

A96 Corridor Masterplan : Stage 2

Interim Report – Phase 1

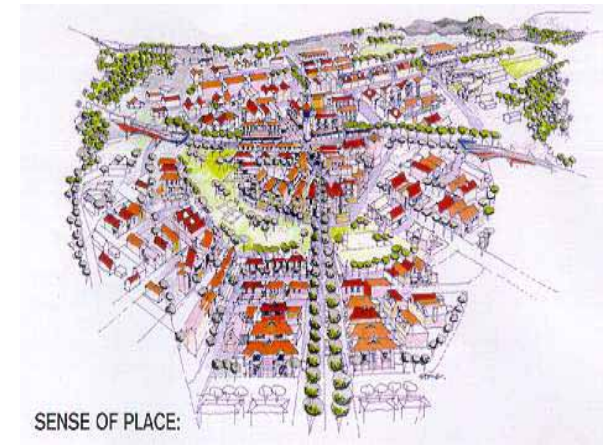
Options for Development and Green Frameworks

July 2006

Halcrow



**We believe in making places work through our
unique collaborative approach to planning,
design, transportation, infrastructure provision
and development.**





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Introduction

This interim report is designed to provide an outline of the preparation of development framework options for Inverness East & Nairn South and a draft Green Framework for the A96 Corridor. This is placed in the context of wider planning policy and considerations emerging from the A96 Corridor Masterplan Stage 1 Study.

The report is divided into nine further chapters as follows:

- Chapter 2 outlines context with a particular focus on strategic policy, outcomes from the Stage 1 study and the specific A96 Corridor strategy.
- Chapter 3 establishes the purpose, aims and objectives for the A96 Corridor Masterplan, as a whole, and for the Frameworks, specifically
- Chapter 4 develops the over-all approach and philosophy for the project. It highlights the Smart Growth approach adopted, introduces the project's vision & development principles and details the approach to partnering – *Collaboration for Success*.
- Chapter 5 provides a method statement for the production of the Framework options and the draft Green Framework.
- Chapter 6 details framework options for Inverness East and establishes their product.
- Chapter 7 details framework options for Nairn South and establishes their product.
- Chapter 8 provides a preliminary options appraisal.
- Chapter 9 provides the context and considerations that have led to the preparation of a draft Green Framework that is presented.
- Chapter 10 outlines the next steps in the project relating to Framework production, specifically and the project, generally.
- Chapter 11 concludes the report by drawing out wider policy and practice issues.



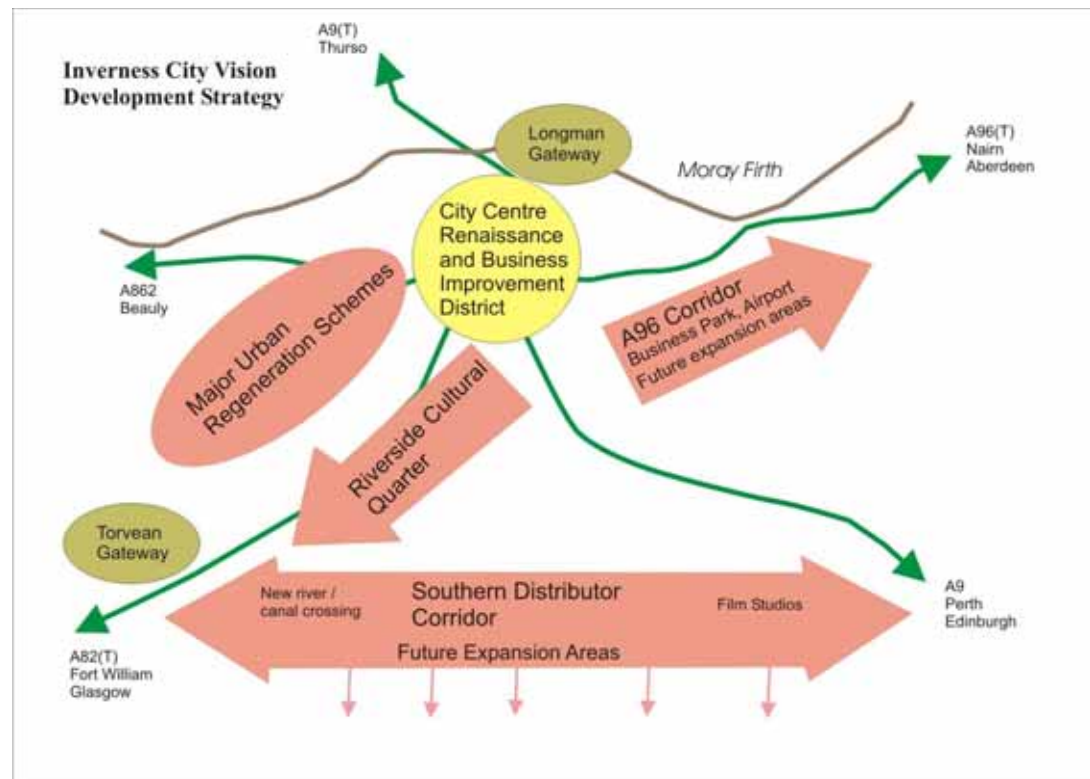
Strategic policy

Inverness City-Vision (2003) establishes the foresight to achieve the development of the A96 Corridor and for delivering quality places.

City-Vision sets out a development theme of *The Expanding City*. Specifically, City-Vision establishes that:

"Farsighted planning and collaboration with major landowners will create six new communities strategically located along the trunk road and rail route through to Nairn. These settlements will occupy a diverse recreational and countryside mosaic bounded by major footpaths following coastline and high forest margins. Cheap and high frequency bus and train services will connect their populations directly with higher order services, cultural and entertainment complexes housed in the central areas of Inverness and Nairn."

City-Vision establishes some key characteristics for the places the A96 Corridor Masterplan will create. These will become attractive places to live, visit, learn and earn. They will provide a range of living environments to meet the needs of a diverse range of people. The vision emphasises quality of life, sustainability, accessibility, vernacular design, place making and community investment for the masterplanning of the A96 Corridor.



Inverness City Vision Development Strategy



2. Context

The principles for development in the A96 Corridor must take cognisance of the existing policy framework set by national, regional and local planning policy.

The National Planning Framework (NPF) guides the spatial development of Scotland to 2025. Of Inverness the NPF notes, at paragraph 36, that:

"The cities are the hubs of wider regional economies and their surrounding towns and rural areas can offer attractive locations for a wide range of economic activities. In the Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) area, Inverness and Inner Moray Firth is a zone with (such) characteristics."

Development Plan policy is determined by the Highland Structure Plan, Nairnshire Local Plan (Adopted) and Inverness Local Plan (Adopted). The Highland Structure Plan supports new settlements in the Inner Moray Firth Area. Policy H2 frames the context for this project:

"The Council will support proposals for the establishment of comprehensively planned new settlements in meeting future housing demand in the Inner Moray Firth area."

The Structure Plan further notes that:

"The forthcoming review of the Inverness Local Plan will need to explore the identification of suitable land to meet housing demand for longer term needs. The A96 Corridor provides an option of linking new housing development to business opportunities associated with the Airport and rail link to Inverness and Nairn."

The Inverness Local Plan sets the context for new development proposals. The A96 Corridor is noted for its development potential and a phased approach to development through the plan and future plans is envisaged. Indeed, a chapter of the Plan considers these matters. The potential for the Inverness city-region is developed and a future scenario describing a vibrant region with attractive places, environmentally sensitive

context, quality employment and excellent public transport extending eastward is envisaged.

The Local Plan contains policies that would control the form of development within the area. In particular, policy GP1 sets standards for new development relating to creating places for people, making connections, mixed use, landscape integration, managing investment and flexibility. GP2 provides policy on urban structure with particular focus on place hierarchy, density/capacity and open space/recreation. This provides the basic building blocks for consideration in developing the frameworks for Inverness east and Nairn South.



A96 Corridor Planning Policy Context

A96 Corridor Masterplan Stage 1

Stage 1 of the Project undertaken by FG Burnett in 2005 establishes a robust foundation for taking this commission forward. This study sought to establish a framework for the A96 Corridor through proofing the concept, examining capacity and preparing a masterplan.

Through a collaborative approach, eight options for the Corridor were developed. Each of these was tested through stakeholder engagement, technical considerations (relating to infrastructure, transport, land use and landscape) and community consultation. These concluded that an option to focus development in a new settlement offered the most sustainable and attractive solution.

The Stage 1 conclusions also recognised that Ardersier Fabrication Yard could be developed for residential and other uses.

Options	Assessment Type		
	Technical	Stakeholder	Community
1.Eastern	X	X	✓
2.Polar	X	✓	X
3.Island	X	X	n/a
4.String of Pearls	X	X	n/a
5.Land Use	✓	✓	X
6.Transport	✓	✓	✓
7.Landscape	X	X	n/a
8.Infrastructure	X	X	n/a

Stage 1 – Option Assessment Summary

Key elements of the Masterplan from Stage 1 include:

- New settlement proposals at Dalcross (two options) and Whiteness.



2. Context

- A dualled A96 incorporating guided bus with public transport hubs at Seafield/Ashton in the west, Tornagrain (at the centre) and Delnies (in the east linking to Whiteness).
- By-passes for Nairn and the Raigmore Interchange.
- Two strategic cycleway/walkway routes running east-west connected by appropriate north-south routes.
- The development of a landscape strategy that recognises the importance of eight sensitive landscapes and promotes the development of a green framework for the Corridor.
- Appropriate growth at the Corridor's smaller settlements.
- Rail upgrades; particularly related to freight.
- A new community/resort at Whiteness (Ardersier Fabrication Yard) for around 3,000 people.
- Growth of existing smaller settlements in the Corridor as allocated in the relevant development plans accommodating up to 3,000 people.
- Review the scope for long-term development at Nairn South and Inverness East¹ incorporating transport improvements to include dualling of the A96 and a strategy to enhance landscape/heritage features supplemented by recreational facilities including a network of cycle/walkways.

Recognising and accommodating heritage resources; particularly Culloden and Fort George were also established.

A96 Corridor strategy

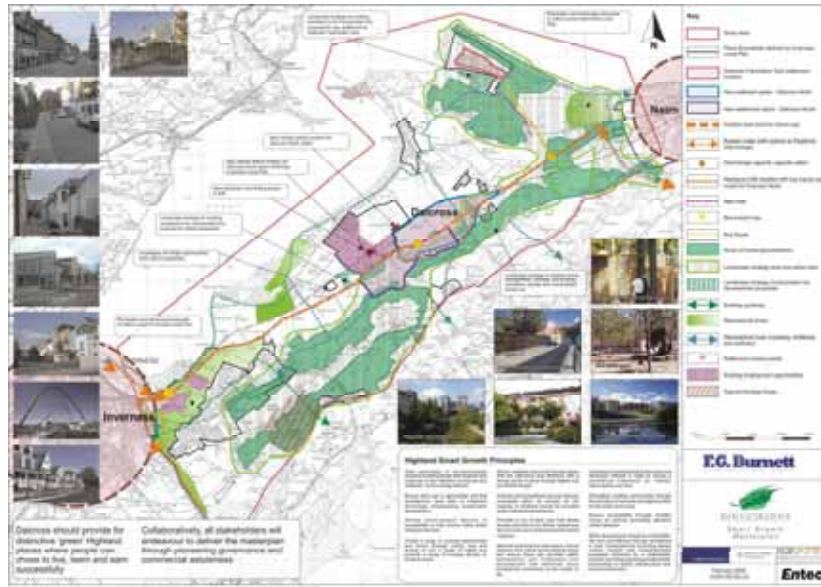
These above matters were considered by the Council's Planning, Development, Europe and Tourism Committee on 17 August 2005. Considerations outlined the outcomes from the A96 Corridor masterplan Stage 1 Study as discussed above. Conclusions identified a preferred location for a new settlement close to Inverness Airport. Further, clear policy outcomes for the A96 Corridor were established that comprised:

- Population growth of 20-30,000 people over the next 30-50 years.
- A new settlement of 10,000+ located south of Inverness Airport to be developed post-2011.

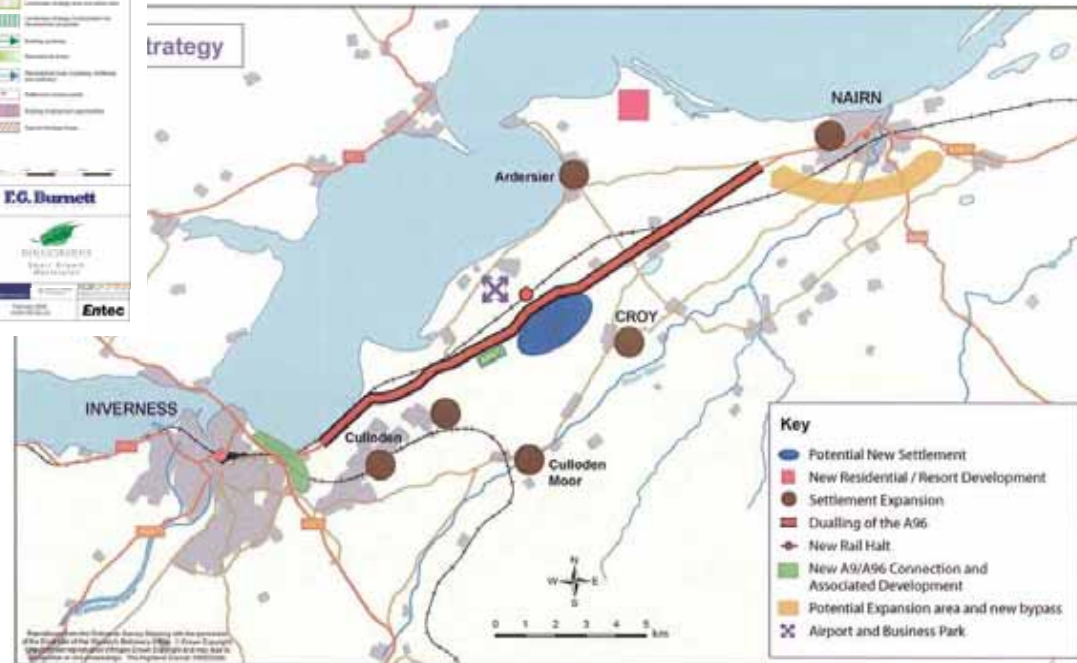
¹ The resolution of the Committee emphasised that these opportunities should be pursued.



