

## The Highland Council

City of Inverness Area Committee – 23 February 2017

Agenda Item	7
Report No	CIA/05/17

### Inverness East Development Brief – Update

#### Report by Director of Development and Infrastructure

#### Summary

This report updates the Committee on work to date regarding the preparation of an Inverness East Development Brief. Members are invited to consider the outcome of consultation undertaken so far and agree the suggested strategy to address issues raised through the preparation of the Draft Development Brief.

#### 1. Purpose of the Brief

- 1.1 Members will recall that the Highland Council and Scottish Government, through the National Planning Framework, have an established strategy of directing Inverness' medium to longer term growth to the A96 corridor including development land at Inverness East. The adopted **Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan** commits the Council to preparing a detailed land use planning policy document, a development brief, for Inverness East. Officers have defined a boundary for the land affected at **Appendix 1**. The vast majority of this land is earmarked for development and parts of it already benefit from planning permissions for example at Stratton, the Inverness Campus and the Inverness Retail and Business Park.
- 1.2 Accordingly, the purpose of the Inverness East Development Brief (referred to in this report as 'the Brief') is to go beyond the principle of development and set out the detail of:
  - the amount of land to be allocated for each type of development;
  - the land to be safeguarded and enhanced as greenspace;
  - the phasing of development over time;
  - how development will integrate with existing and future travel networks – in particular 'East Link';
  - how much and when developer contributions will be sought towards transport and other infrastructure; and
  - an indicative masterplan showing how land uses should be arranged across the land.

## 2. Consultation to Date

- 2.1 A range of initial consultation has been undertaken to ensure that the needs and aspirations of the local community and other stakeholders have been considered. This involved the following key elements:
- meeting with landowners within the Brief area;
  - attending Smithton and Culloden and Cradlehall and Westhill Community Council meetings;
  - meeting with Culloden Youth Forum;
  - meeting with other Council Services and public sector agencies;
  - running an online consultation; and
  - hosting a stakeholder workshop at Inverness Campus.
- 2.2 The stakeholder workshop was held at Inverness College UHI on 16 November 2016. This was facilitated by consultants Ironside Farrar and focused on gathering initial ideas about what development should go within the Brief land area. This one-day workshop involved a range of stakeholders including the local community, community councils, landowners, developers, planning agents, public and third sector agencies and local Members. Around 70 people attended throughout the day with additional informal discussions with students and other visitors at exhibition boards displayed in the main atrium of the college.
- 2.3 The workshop was structured around the **Place Standard**, a simple tool developed by Scottish Government that enables communities to consider 'how good is our place' based on 14 thematic questions. The workshop was divided into a morning, afternoon and evening sessions. Each session covered topics from the Place Standard and the facilitator developed participants' ideas and built upon areas and issues of consensus throughout the day. The summarised output from the day was an 'Emerging Ideas' concept drawing included at **Appendix 2**.
- 2.4 An **online survey** based on the Place Standard was launched six weeks before the workshop to enable people to share their views and ideas for the area. The outcomes from the online survey were used to complement and inform discussions during the workshop sessions. The survey remained open for two weeks after the workshop to capture momentum generated by it. Using this parallel method of consultation helped to ensure people had equal opportunity to engage. 354 comments were submitted by 41 people, a summary of comments is included at **Appendix 3**.
- 2.5 Meetings with other Council services and public sector partners were held prior to the initial workshop. These meetings covered infrastructure and service delivery and additional needs likely to arise with this scale of new development.

