendments.</p> <p>Post mitigation score for LA03 has been changed to “+” and mitigation added.</p> <p>Suggested amendments made to TS05.</p>



<p>will be required to achieve a neutral post mitigation score;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where watercourses have already been straightened opportunities exist to enhance the water environment by re-engineering the watercourses to give them a more natural course. This could result in a positive post-mitigation score. Examples are LA03 in Lairg and TS05 (not assessed) in Thurso.</li> </ul>	
<p><u>Q1c - existing water supplies within 250m</u></p> <p>We highlight that WK21 in Wick does not identify the use of the watercourse at the boundary of the site for water supply for the nearby distillery. Appropriate mitigation should be outlined.</p>	<p>Suggested amendments made to WK21.</p>
<p><u>Q3a - flood risk</u></p> <p>As outlined in our response to the MIR, while you have not carried out a separate Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA), the assessments you have carried out addressed many of the requirements of an SFRA. You could therefore have made your text on page 15 more positive in this regards.</p>	<p>This section of the report has been revised to reflect how SFRA has been addressed in the ER.</p>
<p>We agree with the individual assessments outlined. There are a couple of very minor anomalies where some sites which could be at risk of flooding have been scored as zero before mitigation.</p>	<p>Where a site may be at risk of flooding the score before mitigation has been changed to “-“</p>
<p><u>Q9b - Connection to public water supply and waste drainage</u></p> <p>We agree with the assessments outlined which suggest that nearly all allocations put forwards in the MIR can easily connect to public water and sewerage infrastructure.</p>	<p>Noted. There is a statement in the Proposed Plan that all allocations should connect to the public sewer.</p>
<p>We note and agree that in Lochinver sites LV03 and LV09 could not easily connect to the existing system and welcome the mitigation measures outlined - this mitigation should be included in the Plan. The use of site LV07 is not absolutely clear and as a result the currently proposed choice of mitigation seems reasonable, but as you will note from our response to the MIR we would like to discuss this further.</p>	<p>There is a statement in the Proposed Plan that all allocations should connect to the public sewer.</p>
<p>A number of sites (mostly in Castletown, Halkirk, Thurso and Wick), do not include any mitigation, which in this case we consider should be a statement in the Plan which</p>	<p>There is a statement in the Proposed Plan that all allocations should connect to the public sewer.</p>

identifies that all allocations in the Plan should connect to public infrastructure, as is proposed elsewhere in the ER.	
<u>Q11a - use of brownfield land</u>  There are a number of sites in Castletown (and a few elsewhere) where it is not clear why they have been scored as zero as the scale or type of development unlikely to effect brownfield land. It would seem to us that they should have been scored "X - N/A no brownfield land on site".	Site assessments in Castletown have been amended.
Note in the amended Summary of Effects table site LA01 should be scored as significantly positive before mitigation.	The site assessment for LA01 gave “++ve” score pre and post mitigation for Q11a however the scoring shown in the table on page 33 of the Environmental Report was incorrect. This mistake was rectified post publication and an errata table was published showing the “++ve” scoring.
<u>Q11b - contaminated soils</u>  There are a couple of sites in Tongue, and elsewhere where the question has been answered as "?? Unknown" but the reason for this is unclear. In most of these cases the assessment suggests the sites are greenfield with no previous use and as a result we would have thought that "no contamination present" was a more appropriate response.	At the time of doing the site assessments for the ER we did not have information on all sites from the Contaminated Land Unit so the answer was “unknown”. This information has now been provided and assessments amended as necessary.
In addition it is not clear why the scale or type of development at some sites, such as CT05 (allocated for mixed use) in Castletown and HK05 and HK06 in Halkirk (allocated for housing), would be unlikely to affect contaminated land. We presume the pre-mitigation score should have been that there was or was not potentially contaminated land on site.	The neutral score was being used for these sites, unfortunately the fixed response in the drop down menu in our database for neutral was not an appropriate form of words.
We presume that the pre-mitigation score for site WK14 should have been negative.	It is negative.
<u>Q11c - loss of greenfield land</u>  There are a small number of assessments which are scored to state that the scale or type of proposal means that it's unlikely to result in a loss of greenfield land, however it seems that "no greenfield land" or "small sale use of greenfield land" would be more appropriate. Examples include TS06, TS10 and TS12 in Thurso, all of which are proposed for mixed use.	TS06 has already been noted as having a negative impact on the greenfield land.  TS10 and TS12 have been changed to take account of suggested amendments.
<u>Q12a - disturbance of carbon rich soils and wetlands</u>	Noted.