2. Context



Stage 1 Masterplan



Stage 1 Outcomes Summary (reported to Council Committee in Aug 2005)



3. Purpose, aims and objectives

Purpose

The purpose of the project is to **progress a masterplan for the long term development of the A96 Corridor as a whole.**

Aims and objectives

The overall project aims are to:

Collaboratively, confirm a masterplan for the long term sustainable development of the strategic A96 Corridor forming a comprehensive planning framework for the Corridor as a whole.

Establish a complete living environment for the A96 Corridor that is of the comparatively highest standard and best quality.

This is supported by objectives that seek to:

Prepare development frameworks plans for several localities.

Test and refine overall scenarios for long term growth.

Undertake an appropriate Strategic Environmental Appraisal

Compile an implementation programme for development and infrastructure (including funding and delivery mechanisms).

Align long term land management with development opportunities through a green framework.

Promote extensive engagement and liaison with statutory bodies, regulators, development agencies and other parties whose roles and responsibilities impinge on proposed Corridor developments.

Specific objectives

The project falls into four components:

- Development Framework Plans.
- Strategic Environmental Appraisal.
- Implementation Programme.
- Developer Contribution Protocol.

Component one² - **Development Framework Plans** - objectives are to:

Prepare a development framework for land generally framed by the A96, A9 and Culloden.

Prepare a development framework for Nairn South in the context of a new by-pass passing to the south of the town.

Develop a *green* framework for the Corridor as a whole.

Component two - **Strategic Environmental Assessment** - objective is to:

Undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment encompassing Stages 1 and 2 of the Project.

Component three - **Implementation Programme** - objectives are to:

Prepare a co-ordinated programme and development phasing schedule of strategic

land releases, public investment priorities and infrastructure improvements.

Develop suitable increments for development post-2011 that are responsive to demand and market circumstances.

Iteratively, assess development scenarios in the light of reconciling developer requirements with infrastructure modelling results, market conditions, funding issues, etc.

Component four - **Developer Contribution Protocol** - objectives are to:

Put in place a framework governing the extent and timing of financial contributions toward public investment (infrastructure and service) for each major development in the Corridor.

Review financial mechanisms available for the delivery of public infrastructure that build on established approaches and examine innovative solutions.

Consider the impact of UK Government proposals for the introduction of a Planning Gain Supplement and expedited processing arrangements.

Prepare recommendations for appropriate financial mechanisms that unlock assets and apportion costs/betterment.

² This interim report addresses progress to date in developing Component One.



4. Over-all approach and philosophy

Smart Growth

The over-all approach for the Project provides for contemporary place-making that builds on best traditions. This is Smart Growth.

Smart Growth is a well established approach for the development of new places and the establishment of new communities. It offers an antidote to current bland and undistinguished suburban development patterns that are not in the long-term interest of our cities, existing suburbs, towns or rural areas. Smart Growth taps into community expectations to create sustainable places, a strong environmental ethic and more nuanced views of growth. This results in a new demand for, and a new opportunity to create, places for people.

In Smart Growth settlements, people are able to live, work, shop, worship, learn and play without necessarily having to drive them, and their children, to many different places. People of all ages and levels of mobility are able to move through such settlements in safety and comfort.

Smart Growth recognises connections between development and quality of life. Smart Growth is place centred, is transit and pedestrian oriented and promotes a greater mix of housing, commercial and retail uses. It also integrates open space and many other environmental amenities.

Crucial to success is the development of *green* infrastructure. *Green* infrastructure should form an integrated environmental, recreational and landscape resource that provides the means for the positive management of the landscape and contributes to the protection and enhancement of natural and built assets.

Collaboration for Success

A key component of Smart Growth encourages stakeholder collaboration. Halcrow have developed an approach to maximising this that encourages effective decision making through facilitated workshopping. This is *Collaboration for Success*. *Collaboration for Success* provides a framework for developing a culture of collaboration with stakeholders. It is through this technique, applied on an on-going basis, that engagement with a full range of stakeholders has been achieved. *Collaboration for Success* has provided a framework to allow them to work together to find solutions for the issues facing the masterplanning of the A96 Corridor. *Collaboration for Success* has been focused through parallel events for:

- Governmental and regulatory stakeholders.
- Business/developer/landowner stakeholders.
- Community interests such as community councils and other representative bodies.
- Political stakeholders (i.e. Councillors, MSPs, MPs and MEPs).

Collaboration for Success has been focused around the two main Development Frameworks for Inverness East and Nairn South. Spread over two sessions, the first has been completed.

Session 1 - Option Development:

- Introduced and establish the background to the project.
- Allowed stakeholders to register their expectations and requirements for masterplanning.
- Established commitment of stakeholders to work collaboratively.
- Confirmed the Project's vision and development principles.
- Highlighted best practice in place making.
- Identified options for development of the relevant location through facilitated workshops.

Session 2 - Option Assessment – scheduled for September 2006 will workshop alternatives to accommodate development through applying a sustainability appraisal based on a Smart Growth Sustainability Model.



Smart Growth Sustainability Model

This model tests proposals in relation to a range of criteria relating to:

Accessibility

- Transport and access
- Access and accessibility

Economy

- Local economy and work
- Education & lifelong learning
- Development capacity
- Marketability
- Infrastructure



4. Over-all approach and philosophy

Community

- Community participation
- Social justice
- Health and safety
- Existing development
- Adjoining land uses and relationship with surrounding communities

Environment

- Pollution, waste and resources
- Energy
- Buildings, urban design and land use
- Open spaces
- Site characteristics
- Topography
- Landscape features
- Wildlife and habitat
- Views

Collaboration for Success has promoted a full multi-agency understanding of the challenges facing the A96 Corridor; particularly for Inverness East and Nairn South.

Vision and development principles

Stage 1 of the Project established a local vision and development principles for the A96 Corridor Masterplan. These are outlined below.

The **vision**:

A masterplan for the A96 Corridor should provide for distinctive 'green' Highland places where people can chose to live, learn and earn successfully.

Collaboratively, all stakeholders will endeavour to deliver the masterplan through pioneering governance and commercial astuteness.

Highland Smart Growth **development principles** include:

In respect of the **environment** to -

- Take advantage of environmentally sensitive building design that respects and responds to the Highland vernacular and materials. And is energy efficient.
- Maintain and enhance open space, natural features and critical environmental areas and ensure these are provided within settlements and integrated into development that maximise their recreational contribution to the quality of life.

In respect of **economic development** to -

- Ensure land use is appropriate and that development uses sites to maximum advantage emphasising sustainable development.
- Promote a mix of land uses that allows houses and jobs to be closely related and the mix to be more varied toward the centre of places.
- Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost-effective through developing a clear masterplanned context delivered by a stakeholder process that understands market trends & demands for realistic deliverability over time.
- Every new dwelling should have a new job created.

In respect of **accessibility** to -

- Relate development density to accessibility to help ensure viable public transport services.
- Deliver walkable and cycle friendly places that are distinctive and attractive with a strong sense of place through legible and permeable design.
- Ensure accessibility through mobility choice by actively promoting attractive public transport.
- Address key road challenges including the Raigmore Interchange and appropriateness of the Nairn by-pass.

In respect of **community inclusion** to:

- Create a range of housing opportunities and choice and promote a range of housing density to achieve choice.
- Strengthen existing communities through the provision of services and opportunities for the wider community.



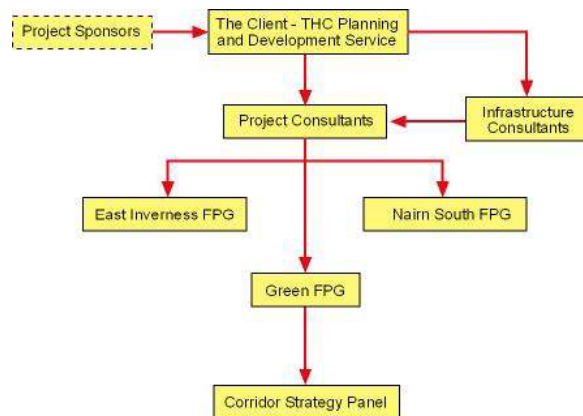
5. Method statement

Overview

The overall approach to this Project is underpinned by an ambition to develop a robust, well supported Masterplan which will facilitate the holistic development of the A96 Corridor.

The methodology has been presented as a staged process (following the four components set out above). However, it is recognised that the masterplanning process is inherently iterative. The development of a successful masterplan will require an ongoing process of testing (not only technical and financial viability, but also in terms of stakeholder support) and review.

The structure of the Project to ensure full stakeholder engagement is shown below.



This structure allows:

- Clear project management and reporting structures focused through the Planning and Development Service of The Highland Council.

- An infrastructure group managed through the Planning and Development Service (with assistance from the Halcrow Group) to coordinate parallel commissions examining water/sewerage, electricity and traffic implications. Liaison with the utility/transport consultants to establish the constraints and opportunities relating to electricity, water/sewerage and the transport network have taken place continuously in taking forward the Project.
- Framework Planning Groups for Nairn South, Inverness East and Green Infrastructure co-ordinated through the project consultants. These are made up of primary interests pertaining to each location.
- A strategic group that takes an overview across the A96 Corridor as a whole.

Frameworks

Two development framework plans for Inverness East and Nairn South have been developed to option stage. A draft green framework plan for the Corridor, as a whole, has also been prepared. The methodology applied to reach this interim stage in these frameworks' development is outlined below.

Inverness East/Nairn South DFPs

Baseline review

A baseline review to gather information and develop understanding of current thinking was undertaken. This resulted in a technical note on arrangements, initial operational actions and programming and information mapping for Inverness East and Nairn South. These have been presented in the technical appendices that accompany this report.

Sites analysis

An analysis of the constraints and opportunities of each location was undertaken this involved detailed site visits that considered:

- Landscape sensitivity.
- The potential of new elements to strengthen positive attributes and ameliorate the impact of elements which detract from the overall integrity of the landscape.
- The interplay of natural features and topography in the landscape.
- Capacity to absorb new development.
- Capacity to absorb further development.
- Ameliorating the impact of existing developed areas.

This built on work completed during Stage 1 of the Project and focused on matters of detail. As a consequence, the focus of this work was in the Nairn South area as the Inverness East area had been the subject of analysis. These considerations are reported in Chapter 9 of this report.

Best practice review

UK best practice case studies were undertaken. This identified 6 place-making projects that displayed best practice from an initial shortlist of 17 projects. These places were:

- South Staiths, Gateshead
- New Hall, Harlow
- Upton, Northampton
- New Gorbals, Glasgow
- Greenwich Millennium Village, London
- Lacuna, West Malling, Kent

In addition, research was undertaken into the planning and urban design initiatives of Smart Growth, New Urbanism and Urban Villages in order to inform considerations. These matters have been brought together in a report



5. Method statement

presented in the technical appendices of the report. A supporting PowerPoint presentation that draws out some themes in successful place-making was also prepared that can be found in the technical appendices

Collaboration for Success 1

Component one of *Collaboration for Success* for each location was undertaken as discussed above. This involved confirming the Project's vision and development principles and identifying stakeholder development options for the locations. Invitees and attendees to these sessions are detailed in the technical appendices.

Five options for Inverness East and four for Nairn South emerged from these considerations.

Option development and refinement

Refinement of the stakeholder options to ensure that clear differentiable proposals are presented for Nairn South and Inverness East was undertaken. This required development of a further Nairn South option to augment the stakeholder options.

A preliminary appraisal of each option in relation to the development principles outlined above was undertaken. These considerations are reported in Chapters 6 and 7 of this report.

Green framework plan

Review of stage 1 outcomes

The preparation of a green framework plan has been undertaken in parallel with the development framework plans. This built on the clear strategy established in Stage 1 of the Project which was reviewed and confirmed as appropriate.

Development of landscape/recreation considerations

Building on landscape character work described above, new sensitive landscapes and areas of landscape protection were identified. Extension of the landscape strategy/action plan designation from Stage 1 eastward has been considered in this context.

Development of green framework

The landscape strategy and action plan has been developed to ensure an integrated approach in the context of the Corridor, as a whole. Key sensitive landscapes at:

- Culloden Battlefield,
- Culloden Forest,
- Dalcross Castle,
- Carse Wood,
- Tornagrain Wood,
- Delnies Wood,
- Whiteness Head/Carse of Denies, and
- Kildrummie and Loch Flemington

have been considered in this context as they are key landscape resources and their protection is fundamental to the environmental quality of the Corridor.

Broadly, in collaboration with landowners, Scottish Natural Heritage, The Highland Council and Historic Scotland, proposals to achieve a high quality green infrastructure for the Corridor, as a whole have been developed. These have addressed:

- Forest and woodland management.
- Natural heritage.
- Built heritage.
- Bio-diversity.
- Recreation.
- Access.
- Interpretation.

Closely related to landscape considerations are those for recreation. Opportunities within the Corridor to build

formal and semi-formal recreational resources to take advantage of the unique opportunities presented have been developed. Recreational considerations (including accessibility) have been integrated into our approach to ensure a full resource for a city region running from Inverness to Nairn.

Integration of the Green framework with the development frameworks at Inverness East and Nairn South as well as settlement proposals at Tornagrain and Whiteness have been a critical consideration. Other proposals for the Corridor, particularly for golf courses, the Airport Business Park and the expansion of the Airport have also been considered.

This has led to the preparation of a draft Green Framework that is detailed in Chapter 9.

Chapter 11 provides details on the next steps for the Project with particular respect to option selection for Inverness East and Nairn South. Steps for finalising the Green Framework will also be outlined. This Chapter will also indicate the steps and actions required to complete the further stages of the project relating to implementation and funding.