### **3. Issues Raised During Consultation**

3.1 The following list summarises the key issues that were identified through the various methods of consultation outlined above:

- a. Improved active travel (walking and cycling) within the Brief area to connect existing and future communities to key destinations like schools, employment locations and the city centre.
- b. Provision of a new centrally located community hub to serve multiple functions and enable different parts of the community to meet and interact.
- c. Additional capacity for both primary and secondary school education to address existing demands and meet future demand brought about by new developments.
- d. Provision of new sports facilities on the east side of Inverness.
- e. Avoidance of known flood risk areas and the need to avoid any increase in flood risk elsewhere.
- f. Provision of a district park and community growing space allotments, and ensuring adequate open space throughout the site.
- g. Ensuring that the major roads (East Link, A96, Barn Church Road) do not sever active travel movement across the Brief area.
- h. Safeguarding and enhancing existing woodland and tree belts to define the landscape, guide the design of future development and support biodiversity and habitats.
- i. Diversity of housing tenures, densities and high quality design.
- j. Set back from real and perceived 'bad neighbour' uses like major roads and the railway, by setting out parameters for the design and layout of future development.
- k. Ensure the Brief provides a framework for development that is both economically viable for the developer but also provides an adequate level of infrastructure and facilities for the local community. Phasing should ensure adequate infrastructure is available to serve new development.

### **4. Development Brief Content**

4.1 A key purpose of the Brief is to set out what financial contributions the Council will ask developers to make to offset the impacts of their proposals. For Members' consideration and approval, it is proposed that the following key aspects be included within a Developer Contributions protocol in the brief:

- road network improvements including the East Link Road;
- community facilities including education provision, sports facilities, parks, and serviced allotments;
- a protected cycle lane across the area and infrastructure for bus routes including shelters and real-time travel infrastructure; and
- public art.

## 5. Development Brief Principles

- 5.1 For Members' consideration and approval this section outlines suggested principles to guide preparation of the Brief to address the issues raised through consultation to date. These are also illustrated at **Appendix 5**.
- 5.2 Principle A: Identify a central location for community, commercial and leisure facilities as illustrated in **Appendix 5**
- 5.2.1 To maximise accessibility for local residents and commercial footfall the Brief should promote a 'Hub' for key services and facilities. It should be convenient to homes and workplaces and integrate with active and public travel connections. Two commercial centres exist and are permitted at West Seafield and Stratton respectively. During the initial workshop and in discussions with Council Transport Planners a 'primary street' and a bus route were identified to connect these two centres and provide active and public transport opportunities to and from the city. The Hub would therefore be most sensibly located along this primary street as illustrated at **Appendix 5**. The Hub should comprise several destination uses to maximise footfall, to create a successful place and to support the viability of public transport and commercial uses. These other uses could include medical facilities, formal public open space and a community meeting venue.
- 5.2.2 Members will be aware that there will be pressure in terms of primary and secondary education provision across East Inverness. This issue was confirmed in discussion with Care and Learning colleagues and a site within the Brief area was suggested as a potential solution in the longer term.
- 5.2.3 Solutions to primary school provision are currently being progressed in the short term by an extension to Smithton Primary, and in the medium term by acquiring a site for a new school north east of Barn Church Road. Wider Council approval will need to be sought to secure an adequate capital programme commitment to this additional education provision.
- 5.2.4 Similarly, primary health care facilities (GP practices) also have capacity issues and early discussions with NHS Highland have confirmed that services in the east of the city are particularly pressured. Therefore co-location of uses that include primary healthcare would help to address capacity issues in the medium to longer term and help to support the concept of a central community hub.

5.3 Principle B: Identify a central district park that connects with the wider green network

5.3.1 The Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan commits the Council to safeguard land for a district park within the Brief area. The principle of a centrally located district park is in line with stakeholder feedback which suggested that the most sensible location is central, walkable and where it can also mitigate flood risk. The park should include the land area known to be at risk of flooding and include additional adjoining land to allow for any increase in that risk from climate change and/or further development. Similarly we agree with feedback we have received that suggests the park should accommodate community growing space / allotments and district scale play facilities.

5.3.2 Workshop input also revealed a consensus that the existing network of woodlands, tree belts and riparian areas is an asset. One specific and positive output from the workshop is that Transport Scotland has confirmed that it is looking at options to redesign the East Link road to avoid loss of trees along Caulfield Road North. Therefore the existing green network should be safeguarded, enhanced and extended to enclose, shelter and define the character of the new neighbourhoods and promote biodiversity within the Brief area.