<p>You will note from our response to the MIR there are a couple of additional sites where we consider impacts are likely.</p>	
<p><u>Q13a - meeting Zero Waste Plan targets</u></p> <p>We are pleased to note that it has been identified that a number of larger allocations, such as DN01 in Dornoch and LA01 in Lairg, could include recycling facilities. We note that there are a number of allocations in Dornoch where it is thought that facilities could be included, but for example, none in Wick. If you have not done so already you may wish to consider discussing each settlement with your waste colleagues and deciding (1) whether additional collection facilities are required for the settlement and (2) if so, where should they be located.</p>	<p>Noted</p>
<p><u>Q13b - minimise demand for primary resources</u></p> <p>We note that this question has mainly been answered to suggest that development is unlikely to have any significant impact on demand for natural resources. However there are some sites, such as HD03 and HD05 in Helmsdale, where it is thought that the development will result in an increase used of primary resources. The reasons why these sites are different in not clear. In retrospect perhaps this question would benefit from some additional guidance on how it should be scored or alternatively it could be one which is removed from the suite.</p>	<p>This question has been revised for West Highlands and Islands LDP SEA site assessments, taking on board the comments received through CaSPlan.</p> <p>Sites HD03 and HD05 revised to be consistent with the approach taken by the CaSPlan team.</p>
<p><u>Q13c - proximity to waste management sites</u></p> <p>We note that for every allocation this question has been answered to say that there are no waste management facilities nearby. However note that site WK05 in Wick, which as not assessed, is the current location of a Highland Council's recycling centre.</p>	<p>Reference made to recycling centre on WK05. Pre and post mitigation scores have been changed to '0' instead of 'X'.</p>

## Justification for Adoption of Plan

CaSPlan, as adopted, has the potential to:

- increase positive impacts on the environment; and
- decrease or avoid negative impacts on the environment.

as, when read alongside the Highland-wide Local Development Plan, it contains measures which will help to achieve the Strategic Environmental Assessment Objectives, whilst acknowledging that there will often be some balance necessary with social and economic objectives.

A number of related plans, policies and strategies were identified and have been used during the preparation of CaSPlan to better the content of the adopted CaSPlan.

Provided below is the commentary on potential implications if the Council had not produced the Local Development Plan. Alternatives were also considered and the commentary for that is also referred to below, which cross refers to Appendix 8c of the Finalised Environmental Report.

It should be noted that upon the adoption of CaSPlan on 31 August 2018, it replaced the Caithness Local Plan and the Sutherland Local Plan.

**[The following is from the section “Expected Environmental Implications without CaSPlan” on page 20-21 of the Finalised Environmental Report]**

### **Expected Environmental Implications without CaSPlan**

It is considered that without CaSPlan there would be increasing adverse impacts on the Caithness and Sutherland environment from development. This is primarily because the existing planning policy does not provide sufficient guidance to direct development to the best locations. The Highland-wide Local Development Plan contains a number of general policies in relation to the strategic protection and safeguarding of the environment. However it relies upon up-to-date area specific development plans to provide a framework to support these policies in the local context. The Caithness Local Plan is now over a decade old and many of the proposals within it do not fit within the current context of the area. The Caithness Local Plan was also not subject to any kind of Strategic Environmental Assessment or Habitats Regulations Appraisal. Although the policies and site allocations within the Sutherland Plan were subject to SEA the plan was adopted in 2010 and it too is due to be renewed.