6. Inverness East Framework

Framework options

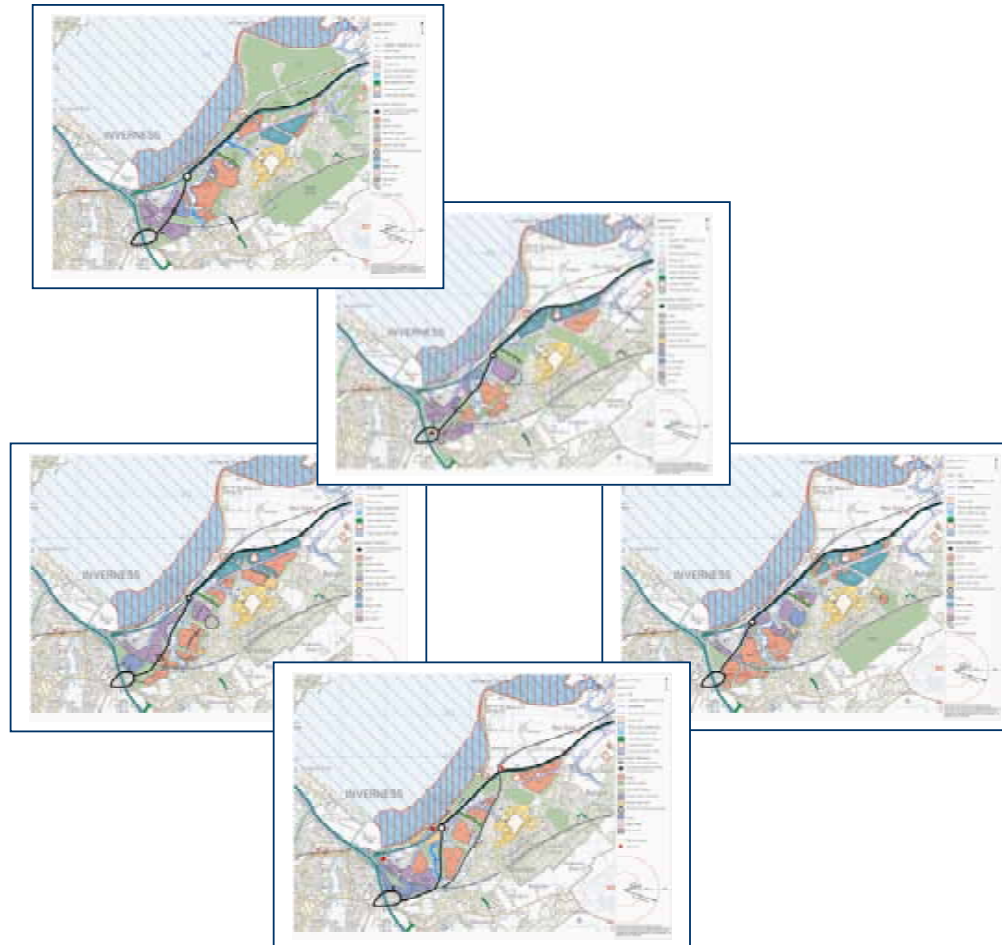
Five options have emerged from stakeholder workshopping and preliminary technical refinement as described above.

These are outlined on the following pages. Each option is described, key outputs such as housing units, population, job creation, etc are identified and a preliminary appraisal relating to the agreed development principles is provided.

Clearly, these proposals will result in the loss of agricultural land. It is recommended that the landscape character assessment be referenced to establish this impact.

Infrastructure implications of these options will require to be considered in the context of the parallel studies described previously.

A sufficient range of information has been supplied to allow public and general consultation to be undertaken through the summer and early autumn. It will also provide a basis for session two of *Collaboration for Success* to be undertaken in September 2006.





6. Inverness East Framework

Option A

Option Description

This option drives forward an **open aspect for the development of Inverness East**. Its principal elements include:

- A by-pass to Raigmore Interchange that connects with the Inshes Interchange which runs close to the south-eastern boundary of the Inverness Retail and Business Park.
- Substantial landscape that seeks to protect the agricultural nature of land; particularly to the east.
- A firm recognition of a substantial landscape buffer between Smithton and Inverness East.
- A golf course to the east with associated medium – low density housing to include appropriate community uses.
- A formal park linking into Culloden that utilises existing water features and landscape.
- A high density housing core focused on a new district centre and retail provision.
- A business park in a strong landscape setting at the western end of the area adjacent to the A9.
- A college campus with associated high density student accommodation landscape setting to the south east of an expanded Inverness Retail and Business Park

Key Option Outputs

Residential

- 3650 units with 3200 high, 200 medium and 250 low density

Population

- 7600 people

Educational

- College Campus on 10 hectares

Business

- Business Park on 60 hectares

Sub-Regional Retail (incl bulky goods and supermarket)

- Retail on 15 hectares

District Centre

- District centre incorporating primary school, community facilities and local shops/services on 3 hectares.

Leisure

- 100 bed hotel

Employment

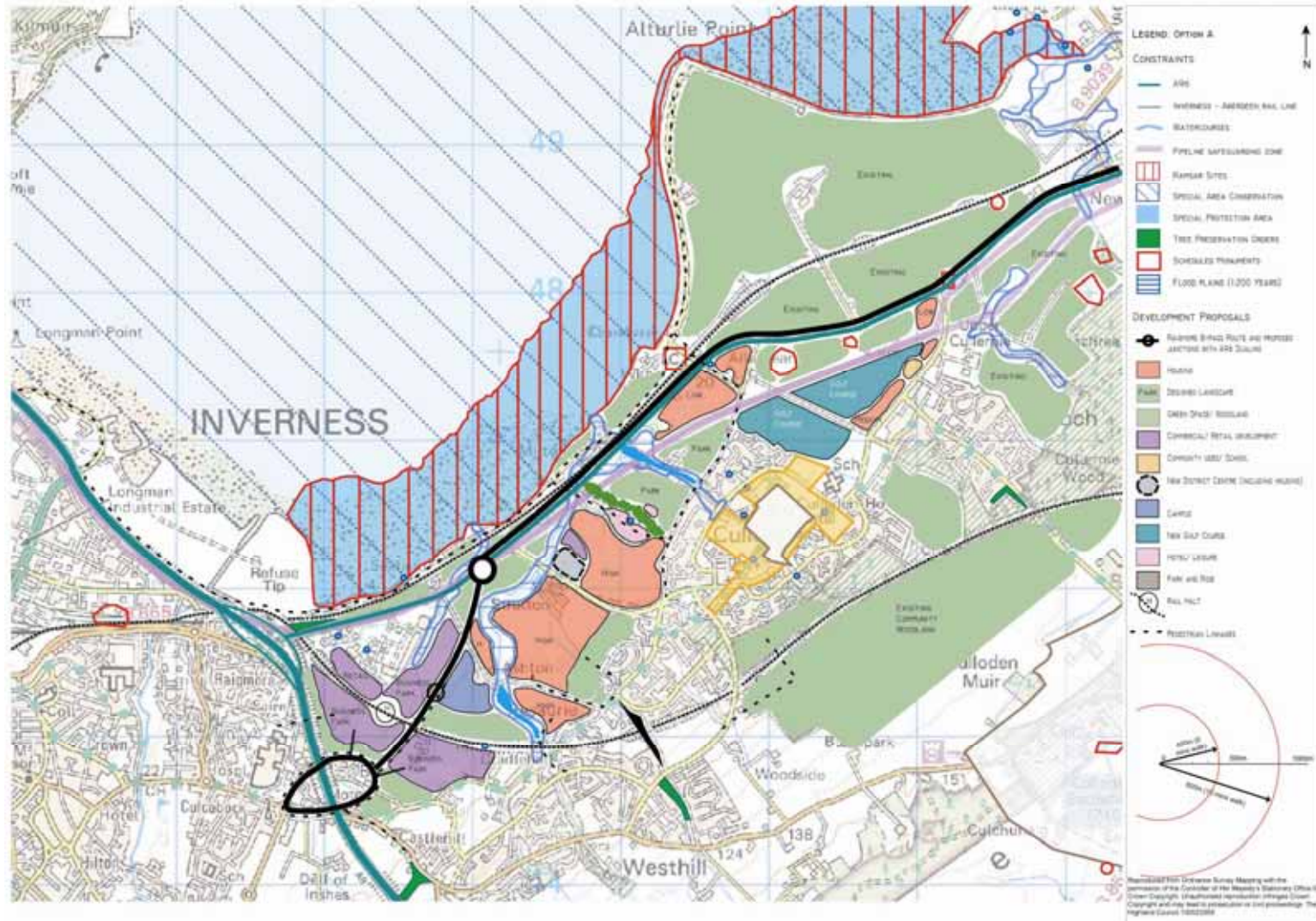
- 5000 new jobs

Open Space

- Golf course on 40 hectares
- Other active provision on 25 hectares
- Passive/amenity provision on 70 hectares (and 500 hectares of existing green space)



6. Inverness East Framework





6. Inverness East Framework

Option B

Option Description

This option brings forward a **focus for development toward the western parts of Inverness East**. Its principal elements include:

- A by-pass to Raigmore Interchange that connects with the Inshes Interchange which leaves the A96 to the east of the Smithton Roundabout.
- A golf course to the east with associated medium – high density housing to include appropriate community uses.
- A buffer of informal landscape/agricultural land providing a setting for Culloden and enforces a separation between Culloden and Balloch that utilises existing water features and landscape.
- A park and ride facility with associated rail halt at the Smithton Roundabout.
- A core of high density housing with an associated district centre (including community uses).
- A retail/business park addressing the new junction created by the by-pass proposal.
- A college campus to the south (east of the Inverness Retail and Business Park) that could mark the start of Inverness.
- An allocation for bulky goods retail immediately to the west of the Inverness Retail and Business Park.
- A business park at the western end of the area adjacent to the A9.
- A substantial landscape spine running generally east-west.

Key Option Outputs

Residential

- 2600 units with 2000 high and 600 medium density

Population

- 5500 people

Educational

- College Campus on 10 hectares

Business

- Business Park on 60 hectares

Sub-Regional Retail (incl bulky goods and supermarket)

- Bulky goods on 8 hectares
- Other retail on 40 hectares

District Centre

- District centre incorporating primary school, community facilities and local shops/services on 10 hectares.

Leisure

- 100 bed hotel

Employment

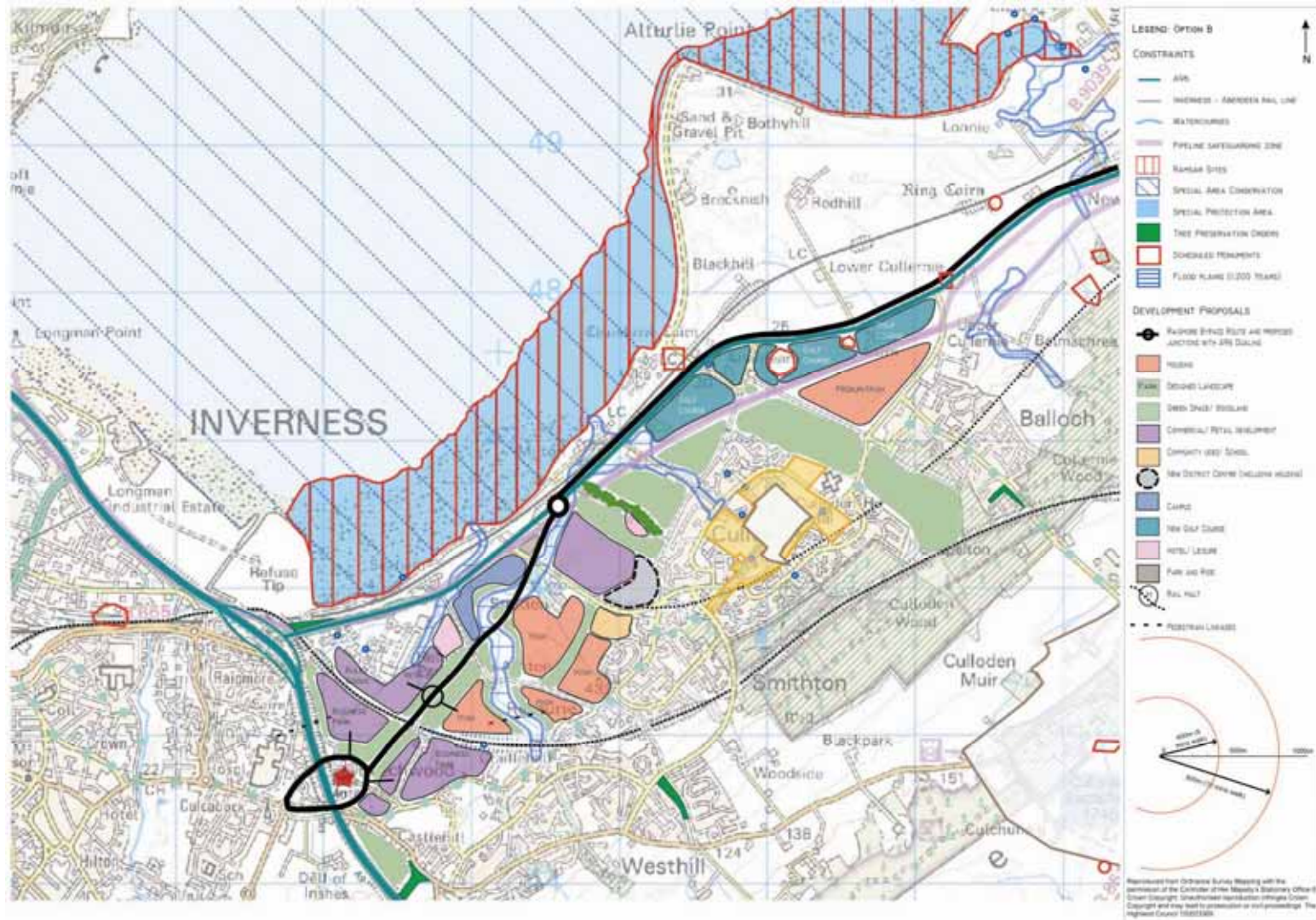
- 6000 new jobs

Open Space

- Golf course on 50 hectares
- Other active provision on 25 hectares
- Passive/amenity provision on 100 hectares



6. Inverness East Framework





Option C

Option Description

This option brings forward a **focus for development toward the western parts of Inverness East**. It also retains **low density development proposals in the east**. The focus is on a **significant college/business offer**. Its principal elements include:

- A by-pass to Raigmore Interchange that connects with the Inshes Interchange which runs close to the south-eastern boundary of the Inverness Retail and Business Park.
- A golf course to the east with associated low density housing.
- The provision of community uses and medium density housing set within a strong landscape context between Balloch and Culloden.
- A business park and college campus designation built around ?? house which could be developed as a hotel.
- A park and ride facility with associated rail halt at the new junction created by the by-pass proposal (to the east of the Inverness Retail and Business Park).
- A core of medium and high density housing with an associated district centre (including housing) that is focused around a landscape spine.
- A retail/business park addressing the new junction created by the by-pass proposal.
- An allocation for bulky goods retail immediately to the west of the Inverness Retail and Business Park.
- Medium density housing north of Westhill accessed from an upgraded Inshes Interchange (as well as from Westhill).
- A landscape area providing a green lung at Beechwood

Key Option Outputs

Residential

- 2350 units with 1000 high, 1100 medium and 250 low density

Population

- 5000 people

Educational

- College Campus on 12 hectares

Business

- Business Park on 65 hectares

Sub-Regional Retail (incl bulky goods and supermarket)

- Bulky goods on 10 hectares
- Other retail on 8 hectares

District Centre

- District centre incorporating primary school, community facilities and local shops/services on 12 hectares.