5.4 Principle C: Support the delivery of sports facilities in the east of the city

5.4.1 There are several options and existing commitments in terms of sports pitch provision. The Inverness Sports Pitches Review suggested it would be reasonable over the next 10-20 years to double the sports pitch capacity in the City. Given the current lack of provision in the east of the city, there are several short and medium to long term opportunities to contribute towards this aspiration. The Inverness Campus planning permission already includes an available and serviced site for sports pitches adjoining the East Link route and this offers potential for short term provision to support existing and new communities including Inverness College UHI students and their agenda to support student health and wellbeing. Proposals are also progressing to deliver a synthetic pitch at Culloden Academy, which would enhance the range of all year round, useable facilities for the eastern Culloden suburbs. As well as these short term opportunities, a medium term solution could be to deliver sports facilities in an optimum location at or close to the Hub. This would offer potential for shared community and school uses and would be in a central location for existing and new communities. All of the above options would be supported by developer contributions and different phases of development could contribute to different projects, with early phases contributing to Culloden Academy and Inverness Campus. The exact detail of this requires further research and should be included in the draft Brief.

5.5 Principle D: Ensure a high level of pedestrian, cycle and road connectivity in the area

5.5.1 The East Link road, the A96 dualling, the Barn Church Road redesign and new crossings over the railway line all have potential to improve connectivity across the Brief area and between existing communities and the City centre. The Council's work with Community Links Plus bids identifies the need for improved east-west connectivity as part of the Inverness City Active Travel Network. Therefore, in line with ideas put forward during consultation, the Brief should capitalise on these opportunities by identifying a new direct east-west movement corridor that prioritises pedestrians and public transport, provides a dedicated route for cyclists and links the retail and business park, the new Hub and the proposed Stratton centre. The issue of severance caused by the major road proposals was raised by stakeholders during consultation. This issue should be overcome by ensuring the Brief requires a range of measures, including: adequate traffic light controlled crossing points and/or underpasses; high quality pedestrian and cycle routes and, ensuring that development layout and design encourages drivers to slow down and be alert at crossing points. Further engagement with Transport Scotland is required to ensure the East Link road, whose main function is movement of motor traffic, is designed as a street that fits well into its urban context as set out in Scottish Government Policy: 'Designing Streets'.

5.6 Principle E: Set out a strategy for design, travel and layout that prioritises walking, cycling and public transport usage and promotes diverse neighbourhoods

5.6.1 Feedback from consultation suggests that current options for cycling and walking are constrained, public transport is below an acceptable standard and traffic congestion is becoming an increasing problem. To address these issues a shift away from car-based travel is necessary. The Brief should promote walking as the most common way of travelling within the new residential neighbourhoods. In order to reap the health and climate change benefits of this change from conventional suburban travel modes, the Brief should promote active travel routes that are direct, safe and pleasant. By contrast, the equivalent driving route to local neighbourhood facilities should be indirect and more inconvenient. Longer journeys within the wider urban district should have an effective public transport and cycling alternative. The Inverness Campus and Stratton masterplans already embody these principles expressed via an informal grid pattern of multiple, active travel connections. Buses and cars are only afforded clear priority on the busier, longer distance journey routes.

5.6.2 Similarly, stakeholders recorded a desire for greater choice in housing tenure, density and design. For example, land for private, smaller, retirement housing should be identified. Phases should involve a mix of uses to ensure new communities are supported by new facilities delivered simultaneously. The existing developer-led masterplan for Stratton Farm should be addressed by incorporating its proposals into a seamless overall masterplan for the Brief area.

5.7 Principle F: Ensure a framework to deliver a viable high-quality city expansion

5.7.1 Consultation to date has revealed potentially conflicting aims of enhanced and timely community infrastructure provision and a commercially viable development. The Brief will have to balance these objectives. It should specify the what, who, when, where and amount of developer contributions. Compromises will be inevitable but the optimum way forward is to specify requirements up front so that the largest portion of 'cost' is borne by the landowners (in terms of lower land values) rather than the house purchaser, the public sector or the local community in terms of fewer or poorer facilities.

