

Equalities Screening for:

Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan - Main Issues Report

Service	Person Responsible
Development and Infrastructure	David Cowie
Created	Last Review
Thursday 18 th September, 2014	Thursday 18 th September, 2014
Status	Next Review
Screened	Friday 18 th September, 2015

Screening Data

1. Please give the title/description of the policy. The word "policy" will be used throughout as shorthand for policy, service, function or proposal.

Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan - Main Issues Report

The Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan (CaSPlan) will be the second of our three new area Local Development Plans that, along with the Highland-wide Local Development Plan and Supplementary Guidance, will form the Highland Council's 'Development Plan' and guide all future development. Following on from the 'Call for Sites' and other early-stage activities, the 'Main Issues Report' (MIR) is the second main stage in the plan preparation process and is a consultation document. The MIR and its consultation is a statutory process and is informed by The Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006, associated Regulations and Planning Circular 6/2013: Development Planning. Feedback received on the MIR will be considered in preparing a Proposed CaSPlan. Once the final CaSPlan has been prepared it will, when adopted, replace the two Local Plans for Caithness and Sutherland.

The MIR will be published online and in paper form and the consultation publicised, through both media and direct mailing. Information events will be held and contacts provided for enquiries to be directed to the Council's Service Centre and passed, where necessary, to the Development Plans Team. The process of consultation will encourage the majority of respondents to complete an online comments form through 'Wufoo'. There will be a guide for filling in the form online and there will also be guidance for other formats of

submission available. Additionally a press release that explains the process to the public will be issued to media and placed on the Council's website.

2. Name of the person carrying out the screening

David Cowie

3. Date of screening

18-09-2014

4. What are the aims and objectives of the policy?

The statutory planning system works in two ways: preparation of a development plan for an area and consideration of planning applications. The development plan sets a vision for a wide area and shows through a spatial strategy and linked planning policies which types of development are acceptable where. A planning permission may be required before carrying out a new development. The planning application is considered carefully and compared to the development plan before a decision is made on it. Given the importance of the development plan in decision-making on new development, a very wide range of individuals and groups could have an interest in and wish to express an opinion on what the plan should include.

The Main Issues Report (MIR) will mark the first formal stage in the preparation of the CaSPlan and is the principal opportunity for the public to get involved and influence the Plan. The adopted Highland-wide Local Development Plan (2012) sets the framework for the preparation of CaSPlan. The MIR presents suggested outcomes that the plan should deliver in terms of Employment, Growing Communities, Connectivity & Transport and Environment & Heritage. It also seeks people's views on the main issues affecting the area and the location of future development.

It is intended that the MIR document itself, the publicity and consultation arrangements and online representation form will allow a variety of contributions from a wide range of the population local to the region as well as those further afield who have an interest in the area. To make sure that all equality groups are encouraged to take part we will be where possible contacting these groups directly to actively encourage them to become involved in the process.

5. Which parts of the public sector duty is the policy relevant to?

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity

- Foster good relations

6. Is the policy relevant to equality groups? That is if there is potential for this policy to affect any of these groups differently. The effect could be positive or negative.

- Age
- Disability
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Homelessness
- Socioeconomic

7. If you ticked any group in Question 6, is there any evidence of, or potential for, negative impact?

YES

Various Groups:

There is potential that the consultation could be of different degrees of accessibility to various different groups. For example, we may make efforts to engage with the old and the young, but there is potential to be less accessible to workers if our events were solely held during normal working hours.

There is the potential that the primary response method, namely online, could exclude certain groups. The form is an online form which requires access to a computer and the internet. Those filling in the form would need a basic level of computer literacy and keyboard skills. Furthermore there is the potential that use of English language only may exclude non-English language participation. The form will be in the English language and input to the form will also be required to be in typed English. The MIR and Guidance for filling in the form will also be in English.

There is the potential that development provided for in CaSPlan could fail to meet the requirements of the population, for example the housing and servicing requirements of an ageing population or access requirements of those with disability.

8. Is there evidence that the policy contributes positively to the promotion of equality on any particular group?

YES

Age: Use of social media, public events, local press to widely publicise the process in an attempt to publicise and involve as many age groups as

possible. Whilst we are encouraging the use of wufoo where that option is accessible to people, there is also the option of submitting the online form in different formats and the opportunity to get assistance with filling in the form. On request we can also produce the MIR in different formats (eg large print).

Disability: Use of social media, public events (with an emphasis on round-table and workshop format rather than formal public meeting), local press to widely publicise the process in an attempt to involve people of all abilities. There is the option of submitting the online form in different formats and the opportunity to get assistance with filling in the form. On request we can also produce the MIR in different formats (eg large print).

Race: Colour, nationality ethnic or national origins. This would include Gypsies and Travellers. For those whose first language is not English, further assistance with filling in the online form and access to the translation service may be required. On request we can also produce the MIR in different formats or translated if necessary.

Religion or Belief: We would contact directly services/organisations that represent these groups/interests to encourage participation in the process.

The publication of the MIR will be publicised locally. The Proposed Plan will be available online and in local libraries and Council service points. The form for comments is an online form and means that it can be filled in at any time and any location with internet access. In addition to the process mentioned above the Council will be directly contacting groups that represent those with protected characteristics directly to make them aware of the MIR and how to comment on it. This process enables a wide variety of people to get involved without the need to attend formal events.

The proposed outcomes for CaSPlan as set out in the MIR, and in particular the outcomes for Growing Communities and for Connectivity and Transport, can help to safeguard and promote through development proposals certain aspects of equality between groups.

9. If there is evidence of, or the possibility of, negative impact, can immediate remedial or mitigating action be taken without the need for a full EQIA?

YES

The MIR will be made available for viewing at local libraries and at Council service points, in addition to online. Different formats of the MIR are available on request. In addition to the online representation form there is also the option to get in touch with the Council via email, telephone, post or at a

service point to request alternative formats of the form (eg large print) and alternative arrangements for making a representation (eg on a postal form). This means that those that do not have access to a computer with internet access or are not computer literate are able to take part. Assistance with filling in the form as well as assistance from the translation service will also be available. This is designed to assist people with physical or learning disabilities as well as those who do not have English as a first language. Groups will be directly contacted to make them aware of the MIR and consultation process. We will use a variety of means to publicise the consultation arrangements and to disseminate information about the issues being consulted upon in the MIR, in order to enable people to be involved, including for example workers.

The Proposed CaSPlan which comes later in the process will include more detail of the requirements for development and will be subject of further EQIA Screening. In general terms CaSPlan itself will not differentiate between equality groups. Furthermore it may be noted that CaSPlan will be used alongside general policies already existing within the Highland-wide Local Development Plan plus Supplementary Guidance – this is not simply intent of the Council as to how it will operate, it is a legal requirement that the Council consider development proposals in the context of the Development Plan as a whole.

With respect to Data Protection, those responding to the consultation will be made aware that the MIR process is a public process and their names may appear in some public documents. However the addresses and other personal details of all contributors will be redacted. This is in line with Highland Council's data protection policy and would also protect against any harassment of protected groups.