The CaSPlan will provide a planning framework which will guide decisions on where development should and should not go for the next 10 years. The Plan will promote development in the most appropriate locations with due consideration to current statutory obligations. Therefore there is potential for positive development and environmental improvements to be delivered from the preparation of a new local development plan.

Appendix 8c of the Finalised Environmental Report provides further information on the assessment of policy alternatives including the expected SEA implications.

## Monitoring Measures

**[The following is from the section “Monitoring” on pages 40-41 of the Finalised Environmental Report]**

Section 19 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 requires the Responsible Authority to monitor significant environmental effects of the implementation of the Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan. This must be done in such a way as to also identify unforeseen adverse effects and to take appropriate remedial action.

It is considered good practice that monitoring:

- fit a pre-defined purpose, help to solve problems, and address key issues;
- is practical and is customised to the PPS;
- is transparent and readily accessible to the public;
- is seen as a learning process and a cyclical process relating closely to the collation of the environmental baseline.

For this monitoring to be effective it will need to be linked to both the SEA Objectives and the Plan Objectives. The baseline data set out earlier in this report sets the scene for any monitoring which is to take place. Below is a monitoring framework which will be subject to future revision based on review of its effectiveness in practice. We are developing a broader Highland wide monitoring framework as part of the review of the Highland wide Local Development Plan. The table below focuses on indicators relevant to the state of the environment.

<b>SEA Environmental Report Monitoring</b>					
<b>Environmental Parameter</b>	<b>SEA Objective</b>	<b>Monitoring Indicator</b>	<b>Responsible for Data Collection</b>	<b>Publication of Monitoring</b>	<b>Remedial Action</b>
1 - Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna	To conserve and where possible enhance biodiversity and accord to the protection of valued nature conservation habitats and species.	Monitor biodiversity actions.  Monitor loss of woodland habitat through development and provision of compensatory planting to deliver habitat.	THC	Triennial Biodiversity Duty Report/ Ongoing	Review application of policy area.
2 - Population & Human Health	To improve the living environment for all communities and promote	Monitor housing completions in SDAs, Growing Settlements, hinterland	THC	Annual Briefing Note	Review application of policy area.

	improved health of the human population.	areas, wider countryside and fragile areas to monitor application of the Development Hierarchy.			
3 - Soil	Safeguard the soil quality, geo-diversity and improve contaminated land.	Number of planning applications granted on prime agricultural land.	THC	As Required	Review application of policy area
		Number of planning applications granted on brownfield land in the last 12 months and remedial action required.		Annual	
4 - Water	Manage and reduce flood risk and protect the water environment.	Monitor reduction in level of permissions in areas of flood risk.	THC	As Required	Seek mitigation measures to reduce flood risk.
		Monitoring of quality of rivers and bathing waters.	SEPA	Annual	
5 - Climatic Factors	Reduce greenhouse gases and contribute to the adaptation of the area to climate change.	Monitor travel patterns and reductions in car usage.	THC	As Required	Review application of policy area.
6 - Material Assets	Manage, maintain and promote sustainable use of material assets.	Monitor % of residual waste going to landfill.	THC	Ongoing	Review policies on waste strategy and minerals.

		Mineral Supply Audit.			
7 – Cultural Heritage	Protect and enhance, where appropriate, the area’s rich historic environment.	<p>Monitor changes to the quantity and quality of heritage features, such as historic buildings at risk, conservation areas, listed buildings and scheduled monuments.</p> <p>Monitor the implementation of mitigation identified in site assessments has been carried through to consented applications.</p>	THC / Historic Environment Scotland	Ongoing	Review application of policy area.
8 - Landscape	Protect and enhance the character, diversity and unique qualities of the landscape.	Monitor development of unspoilt coast (including Marine Planning Zones for Aquaculture).	THC	As Required	Review application of policy area.