## **6. East Link (A9-A96 Link)**

6.1 The A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton road project (better known as 'East Link') is necessary to help open up sites for development in East Inverness, whilst also aiding in the removal of local traffic from the trunk road network. A large proportion of the City's future employment, housing and infrastructure growth will be in this area and the East Link is necessary to facilitate this expansion. Transport Scotland is funding the construction of the East Link, and it is an important project within the Inverness and Highland City-Region deal.

6.2 The Council is working closely with Transport Scotland on the development of this scheme, and discussions are continuing on the various options that have been identified to date. Transport Scotland has committed to ensuring full consultation with the Council through this Committee before any decision is made. It is important to ensure that all of the implications of the options on the local road network are fully understood before such decisions are made.

6.3 In the short term however, officers believe that an additional running lane on the A9 on the southbound approach to the Inshes Slip Road will add road network capacity and help alleviate the safety issue (both existing and for the future option selected) of traffic queuing southbound on the A9 at the B9006 offslip junction. As this additional running lane is common to all options being considered, Committee is asked to request that Transport Scotland progress its detailed design and early implementation as a priority.

6.4 From existing and projected traffic volumes over Inshes overbridge, there is clear further benefit to be gained by providing an additional lane westbound over Inshes overbridge, and engineering studies have confirmed that this can be accommodated using the existing bridge. This is a commitment within the Council's capital programme, and Committee approval is sought to progress this work, given the short term benefits that such a scheme will deliver.

## **7. Next Steps**

7.1 The Development Plans Team will continue to prepare the Brief and a draft will be presented to Committee on 19 June or 14 September 2017 for approval to undertake a public consultation. The results of this consultation will be used to finalise the Brief for adoption, subject to committee approval.

## **8. Implications**

### **8.1 Equalities**

There are no equality implications arising from this report.

### **8.2 Environmental**

The Brief will be screened for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulation Appraisal (HRA).

### **8.3 Resource**

Adequate resources to prepare the Brief are provided for within the Development and Infrastructure Service budget.

### **8.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever**

The Brief will maximise opportunities to deliver climate change mitigation and Carbon Clever measures.

### **8.5 Legal, Rural and Gaelic implications**

There are no legal, rural or Gaelic implications arising from this report.

## Recommendations

The Committee is invited to:

- (i) note the results of consultation to date as explained in sections 2 and 3 of the report;
- (ii) agree the scope of developer contributions proposed in section 4 of the report;
- (iii) discuss and agree the guiding principles for the Brief set out below and described in detail in Section 5 of the report:

Principle A: Identify a central location for community, commercial and leisure facilities as illustrated in **Appendix 5**;

Principle B: Identify a central district park that connects with the wider green network as illustrated in **Appendix 5**;

Principle C: Support the delivery of sports facilities in the east of the city as illustrated in **Appendix 5**;

Principle D: Ensure a high level of pedestrian, cycle and road connectivity in the area as illustrated in **Appendix 4**;

Principle E: Set out a strategy for design, travel and layout that prioritises walking, cycling and public transport usage and promotes diverse neighbourhoods as illustrated in **Appendices 4 and 5**; and

Principle F: Ensure a framework to deliver a viable high-quality city expansion;

- (iv) note the intention for a draft Brief to be brought to Committee in June or September 2017 for its approval;
- (v) support the additional 'running' lane on the southbound A9 as an early priority within the context of the East Link project; and
- (vi) agree that the Council should progress the design and contract for the construction of an additional westbound lane across the B9006 Culloden A9 overbridge as an early priority.