Leisure

- 100 bed hotel

Employment

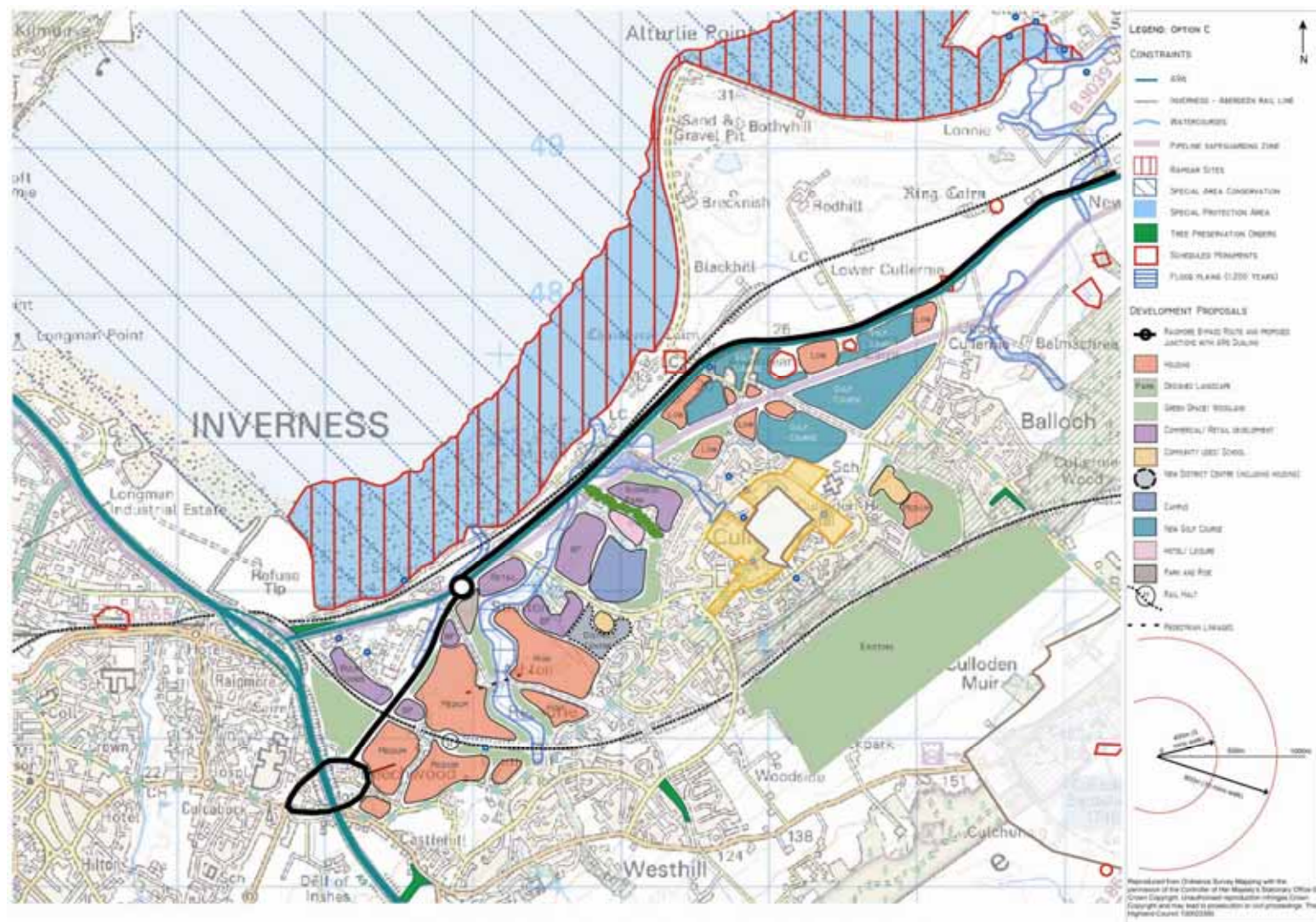
- 6200 new jobs

Open Space

- Golf course on 75 hectares
- Other active provision on 25 hectares
- Passive/amenity provision on 50 hectares (and 120 existing green area hectares)



6. Inverness East Framework





Option D

Option Description

This option **spreads development across Inverness East**. Its principal elements include:

- A by-pass to Raigmore Interchange that connects with the Inshes Interchange which leaves the A96 to the east of the Smithton Roundabout.
- A golf course to the east with associated low density housing towards the east and medium density at the west of the course.
- The provision of community uses adjacent to Culloden High School.
- A bulky goods retail park accessed from the new junction created by the by-pass proposal.
- A core of high density housing with an associated district centre (including housing) that is focused around a landscape spine.
- A business park allocation wrapped around the Inverness Retail and Business Park (which could include leisure and retail proposals).
- High density housing north of Westhill in a landscape context accessed from an upgraded Inshes Interchange (as well as from Westhill).
- A college campus located at Beechwood (north) set in a landscape setting.

Key Option Outputs

Residential

- 2700 units with 2000 high, 450 medium and 250 low density

Population

- 5700 people

Educational

- College Campus on 12 hectares

Business

- Business Park on 20 hectares

Sub-Regional Retail (incl bulky goods and supermarket)

- Retail on 30 hectares

District Centre

- District centre incorporating primary school, community facilities and local shops/services on 10 hectares.

Leisure

- 100 bed hotel

Employment

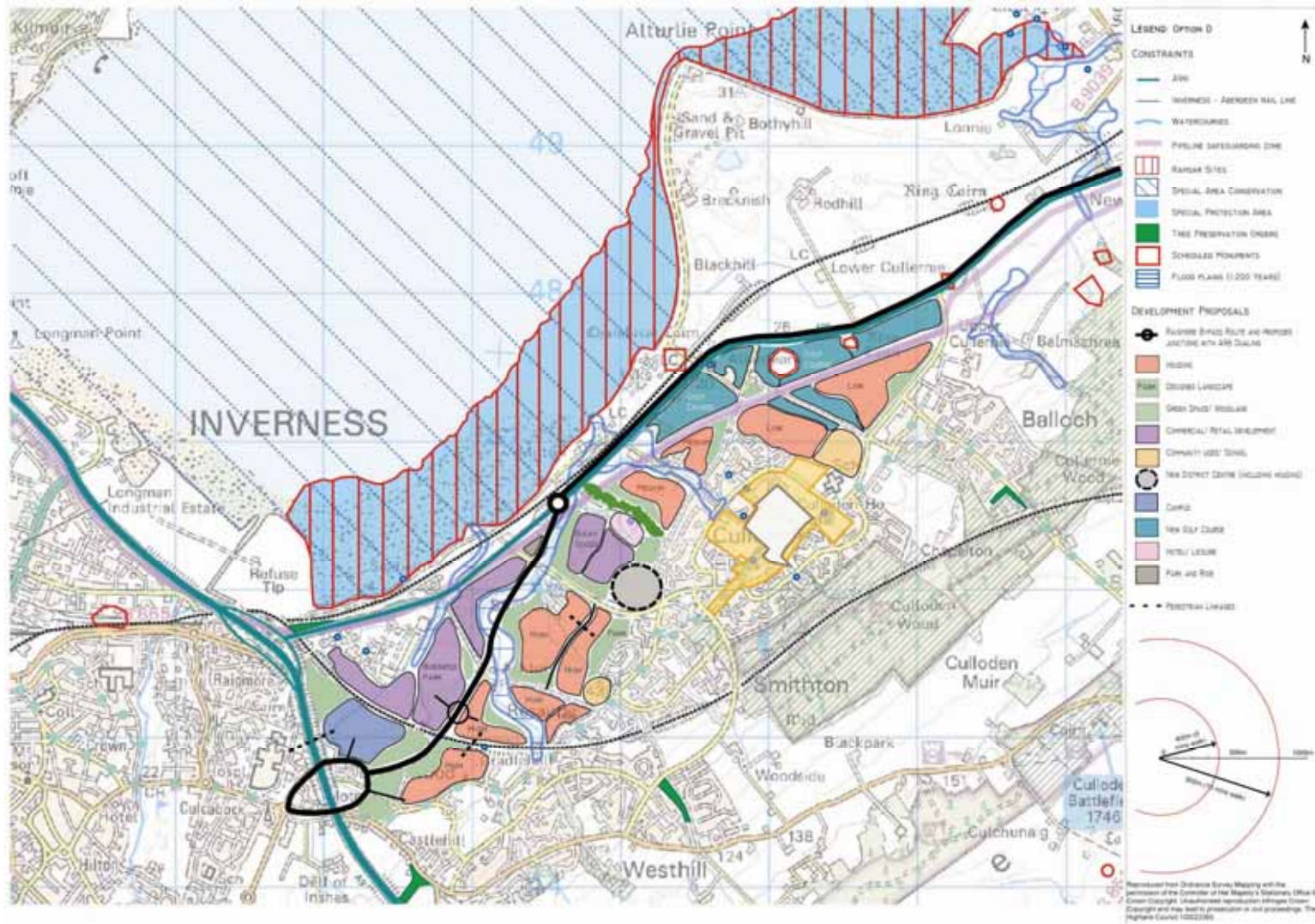
- 2803 new jobs

Open Space

- Golf course on 50 hectares
- Other active provision on 8 hectares
- Passive/amenity provision on 50 hectares



6. Inverness East Framework





6. Inverness East Framework

Option E³

Option Description

This option seeks to **address the Moray Firth explicitly and offers a bold public transport proposal**. Its principal elements include:

- An arching by-pass to Raigmore Interchange that connects with the Inshes Interchange which leaves the A96 at the Smithton Roundabout.
- Realignment of the east-west railway to provide access through Inverness East.
- Low density housing to the east.
- A solid landscape buffer between Balloch and Culloden extending northward through Inverness East.
- A high density housing core with a district centre focused around a rail halt on the realigned railway.
- A community focus at the Moray Firth that takes advantage of opportunities afforded by realigning the railway.
- A retail/business park allocation as an extension of the Inverness Retail and Business Park.
- A college campus located at Beechwood accessed from an upgraded Inshes Interchange with a strong landscape/open space focus.

Key Option Outputs

Residential

- 2550 units with 2000 high, 300 medium and 250 low density

Population

- 5400 people

Educational

- College Campus on 22 hectares

Business

- Business Park on 15 hectares

Sub-Regional Retail (incl bulky goods and supermarket)

- Retail on 13 hectares

District Centre

- District centre incorporating primary school, community facilities and local shops/services on 6 hectares.

Leisure

- 100 bed hotel

Employment

- 1750 new jobs

Open Space

- Other active provision on 20 hectares
- Passive/amenity provision on 75 hectares

³ Considerations of this option must take into account preliminary appraisal of its rail proposal which has been provided in the technical appendices.



6. Inverness East Framework

Options' product summary

The following table provides an overview of the options' product for Inverness East

Option	A	B	C	D	E
Key Option Outputs					
Residential					
Number of total units	3650	2600	2350	2700	2550
Number of high density units	3200	2000	1000	2000	2000
Number of medium density units	200	600	1100	450	300
Number of low density units	250	0	250	250	250
Population					
Number of people	7600	5500	5000	5700	5400
Educational					
Area for campus	10	10	12	12	22
Business					
Area for business park	60	60	65	20	15
Retail					
Area for bulky goods	0	8	10	15	0
Area for sub-regional retail	15	40	8	15	13
District Centre					
Area for district centre	3	10	12	10	6
Area for community uses	1	6	8	10	18
Leisure					
Size of hotels	100 bed	200 bed	100 bed	100 bed	100 bed
Employment					
Number of new jobs	5000	6000	6200	2800	1750
Open Space					
Area for golf course	40	50	75	50	0
Area of active open space	25	25	25	8	20
Area of passive open space	70	100	170	50	75

Assumptions for the above are outlined in the supporting technical appendices. Areas are in hectares. New campus employment has been assumed at none as it will replace an existing facility.



7. Nairn South Framework

Framework options

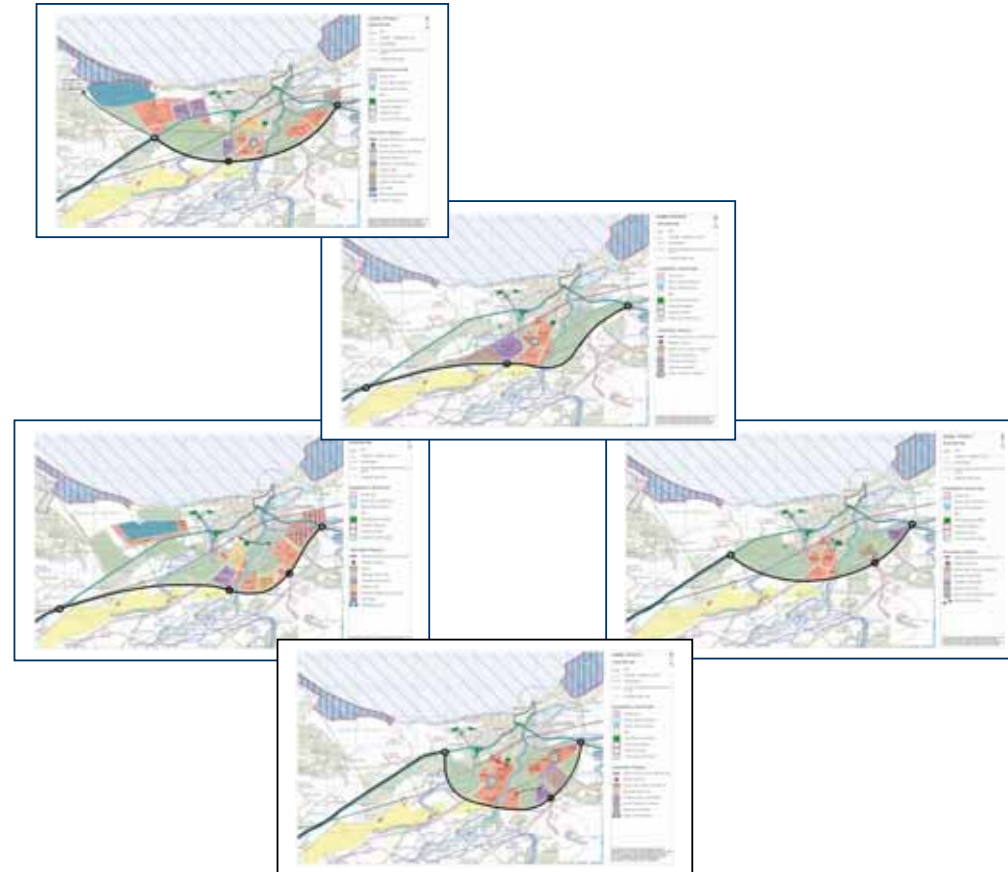
Five options have emerged from stakeholder workshopping and preliminary technical refinement as described above.

