





Appendix 3 – Outline of Vision and Spatial Strategy and General Policy Approaches

Caithness and Sutherland Vision and Spatial Strategy – What should Caithness & Sutherland be like in 2035?

Option 1 – The Preferred Vision		
Employment	A strong and diverse economy characterised by a renowned centre for renewable energy, world class engineering, traditional land and sea based industries and a tourist industry that combines culture, history and adventure.	Go to Section 3 page  →
Growing Communities	A network of successful, sustainable and socially inclusive communities where people want to live, which provide the most convenient access to services, education, training and employment and are the primary locations for inward investment.	Go to Section 4 page  →
Connectivity and Transport	Enhanced communications, utilities and transport infrastructure that support communities and economic growth, with development anchored to existing or planned provision.	Go to Section 5 page  →
Environment and Heritage	High quality places where the natural, built and cultural heritage is celebrated and valued assets are safeguarded.	Go to Section 6 page  →
<p>Reasons: These four outcomes are our preferred vision for Caithness and Sutherland because we think they would best deliver both the Council's Programme and the SOA. They also provide a stronger connection to the suggested actions outlined in this Plan.</p>		

Option 2 – An Alternative Vision

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

“By 2030, Caithness and Sutherland will:

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

Reasons:

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

Growing Settlements Policy

Option 1 – The Preferred Growing Settlements Policy

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

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

- take account of the issues and placemaking priorities (listed in Section 7) and development factors (to be included in the Proposed Plan);
- are likely to help sustain facilities in that settlement;
- are compatible in terms of use, spacing, character and density with development within that settlement;
- can utilise spare, existing capacity in the infrastructure network (education, roads, other transport, water, sewerage etc.) within that settlement or new/ improved infrastructure could be provided in a cost efficient manner;
- avoid a net loss of amenity / recreational areas significant to the local community; and
- would not result in an adverse impact on any other locally important heritage feature (which may include a war memorial, burial ground, important public viewpoint/vista or open space).

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

Option 2 – An Alternative approach

More rigid approach

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

Option 3 – An Alternative approach

More flexible approach

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

Proposed Policy – Promoting and Protecting Settlement Centres

Option 1 – The Preferred Approach

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

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

PROPOSED POLICY - PROMOTING AND PROTECTING SETTLEMENT CENTRES

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

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

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

Reasons:

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

Option 2 - More Flexible Approach

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

Option 3 – More Rigid Approach

Identify centre boundaries for all settlements

Special Landscape Areas

Option 1 – The Preferred approach

Examine all SLA boundaries and make amendments as appropriate

Having examined all the existing SLAs within the CaSPlan area we consider the following SLAs should remain unchanged from the boundaries shown in HwLDP:

Duncansby Head SLA; the Flow Country and Berriedale Coast SLA; Ben Griam and Loch Nan Clar SLA; Ben Kilbreck and Loch Choire SLA, and the Loch Fleet, Loch Brora and Glen Loth SLA.

We intend to refine the boundaries of the following SLAs to better reflect the criteria above:

Oldshoremore, Cape Wrath and Durness SLA; Eriboll East and Whiten Head SLA; Farr Bay, Strathy, Portskerra SLA; Dunnet Head SLA.

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

This option is preferred because:

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

Option 2 – An alternative

Carry forward all the SLAs unchanged from the HwLDP

This option is not preferred because we think we should take the opportunity to refine the SLA boundaries at a local level.