Designation: Director of Development and Infrastructure  
Date: 6 February 2017  
Authors: Craig Baxter, Tim Stott, Rhiannon Barbour, Scott Dalgarno  
Background Papers: Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan: July 2015

### Appendices:

Appendix 1: Inverness East Development Brief Boundary  
Appendix 2: Stakeholder Workshop: Emerging Ideas Drawing  
Appendix 3: Summary of Online Survey Results  
Appendix 4: Illustration of potential future connectivity  
Appendix 5: Illustration of potential future land uses



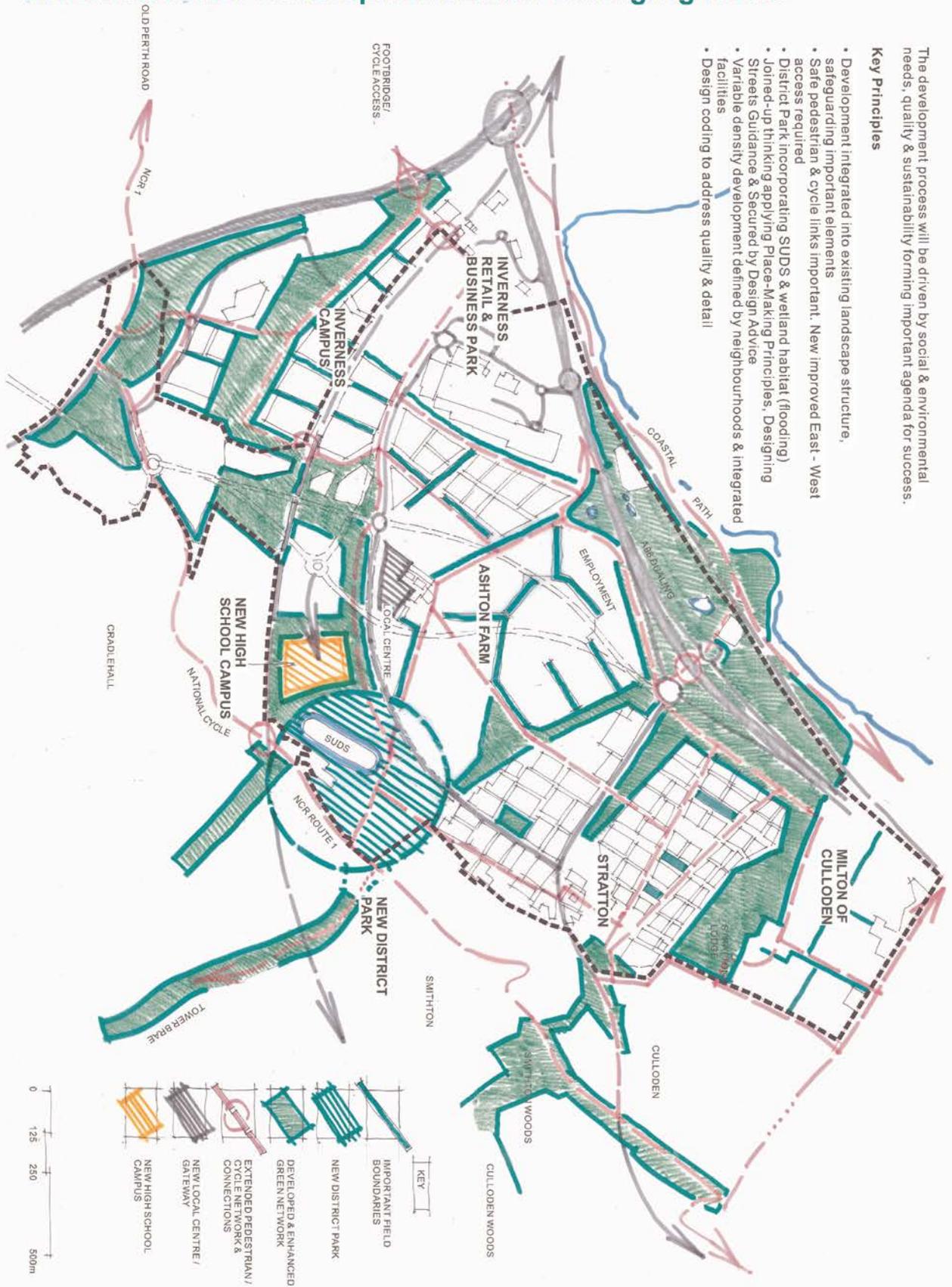
## Appendix 2: Stakeholder Workshop: Emerging Ideas Drawing

### Inverness East Development Brief: Emerging Ideas

The development process will be driven by social & environmental needs, quality & sustainability forming important agenda for success.