These are outlined on the following pages. Each option is described, key outputs such as housing units, population, job creation, etc are identified and a preliminary appraisal relating to the agreed development principles is provided.

Infrastructure implications of these options will require to be considered in the context of the parallel studies described previously.

Clearly, these proposals will result in the loss of agricultural land. It is recommended that the landscape character assessment be referenced to establish this impact.

A sufficient range of information has been supplied to allow public and general consultation to be undertaken through the summer and early autumn. It will also provide a basis for session two of *Collaboration for Success* to be undertaken in September 2006.





Option A

Option Description

This option focuses on the **linear expansion of Nairn**. Its principal elements include;

- A bypass route for Nairn running from Drumdivan in the west to Auchinacloch in the East.
- Development to the north and south of the A96 corridor
- Development of a new mixed use district centre which includes housing to the south of Nairn, with associated residential pockets, community services and open space provision adjacent.
- Provision of a new retail area serving new communities, accessed from the proposed Nairn Bypass.
- A high density housing core focused around the district centre, with medium-lower density housing areas located at peripheral residential areas.
- Development of a new cluster of service/ commercial/ retail uses to the north western gateway of Nairn adjacent to the A96 corridor,
- Strengthening of the existing green framework by linking key waterways and providing additional amenity and functional open space for the town.
- Provision of a footpath network providing pedestrian linkages between existing and new development areas.

Key Option Outputs

Residential

- 3750 units with 1800 high and 1950 low density

Population

- 7850 people

Business

- Business Park on 25 hectares
- Industrial development on 25 hectares (10 hectares for relocated timber yard)

Sub-Regional Retail (incl bulky goods and supermarket)

- Bulky goods on 30 hectares
- Other retail on 15 hectares

District Centre

- District centre incorporating primary school, community facilities and local shops/services on 10 hectares.

Employment

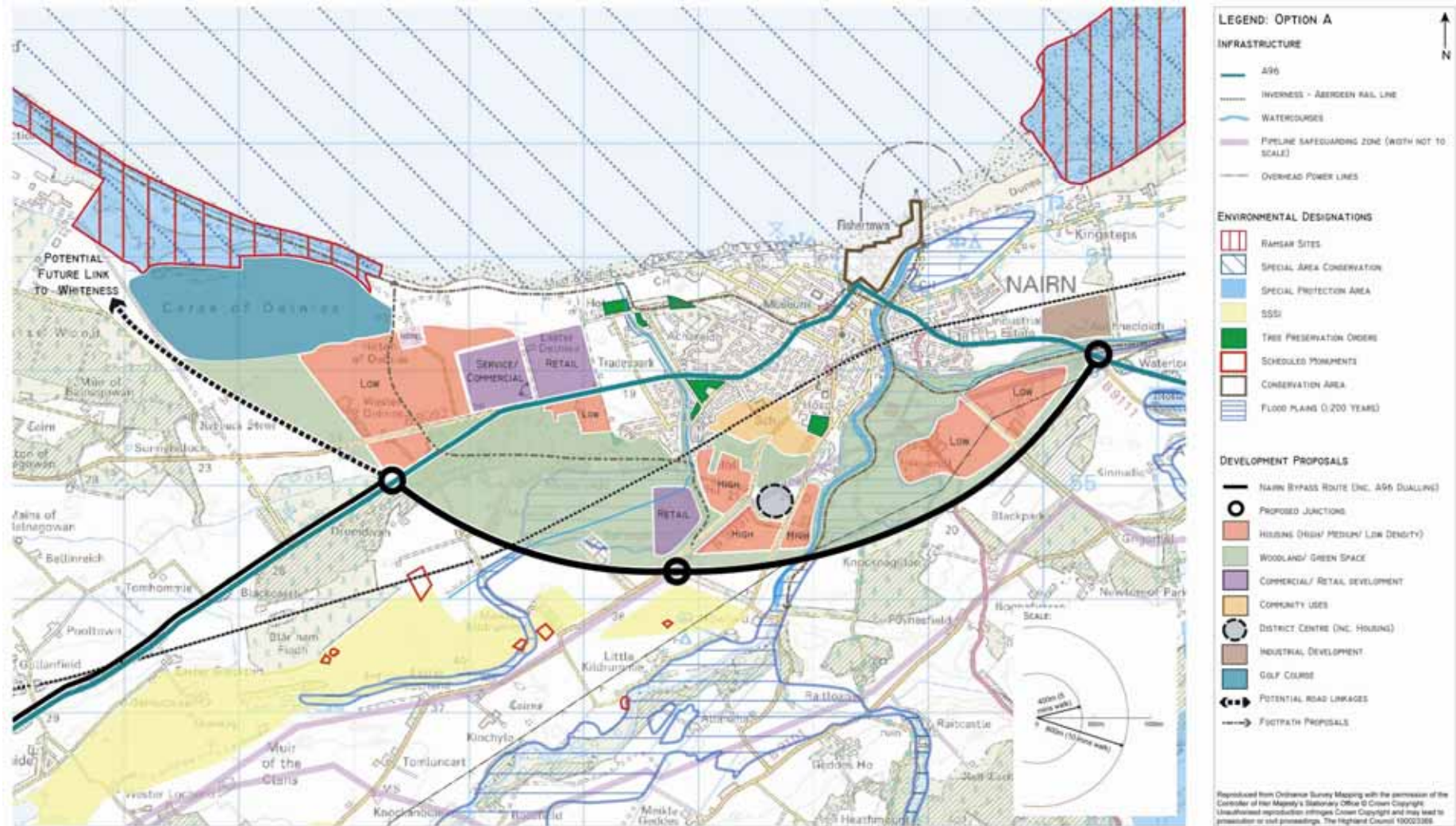
- 3000 new jobs

Open Space

- Golf course on 150 hectares
- Other active provision on 40 hectares
- Passive/amenity provision on 400 hectares



7. Nairn South Framework





Option B

Option Description

This option focuses on land to the **south of the Inverness – Nairn railway line. Housing is proposed at high-medium density, clustered around a mixed use district centre.** Principal elements of this option are;

- A bypass route for Nairn running from Gollanfield in the west to Auchinacloch in the East.
- Creation of a new mixed use district centre including housing to the south east of the town centre
- High density housing focused around the district centre with medium-low density housing located along the bypass edge.
- Retention of a green corridor along existing floodplains for the River Nairn and smaller burns.
- Creation of a commercial cluster to the south west of Nairn including a mix of industrial and business space set within a high quality landscaped environment.
- Direct access from the bypass route to the proposed commercial cluster to the south of Balnaspirach.

Key Option Outputs

Residential

- 2650 units with 1000 high, 1500 medium and 150 low density

Population

- 5550 people

Business

- Business Park on 30 hectares
- Industrial development on 50 hectares (10 hectares for relocated timber yard)

Sub-Regional Retail (incl bulky goods and supermarket)

- Bulky goods on 20 hectares
- Other retail on 10 hectares

District Centre

- District centre incorporating primary school, community facilities and local shops/services on 10 hectares.

Employment

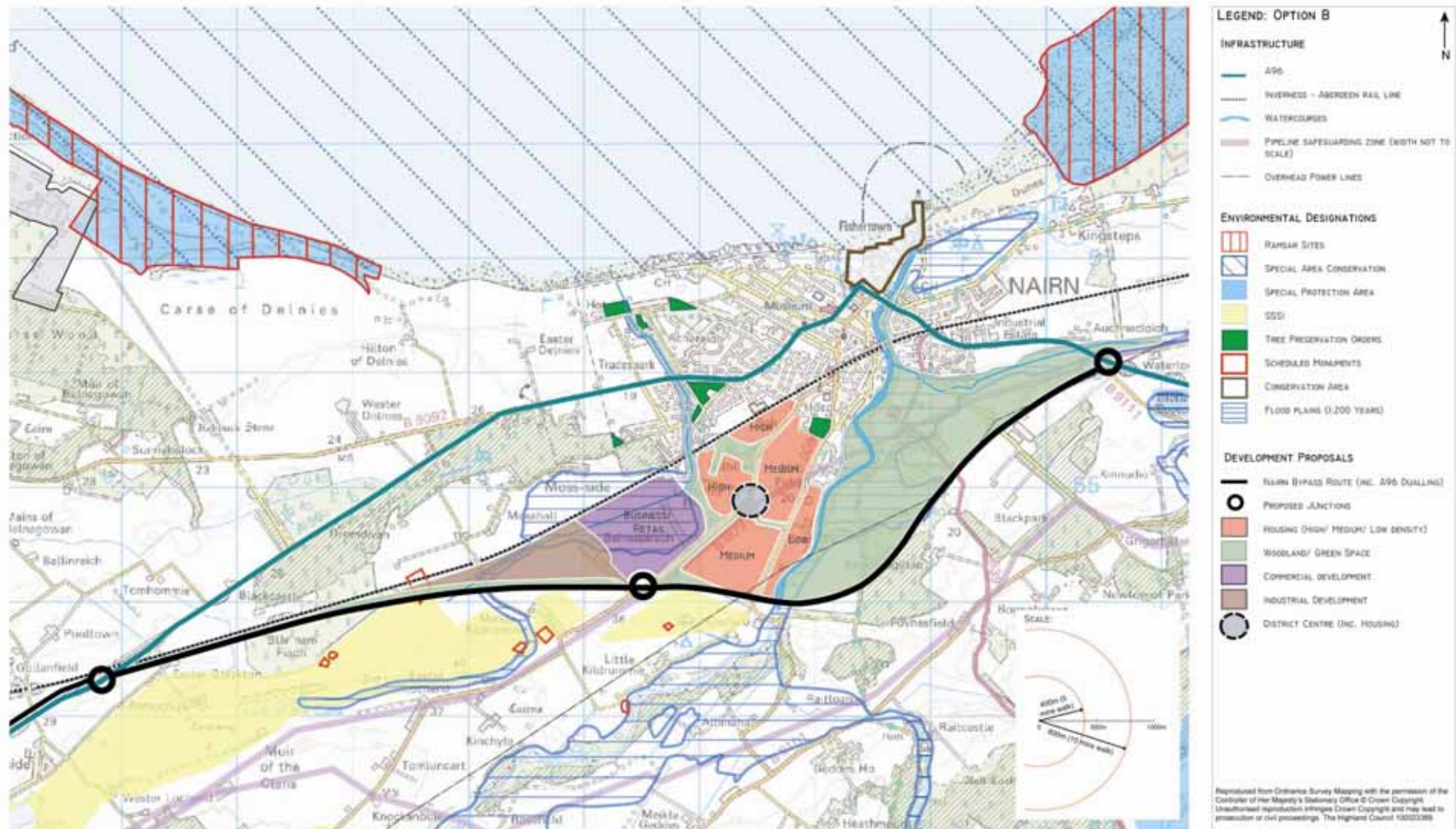
- 4000 new jobs

Open Space

- Active provision on 25 hectares
- Passive/amenity provision on 250 hectares



7. Nairn South Framework





Option C

Option Description

Option C focuses on **the expansion of Nairn to the south, including a strong green framework** which follows the flood plain of the River Nairn and local burns. Principal elements of this option are;

- A bypass route for Nairn running from Drumdivan in the west to Auchinacloch in the East.
- Development of a business park adjacent to the proposed bypass route to the south east of Nairn
- Housing to the south of Nairn focused around a district centre
- A new access road to north of the proposed district centre to ease central congestion and improve linkages between proposed areas of housing growth
- Strong framework of "green wedges" between primary development areas.
- Retention of green space to the south of the A96 at key gateway points into Nairn

Key Option Outputs

Residential

- 1600 units with 400 high, 850 medium and 350 low density

Population

- 3400 people

Business

- Business Park on 25 hectares
- Industrial development on 25 hectares (10 hectares for relocated timber yard)

District Centre

- District centre incorporating primary school, community facilities and local shops/services on 10 hectares.