#### Key Principles

- Development integrated into existing landscape structure, safeguarding important elements
- Safe pedestrian & cycle links important. New improved East - West access required
- District Park incorporating SUDS & wetland habitat (flooding)
- Joined-up thinking applying Place-Making Principles, Designing Streets Guidance & Secured by Design Advice
- Variable density development defined by neighbourhoods & integrated facilities
- Design coding to address quality & detail



## Appendix 3: Summary of online survey results

### Moving around

#### General comments

- Roads are too narrow in some places to effectively share with cyclists. Upkeep of paths an issue
- More wayfinding and better lighting needed for popular routes
- Need for a separated off-road cycle network
- Roads generally quiet and safe
- Priority segregated junctions and underpasses needed
- Cycle routes seem to be an afterthought in development
- HC should narrow roads to provide wider pavements & cycle paths
- Shared pedestrian/cycle paths reduce cycle speeds and decrease safety making cycling less effective.

#### Specific place based comments

- At Barn Church Rd, cyclists have to give way at every junction
- No direct route from Cradlehall to Retail Park
- Concerns about the safety of the Resaurie rail bridge gap
- Culloden Road lacks pavement
- Too much traffic to feel safe cycling at Inshes roundabout
- Tap into old A96 and provide safe underpass under A9 at Raigmore Interchange
- Beechwood Campus a positive example
- Pedestrian crossing to Simpsons Garden Centre needed
- Should link Southern Distributer with UHI campus
- Old Perth Rd and railway underpass an issue for cyclists
- Lighting needed for Culloden Avenue
- Better crossing to Arturlie needed

### Public transport

#### General comments

- Bus timetables not suitable
- Not enough bus service at non-peak times
- Service not reliable
- Road congestion constrains bus times
- Need for suburban rail to city centre
- Expensive
- More direct service to town needed
- Better bus shelters with digital displays needed
- Need to ensure bus timetables match with trains/planes

#### Specific place based comments

- Bus routes in Culloden great
- Hard to get from Westhill, Cradlehall to Retail Park
- No route from one end of southern distributor to Beechwood/Inshes Retail Park
- Circular route needed from Clachnaharry via Scorguir and Bught to Hilton, Raigmore Culloden and back via town centre and Merkinch every 20 mins

## Traffic and parking

### General comments

- Abandon East Link & 20 mph max on residential roads
- Too many houses with narrow road access
- Cars parked on bends and pavements
- Need lower speed limits, traffic calming and landscaping to re-prioritize cycling and walking
- Need for more park and ride opportunities
- Paid parking in town centre driving up usage of retail parks
- Overprovision of parking vital to ensure no anti-social parking
- Traffic queues at peak times dangerous

### Specific place based comments

- Difficult to park by Raigmore Hospital
- Inshes roundabout congestion
- Barn Church Road roundabout congestion
- Difficulty turning right at A96 Barn Church Road at Balloch during rush hour
- Limited parking at Cradlehall Primary
- Inshes/UHI junction arrangement queues excessive
- Dangerous bottle neck at primary near Inshes
- Traffic to Inshes retail park should be fed to General Wade Road
- A9/A96 link road shouldn't come out at Tesco roundabout
- A prohibition of traffic turning right into UHI from Caulfield Road N would increase cyclist safety

## Streets and space

### General comments

- Grass cuttings should be done more frequently
- Need for a District Park
- Natural landscaping should be used
- Need for a larger well kept play park
- Buildings should be lower than 1 storey to preserve views
- Houses should be distinctly different in appearance
- Retain as much green space as possible
- Need for greenspace and employment to break up housing
- Area seen to be 'commuter area' rather than a distinctive place
- Needs more signs in Gaelic

### Specific place based comments

- Footpaths between Moraypark Lane and Moraypark Terrace need surveillance, vandalism issues
- UHI good example
- Inshes Park positive
- Does not want prison in area
- EastLink should go through boundary between existing development and new sites, rather than bisecting new development area

## Natural space

### General comments

- Removal of existing trees/greenspace not acceptable
- Building on farm land = reduction of natural space
- Important to safeguard woods and fields as much as possible
- Need to plan a large scale parks because of loss of open space
- Could better utilise greenspace with better paths/signage/bins

### Specific place based comments

- Culloden Woods positive example
- More paths in the south side of Culloden Wood
- Campus positive example

## Play and recreation

### General comments

- Few activities for pre-school children beyond parks
- Need for high quality larger scale playpark
- Major sports/leisure facility needed
- Need for community hub for young and old
- Not enough facilities for adults
- Good facilities for youth (Culloden Youth Forum)
- Poor facilities for youth
- Dog walking areas needed

### Specific place based comments

- Playpark behind Moraypark Lane gets too boggy
- Sports Pitches in Maxwell Park poor quality
- Balloch with no playparks

## Facilities and amenities

### General comments

- Schools not on commuting routes or over capacity
- Too many houses, not enough amenities
- Most community facilities religion-based
- More restaurants/pubs needed
- More community shops needed
- Current facilities will not meet future demand
- Create a multi-use campus with schools, sports provision, active travel links

### Specific place based comments

- Parking issues at Culloden Academy and Culloden Shopping Area
- Inshes Park could use outdoor gym and better lighting
- Coffeeshop needed on campus
- Facilities at Culloden only available outwith school hours
- Culloden Library an asset
- Westhill in need of library

## Work and local economy

### General comments

- Economy could be strengthened by district park/sports centre
- Job opportunities seasonal/part time/zero hour contracts
- Need to create jobs in local area to justify housing
- Need for more flexible office space and small local businesses

## Housing and community

### General comments

- Private rent high and lack of social housing
- New council housing should be higher quality (including street environment)
- Houses should not be identical, better placemaking
- Antisocial behaviour an issue
- Multi-occupancy flats where generations can mix
- Alternative technologies for heat and electricity should be considered

### Specific place based comments

- Drakies a good mix of people

## Social interaction

### General comments

- Churches are good outlets, limited to religious
- Difficult due to lack of facilities
- Important to mix affordable and market housing
- District park and sports facilities/playpark would improve options for social interaction
- More local cafes/a pub would improve social interaction
- People that cannot drive are socially isolated
- Need to target fitness and social activity for retirees
- Community groups should work together

### Specific place based comments

- Culloden Academy & Library good places to meet for youth
- Safety concerns with school near railway

## Identity and belonging

### General comments

- General positive comment
- Can be transient
- No sense of community
- A community hub/more facilities would increase sense of belonging
- Issues around dog fouling, fly tipping

### Specific place based comments

- Smithton Green Hall, Smithton Free Church and Barn Church increase sense of belonging

## Feeling safe

### General comments

- Generally safe
- More visible police force needed
- Community police station needed
- Bus journeys can be intimidating
- Neighbour watch scheme may help feeling of safety
- Better lighting throughout area needed

### Specific place based comments

- Teenagers drinking in Drakies and Inshes District Park reduces sense of safety

## Care and maintenance

### General comments

- General positive comment
- Issues around factoring agreements not being renewed
- Ownership and management of all open spaces should be managed by the council rather than private companies
- Allow community based workers to care for common spaces instead of centralised council works
- Issues around vandalism with benches, dog fouling and litter.
- Pitches flooded
- Cycling routes not well maintained
- Overgrown trees and paths