Employment

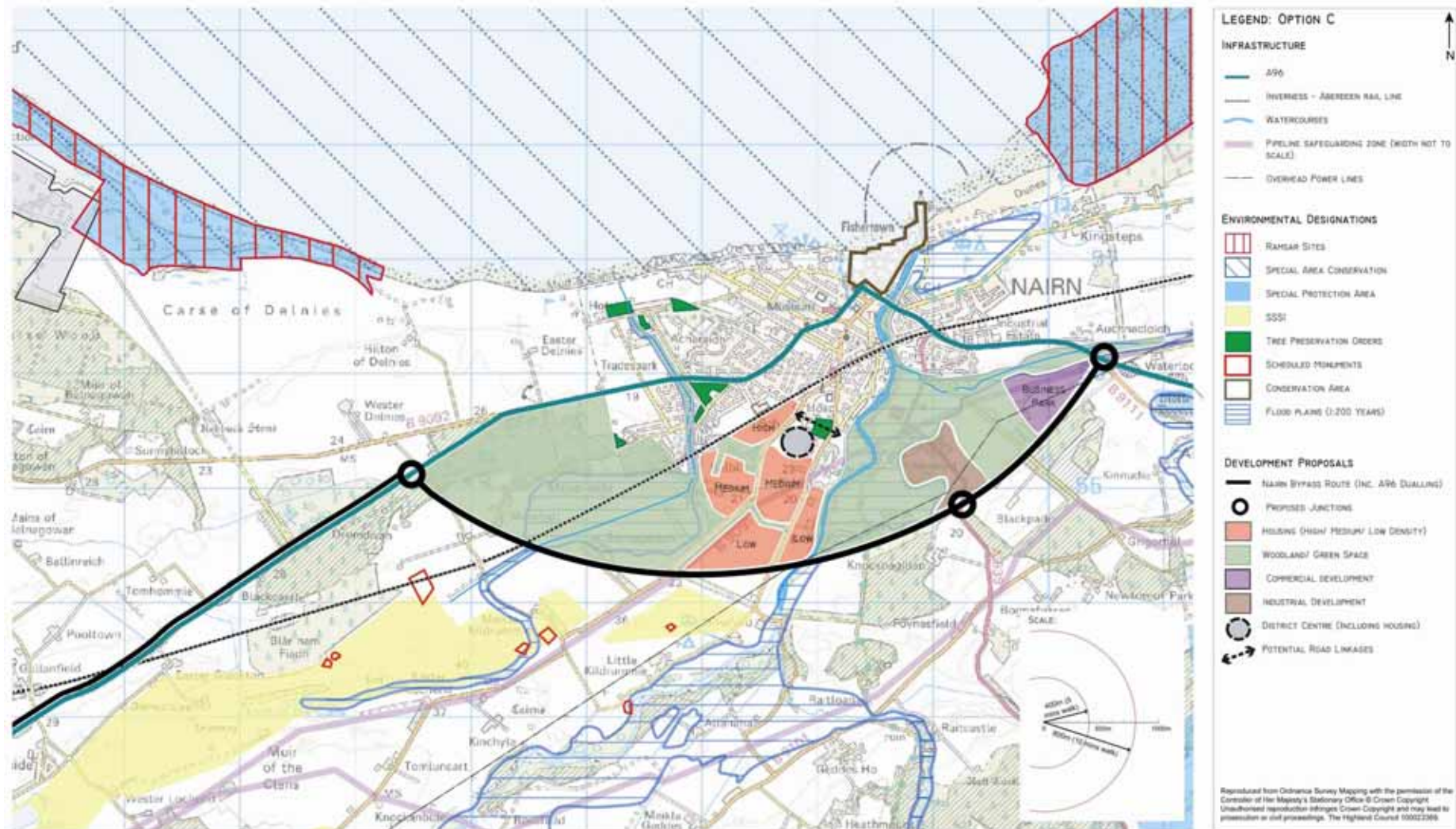
- 2500 new jobs

Open Space

- Active provision on 15 hectares
- Passive/amenity provision on 350 hectares



7. Nairn South Framework





Option D

Option Description

This option proposes **development to the north and south of the A96 Corridor**. A new residential and leisure focus is proposed to the north of the A96, with proposals for mixed land uses to the south and east of Nairn. Its principal elements include;

- A bypass starting in the west from Gollanfield through Howford to Auchenacloch.
- Focus on high density residential development along the River Nairn Corridor with medium – low density residential pockets located around the settlement periphery.
- Development of a housing/ commercial mixed use area to the east of Nairn.
- A business/ retail district with adjacent residential zones.
- An additional golf course is proposed to the west of Nairn, with associated low density housing
- A business/ retail/ community focus along the Cawdor Road.
- Conservation and enhancement of existing woodland into a new woodland park providing open space for surrounding communities.

Key Option Outputs

Residential

- 3600 units with 1200 high, 1500 medium and 900 low density

Population

- 7550 people

Business

- Business Park on 15 hectares

Sub-Regional Retail (incl bulky goods and supermarket)

- Retail on 12 hectares

Community District

- Community area incorporating primary school, high school extension and other community facilities on 10 hectares.

Employment

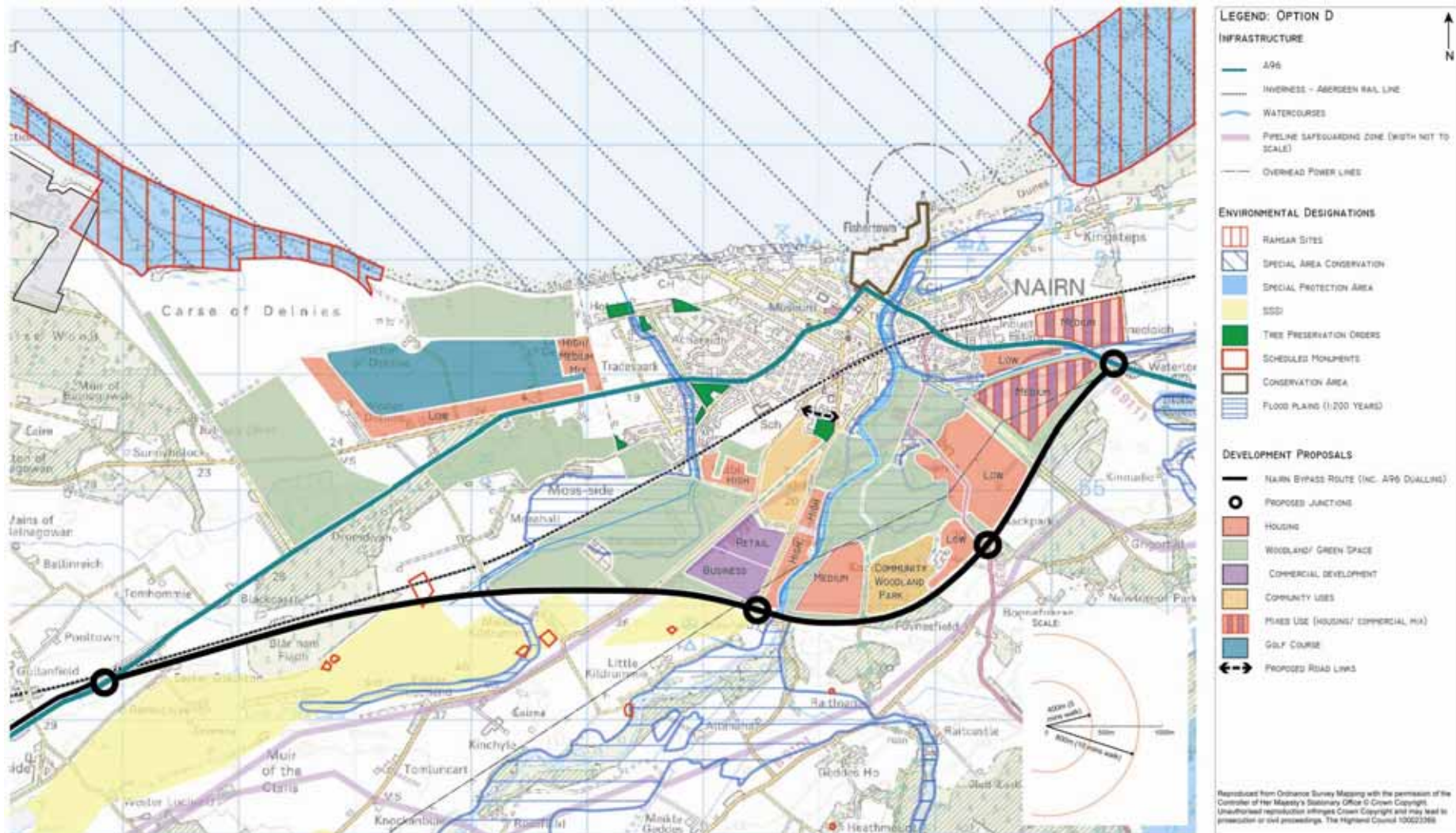
- 2500 new jobs

Open Space

- Golf course on 100 hectares
- Other active provision on 50 hectares
- Passive/amenity provision on 400 hectares



7. Nairn South Framework





Option E

Option Description

Option E proposes **two clusters of development land to the south of Nairn**. Principal elements are;

- This option offers the tightest potential route for a bypass, linking to the north of Moss-side in the west to Auchenaclloch in the east, with a key junction linking north south proposed at the A839.
- New mixed use district centres (including a housing element) with a well connected high-medium density residential hinterland
- Residential development to the south of Nairn would require consideration of existing overhead pylons in places.
- New access routes to ensure integration of new development pockets with the existing urban fabric of the town.
- A high quality business park on land to the south west of Nairn adjacent to the proposed junction with the A839.
- Industrial development is proposed to the south east of Nairn.
- A strong green framework following existing flood plains.

Key Option Outputs

Residential

- 5000 units with 2200 high, 2000 medium and 800 low density

Population

- 10500 people

Business

- Business Park on 40 hectares
- Industrial development on 35 hectares (10 hectares for relocated timber yard)

District Centre

- District centres incorporating primary school, community facilities and local shops/services on 20 hectares.

Employment

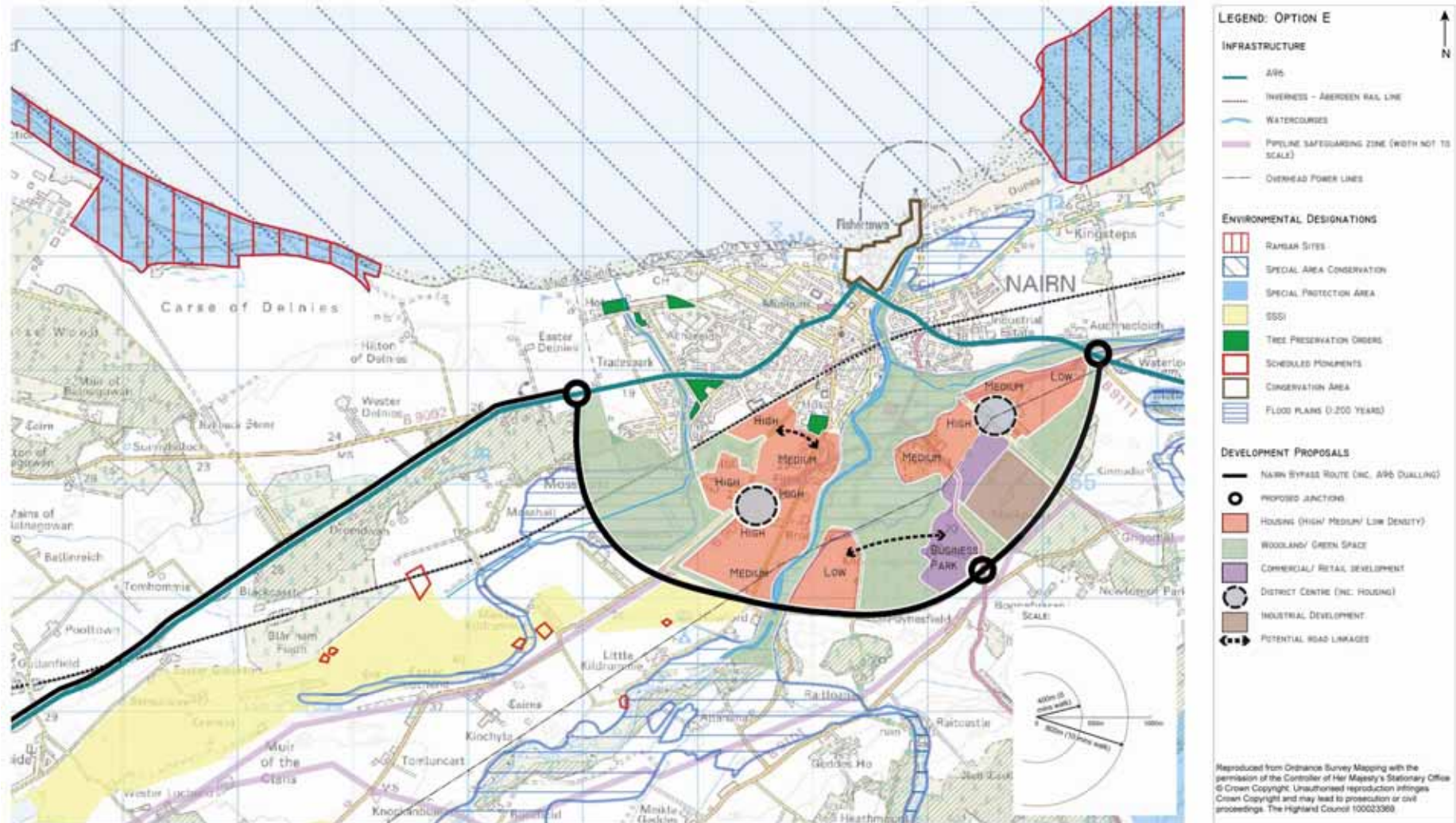
- 4350 new jobs

Open Space

- Active provision on 40 hectares
- Passive/amenity provision on 300 hectares



7. Nairn South Framework





7. Nairn South Framework

Options' product summary

The following table provides an overview of the options' product for Nairn South.

Option	A	B	C	D	E
Key Option Outputs					
Residential					
Number of total units	3750	2650	1600	3600	5000
Number of high density units	1800	1000	400	1200	2200
Number of medium density units	0	1500	850	1500	2000
Number of low density units	1950	150	350	900	800
Population					
Number of people	7850	5550	3400	7550	10500
Business					
Area for business park	25	30	25	15	40
Area for industrial	25	50	25	15	35
Retail					
Area for bulky goods	30	20	0	0	0
Area for sub-regional retail	15	10	0	0	0
District Centre					
Area for district centre	10	10	10	10	20
Employment					
Number of new jobs	3000	4000	2500	2500	4350
Open Space					
Area for golf course	150	0	0	100	0
Area of active open space	40	25	15	50	40
Area of passive open space	400	250	350	400	300

Assumptions for the above are outlined in the supporting technical appendices. Areas are in hectares.



8. Preliminary option appraisal

Approach

In order to facilitate consideration of the options, it would be appropriate to provide some guidance to allow the merits of each option for Inverness East and Nairn South to be examined.

The approach for this has been to consider each option in the round in relation to appropriate Highland Smart Growth development principles outlined in Chapter 4 above. These are outlined in the following paragraphs.

Appropriate Highland Smart Growth **development principles**, for application in this context, are:

In respect of the **environment** to -

- Take advantage of environmentally sensitive building design that respects and responds to the Highland vernacular and materials. And is energy efficient.
- Maintain and enhance open space, natural features and critical environmental areas and ensure these are provided within settlements and integrated into development that maximise their recreational contribution to the quality of life.