### Specific place based comments

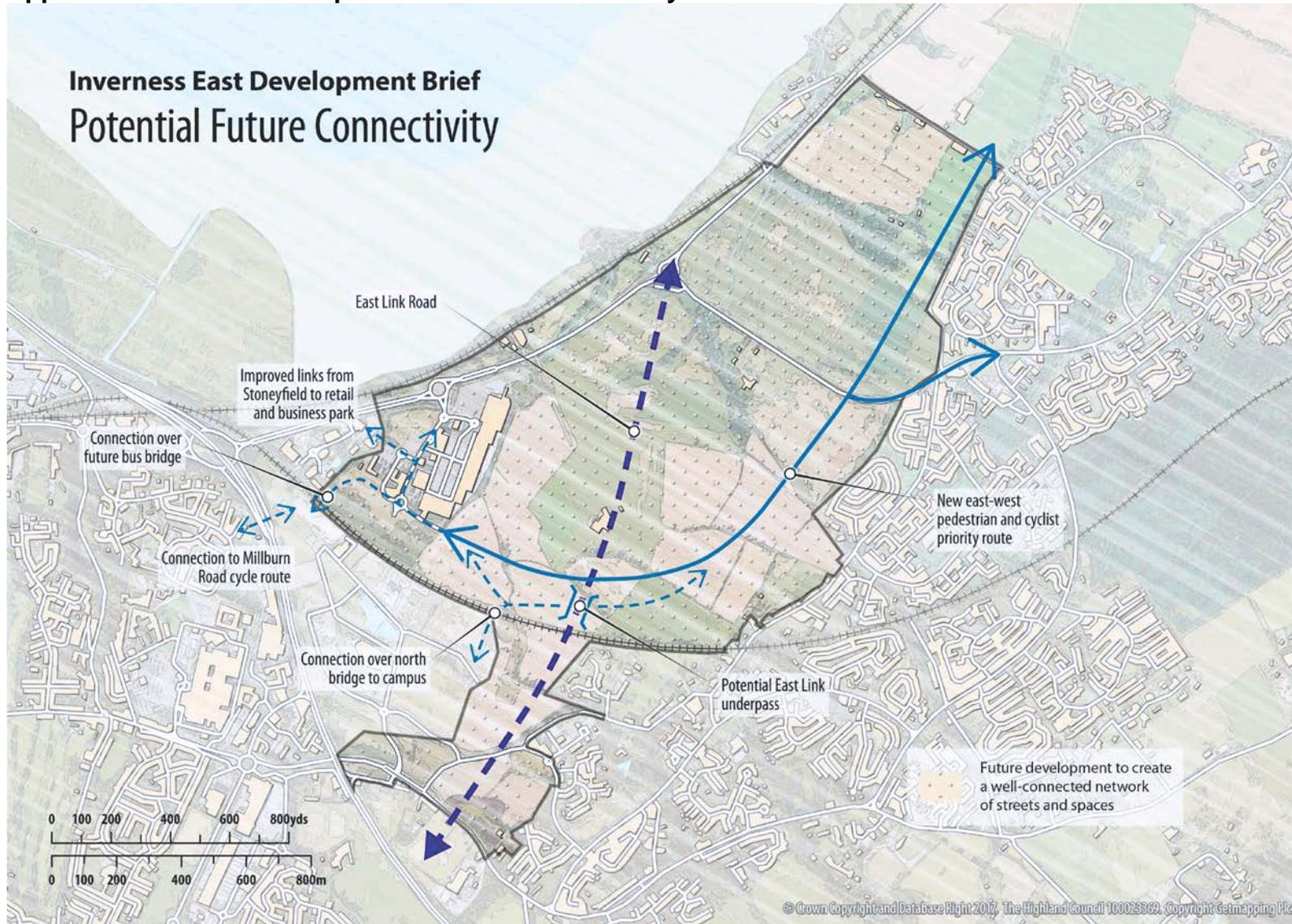
- Broken glass and litter at Smithton rail overbridge, dangerous for cyclists

## Influence and sense of control

### General comments

- General positive comment
- Community councils are positive
- Young people have voice, little contact with community council
- The Council doesn't listen to views
- Council should provide webcast for local debate
- Consultations frustrating because it's hard to tell what kind of impact comments make

## Appendix 4: Illustration of potential future connectivity



## Appendix 5: Illustration of potential future land uses