In respect of **economic development** to -

- Ensure land use is appropriate and that development uses sites to maximum advantage emphasising sustainable development.
- Promote a mix of land uses that allows houses and jobs to be closely related and the mix to be more varied toward the centre of places.
- Every new dwelling should have a new job created.

In respect of **accessibility** to -

- Relate development density to accessibility to help ensure viable public transport services.
- Deliver walkable and cycle friendly places that are distinctive and attractive with a strong sense of place through legible and permeable design.

- Ensure accessibility through mobility choice by actively promoting attractive public transport.
- Address key road challenges including the Raigmore Interchange/appropriateness of the Nairn by-pass.

In respect of **community inclusion** to:

- Create a range of housing opportunities and choice and promote a range of housing density to achieve choice.
- Strengthen existing communities through the provision of services and opportunities for the wider community.

Matrices relating each option for Inverness East and Nairn South to these Smart Growth principles are provided on the following pages. This establishes if the option, in the round, meets the development principle requirement, exceeds it or fails its test.

Clearly, these options will require a robust analysis and appraisal. The approach for this is provided in Chapter 10.



8. Preliminary option appraisal

Inverness East appraisal matrix

	Option	A	B	C	D	E
	Highland Smart Growth Development Principle					
Environment	Take advantage of environmentally sensitive building design that respects and responds to the Highland vernacular and materials. And is energy efficient.	Likely meet or exceed .	Likely to meet although some retail allocations may mitigate against.	Likely meet or exceed .	Likely to meet although some retail allocations may mitigate against.	Likely meet or exceed .
	Maintain and enhance open space, natural features and critical environmental areas and ensure these are provided within settlements and integrated into development that maximise their recreational contribution to the quality of life.	Exceeds through extensive landscape buffers and open space provision.	Meets through clear and legible landscape structure.	Fails as proposal landscape resources are poorly integrated.	Fails as proposal landscape resources are poorly integrated.	Fails as proposal landscape resources are poorly integrated.
Economic Development	Ensure land use is appropriate and that development uses sites to maximum advantage emphasising sustainable development.	Meets with solid core and other appropriately located allocations.	Meets with solid core and other appropriately located allocations.	Meets as development is maximised.	Fails as bulky goods location does not promote most effective use.	Meets with solid core and other appropriately located allocations.
	Promote a mix of land uses that allows houses and jobs to be closely related and the mix to be more varied toward the centre of places.	Fails as business/campus proposal are isolated from other uses.	Fails as business & campus proposals are isolated from other uses.	Meets as development is integrated; particularly at central core.	Fails as proposal promotes mono-use adjacent to centre.	Meets as development is integrated.
	Every new dwelling should have a new job created.	Exceeds	Exceeds	Exceeds	Meets	Fails
Accessibility	Relate development density to accessibility to help ensure viable public transport services.	Meets with urban core and substantial employment area.	Meets with urban core and substantial employment area.	Meets or exceeds due to solid urban core and substantial employment /study areas.	Fails as development density adjacent to centre is inappropriate.	Meets with urban core and substantial employment area.
	Deliver walkable and cycle friendly places that are distinctive and attractive with a strong sense of place through legible and permeable design.	Meets or exceeds due to focus on place-making core and distinctive business/campus area.	Meets or exceeds due to placemaking core, strategic landscaping and location of campus.	Meets or exceeds with coherent business, campus, residential and service proposals.	Fails as legibility will be lost for significant area close to centre.	Meets due to focus on place-making core.
	Ensure accessibility through mobility choice by actively promoting attractive public transport.	Meets or exceeds due to significant cores of development.	Exceeds due to cores of development related to existing network.	Meets or exceeds due to significant cores of development.	Fails as proposal is not responsive to attracting public transport.	Exceeds due to significant cores of development focusing on rail.
	Address key road challenges including the Raigmore Interchange.	Meets through by-pass.	Meets through by-pass.	Meets through by-pass.	Meets through by-pass.	Meets through by-pass.
Community Inclusion	Create a range of housing opportunities and choice and promote a range of housing density to achieve choice.	Fails as density generally high. However, in wider context likely to meet.	Fails as density generally high. However, in wider context likely to meet.	Meets as a full range of density is proposed; appropriately located	Meets with a range of density across Inverness East.	Fails as density focuses on high and low provision.
	Strengthen existing communities through the provision of services and opportunities for the wider community.	Exceeds through shortfall upgrading.	Meets through district centre provision.	Meets through district centre provision.	Meets through district centre provision.	Exceeds with substantial focus to north.



8. Preliminary option appraisal

Nairn South appraisal matrix

	Option	A	B	C	D	E
	Highland Smart Growth Development Principle					
Environment	Take advantage of environmentally sensitive building design that respects and responds to the Highland vernacular and materials. And is energy efficient.	Likely meet although extensive low density housing allocations may threaten.	Likely meet or exceed .	Likely meet or exceed .	Fails as proposals do not respond to Nairn layout.	Likely meet or exceed .
	Maintain and enhance open space, natural features and critical environmental areas and ensure these are provided within settlements and integrated into development that maximise their recreational contribution to the quality of life.	Exceeds through extensive buffers and open space provision.	Meets through clear landscape structure.	Meets through clear landscape structure.	Exceeds through innovative community woodland proposals.	Meets through clear landscape structure.
Economic Development	Ensure land use is appropriate and that development uses sites to maximum advantage emphasising sustainable development.	Fails as sustainable outcomes are lost due to suburban low density and inappropriate open space.	Meets with solid core and other appropriately located allocations.	Fails as business park allocation is not integrated.	Fails as sustainable outcomes are lost due to poor integration of allocations.	Meets with solid core and other appropriately located allocations.
	Promote a mix of land uses that allows houses and jobs to be closely related and the mix to be more varied toward the centre of places.	Fails as business proposals are isolated from other uses.	Meets as development is integrated.	Fails as business proposals are isolated from other uses.	Fails as poor integration prevents coherent mix.	Exceeds as development is strongly integrated.
	Every new dwelling should have a new job created.	Meets	Exceeds	Exceeds	Fails	Meets
Accessibility	Relate development density to accessibility to help ensure viable public transport services.	Fails as low density allocations are excessive.	Meets or exceeds due to accessible urban core and substantial employment area.	Fails as business proposals are isolated from other uses.	Fails as allocations fail to relate density to transit accessibility.	Meets or exceeds due to accessible urban cores and employment area.
	Deliver walkable and cycle friendly places that are distinctive and attractive with a strong sense of place through legible and permeable design.	Fails as low density allocations make good design outcomes more difficult to achieve.	Meets or exceeds due to solid urban core and substantial employment area.	Fails as business proposals are isolated from other uses.	Fails as proposals do not deliver a sense of place.	Meets or exceeds due to solid urban cores and substantial employment area.
	Ensure accessibility through mobility choice by actively promoting attractive public transport.	Fails as proposal is not responsive to attracting public transport.	Meets or exceeds due to integration and mix of uses.	Fails due to isolated business park.	Fails as opportunities to promote public transport are not presented.	Meets or exceeds due to integration and mix of uses.
	Address key road challenges including the appropriateness of the Nairn by-pass.	Meets through by-pass.	Meets through by-pass.	Meets through by-pass.	Meets through by-pass.	Meets through by-pass.
Community Inclusion	Create a range of housing opportunities and choice and promote a range of housing density to achieve choice.	Fails as density focuses on low provision.	Meets with a range of density focused on a district centre.	Meets with a range of density focused on a district centre.	Meets as a range of density is proposed.	Meets with a range of density focused on a district centres.
	Strengthen existing communities through the provision of services and opportunities for the wider community.	Fails as proposals do not respond to wider integration.	Meets through district centre provision.	Meets through district centre provision.	Meets as good community and recreational provision is made.	Meets through district centre provision.



9. Green Framework

Context

The development of the Green Framework must be considered in the context of the A96 Corridor masterplan Stage 1 Study. This examined and developed proposals relating to landscape and recreation across the Corridor as a whole to the west of Nairn. The following considerations build on these matters and landscape consideration for Nairn South (see supporting technical appendices for landscape character assessment for Nairn).

Importantly, the active engagement of principal land managers across the A96 Corridor has been a key aspect of developing the Green Framework. This has been achieved through the Green Framework Planning Group outlined previously.

Objectives

The objectives of the Green Framework for the A96 Corridor are to:

- Establish a broad landscape and recreation strategy including integration with the development frameworks in the Corridor over the next 30 to 50 years.
- Establish environmental quality and respond to sensitive resources and locations.
- Create new green infrastructure and enhance the existing landscape.
- Address issues including land management, natural heritage, built heritage, bio-diversity, recreation, access and interpretation.

Opportunity

The Green Framework can contribute to the quality of life by:

- Improving healthy living by providing opportunities for exercise, sport and informal recreation.
- Providing a setting for future development integrated with the existing landscape fabric.
- Providing further greenspace (including community woodland) and wider access to the countryside.
- Improving linkages over major transport corridors through use of 'green bridges.'
- Protecting and enhancing existing bio-diversity and creating new areas and linkages.
- Opening up and improving urban to rural links.
- Developing sustainable farming through appropriate support for farming practices and forestry restructuring to better integrate agriculture and forestry and to expand and restore areas of native woodland
- Providing an enhanced environmental backdrop that will assist in attracting business and inward investment to the A96 Corridor.

Environmental context of the Corridor

Landscape character

One of the major features of the landscape along the A96 corridor is the sense of space and the large 'scale of the landscape' with the sea, sky and forested ridges being dominant features. The coastline is attractive with wide open views to the north over the Firth to the Black Isle. Broad open areas of intensive farmland extend inland from

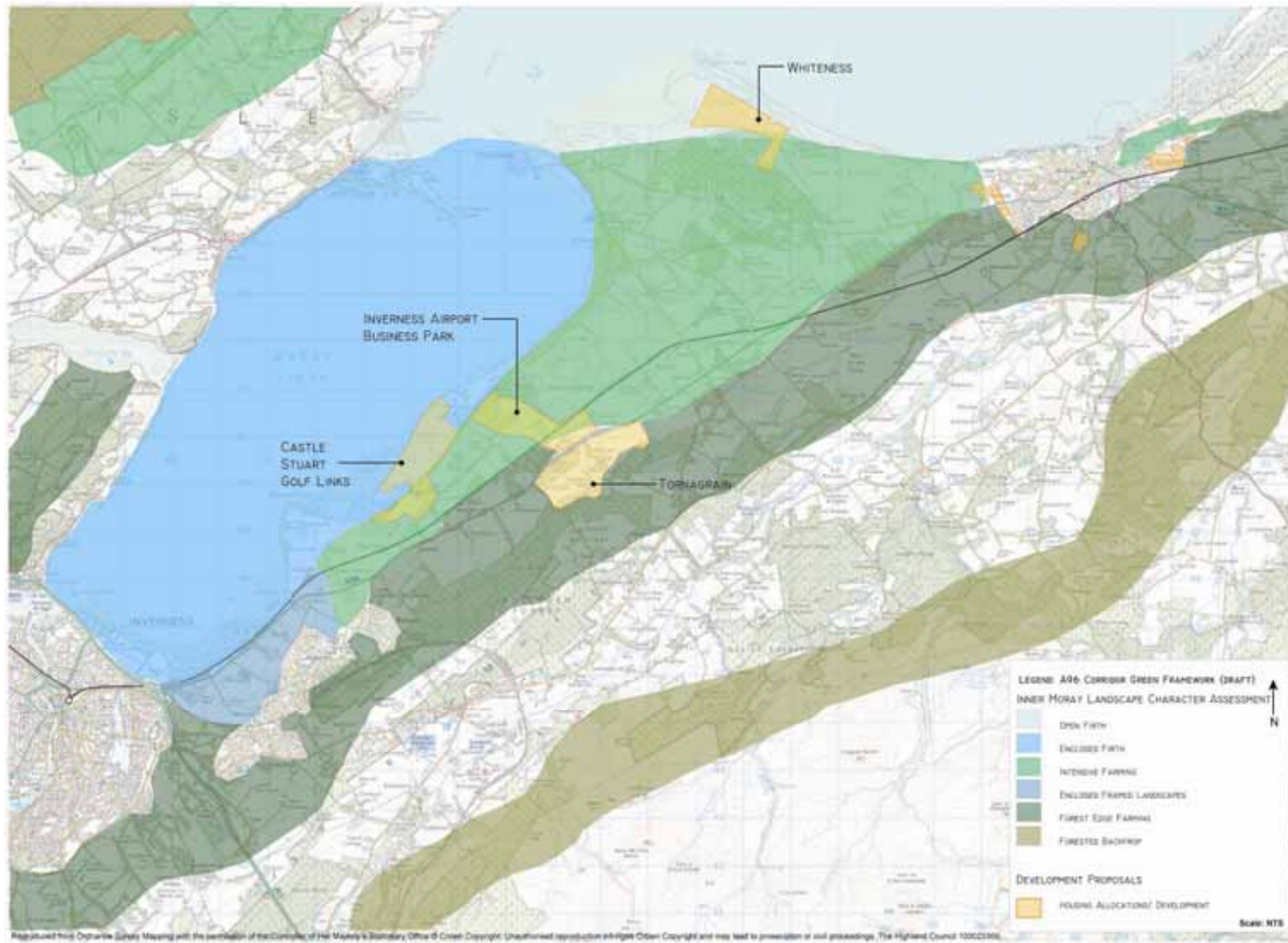
the shore, broken only to the south of Whiteness by extensive areas of forest. The land rises from the shore to form a wooded ridge running west to east from Whitehill through Balloch, decreasing in height to the east of Croy. The landscape is characterised as forest edge farming. Kildrummie Kames SSSI forms a major landscape feature with its interesting landform and cover of gorse. Closer to Nairn, the landscape becomes more enclosed with fields enclosed by shelterbelts and woodland blocks. The River Nairn follows a very attractive wooded valley.

The landscape overall has the capacity to contain significant areas of development, the former Ardersier Fabrication Yard at Whiteness being an example of how a very large structure can be accommodated in this landscape. There is nothing unattractive about the A96 Corridor; it provides a great opportunity to develop a Green Framework in a very pleasant landscape setting.

The A96 landscape character assessment taken from *the Inner Moray Landscape Character Assessment, 1998* is provided below.



9. Green Framework



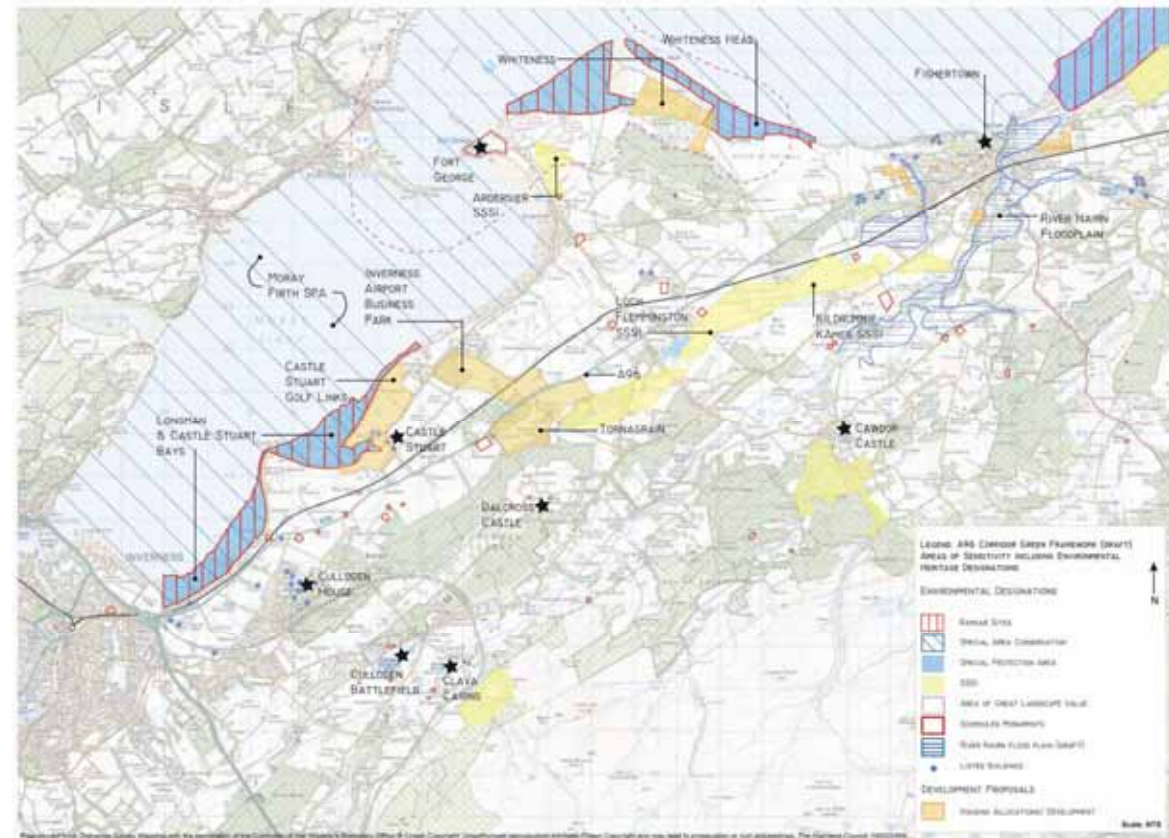


9. Green Framework

Heritage and cultural features

There are several heritage and cultural features in the corridor including:

- Culloden Battlefield – new visitor centre to be constructed with associated facilities. Green Framework can provide improved pedestrian and cycle links and ensure that important open character and views from site are considered and maintained.
- Clava Cairns.
- Fort George – large military site, major visitor attraction set in a very attractive coastal location. Nearby live firing ranges – responsible public access is required, especially as part of Inverness to Nairn link and neighbouring Whiteness development.
- Castle Stuart – situated close to developing Castle Stuart Golf Links.
- Dalcross Castle – historic garden and designated landscape.
- Cawdor Castle – major visitor attraction outside study area. It is an important focus for tourists and cycle and pedestrian links.
- Fishertown – a conservation area in Nairn.
- Listed buildings – particularly cluster in Culloden and to the west of Nairn.





9. Green Framework

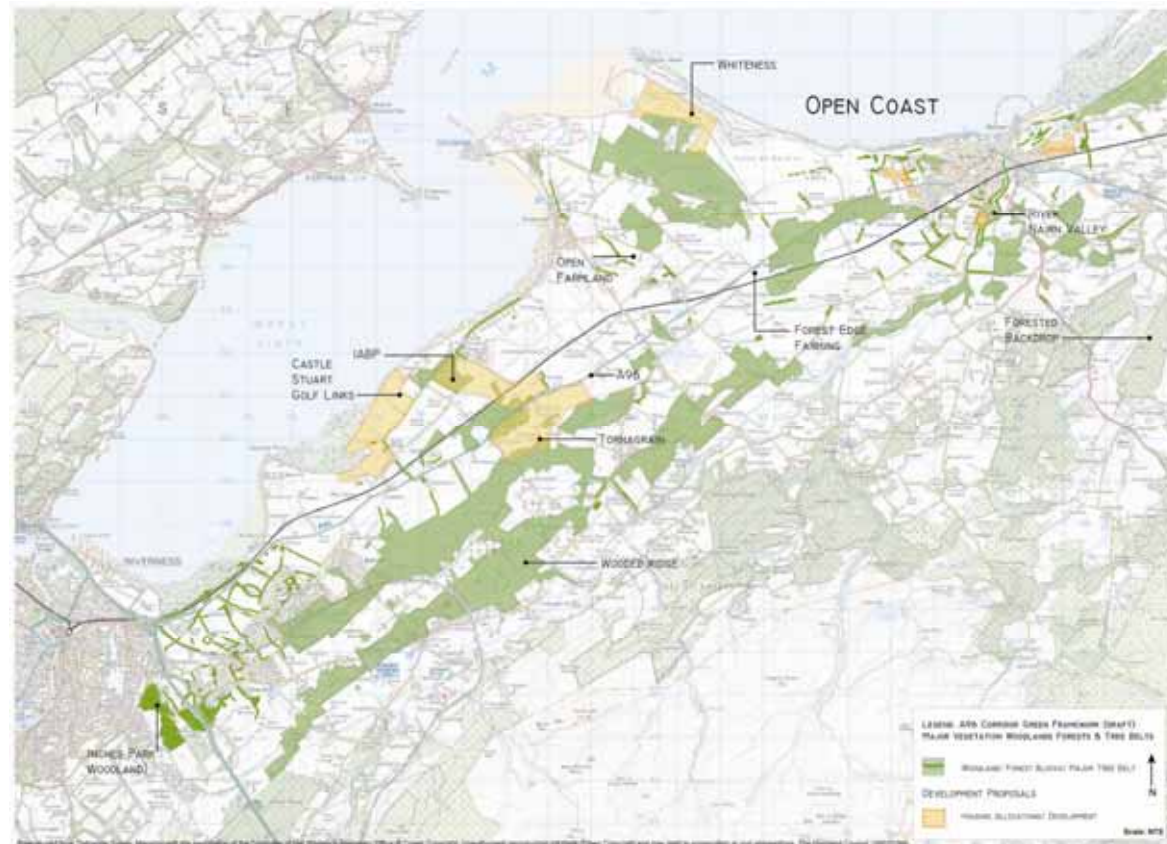
Biodiversity

The Corridor contains a wide variety of habitats. The major designated areas include:

- Moray Firth SAC
- The SPA and Ramsar sites along the coast at Longman and Castle Stuart Bays and Whiteness Head – especially important for wintering birds. Key issue is controlling public access to the foreshore, especially those walking with dogs. Proposed coastal path from Inverness to Nairn needs to be carefully sited with restricted points of access to the foreshore.
- Kildrummie Kames and Loch Flemington SSSI – opportunity to enhance knowledge and experience of geological feature at Kildrummie Kames (and Ardersier SSSI) through public access and interpretation.
- Ancient woodlands.
- Tree preservation orders.

Access and informal recreation

There are a number of access routes throughout the Corridor including two Sustrans routes. However, there is no hierarchy of routes with clear signage and publicity and no route following the coastline from Inverness to Nairn. There are a substantial number of woodland paths and car parks provided by the Forestry Commission. A community forest has been developed at East Delnies to the west of Nairn.



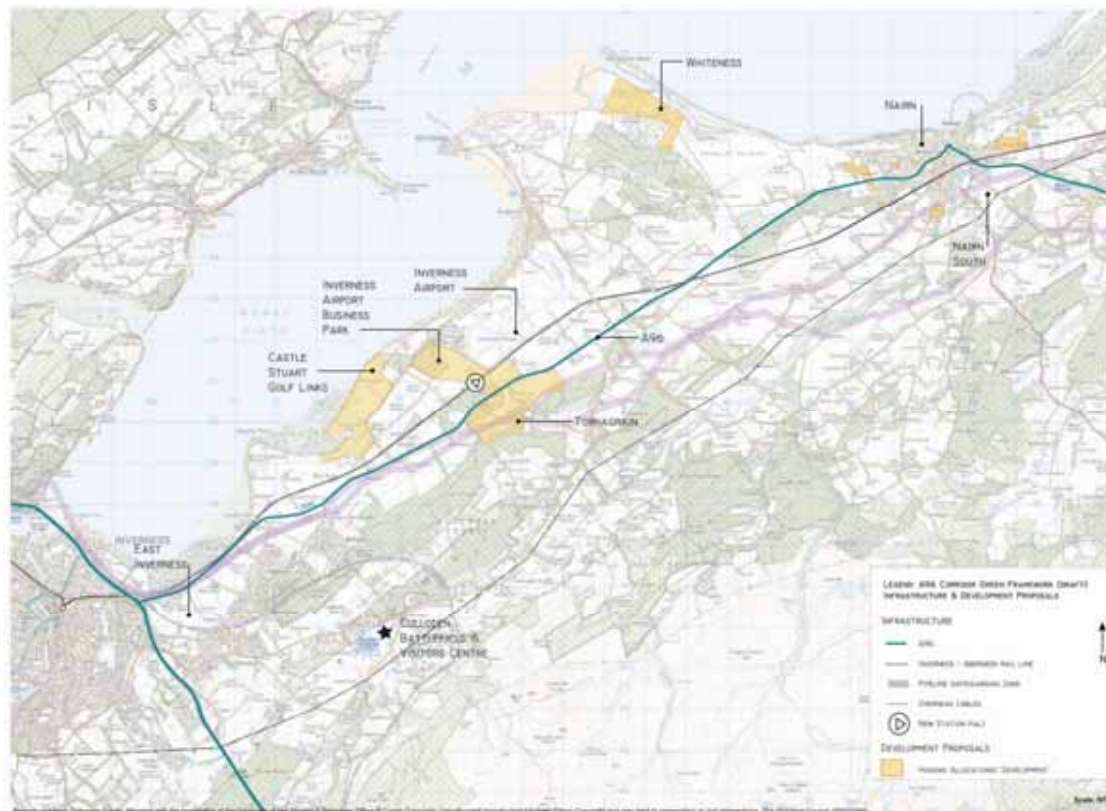


9. Green Framework

Strategic built development proposals

Emerging or committed strategic development proposals in the A96 corridor include:

- Castle Stuart Golf Links with associated hotel and time share beside very sensitive coastline. Sensitive design is required to ensure landscape and biodiversity are not compromised.
- Tornagraim new settlement, proposal for a sustainable settlement of approx 10,000 people to south of A96 on gently sloping site, half of which is well contained visually by existing forestry and other, eastern half, is more open and exposed but has wide open views across the Firth.
- Inverness Airport expansion.
- Inverness Airport Business Park (IABP), a business and freight park beside the airport to north of A96 and bisected by railway line with a new station halt. Proposal to integrate some of build development into the existing forestry areas.
- Whiteness new settlement and leisure facilities on former Ardersier Fabrication Yard including 2,000 residential units, marina and leisure / community facilities. Sensitive coastal site with need to restrict access to Whiteness Head. Bordered by thick forestry area to south.
- East Inverness, a private proposal for residential, retail and business development around Seafield area bordering existing communities of Westhill, Culloden and Balloch.
- Nairn South, private proposals to achieve new residential growth with possibility of associated Nairn by-pass / relief road.



Achieving the Green Framework



9. Green Framework

The draft Green Framework builds on the existing features of the Corridor, future developments and important linkages to create a major component of the masterplan for the Corridor. The draft Green Framework contains the following major initiatives and sites:

A. New **Coastal Park** with connections into Inverness over A9 corridor – develop coastal open space including landfill site (north of Raigmore Junction) as new shoreline park for Inverness beside Moray Firth; include shoreline area on alignment of former coastal road eastwards through Seafield, Milton and Blackhill. Develop cycle and pedestrian routes linking to Castle Stuart Golf Links and beyond.

B. Inverness to Nairn **Coastal link** including coastal park (described above) running through Castle Stuart Golf Links through Fishertown to coastal road leading to Ardersier. Onward connections to Fort George and Whiteness to Nairn. Major opportunity to open up the coastline to walkers and cyclists. Constraint is sensitivity of much of the coastline – careful routing of the link is required with some areas set back from the coastline (this is proposed through the Castle Stuart Golf Links), with controls on dog walking especially over the winter months to protect birds.

C. **Inverness green bridge** link – provide pedestrian / cycle link to East Inverness over A9 and mainline railway. Create links from Inverness to communities to east of transport corridors – ‘urban to rural links’.

D. **Inshes Park** and connections to wooded ridge – development by *Green* Inverness of park and development of pedestrian and cycle links over A9 to Westhill / Culloden and wooded ridge to the east. Strong links possible from south Inverness to Sustrans routes and wider network of paths and cycle routes.

E. **East Inverness** – reinforce tree belts and integrate green wedges with existing and planned development. Opportunity to define ‘built edges’ and provide substantial green space linking higher wooded ridge to coastal area

and providing attractive setting to eastern edge of Inverness.

F. New **gateway to Inverness** – as part of upgrading of A96 and East Inverness development, a major new ‘gateway building’ or feature.

G. **Tornagrain / IABP green bridge** – connecting seashore / airport and IABP to Tornagrain and links south of the A96. Opportunity to provide excellent connectivity over road corridor and railway line.

H. **Tornagrain** – to include planting / bund beside A96 to screen township from road corridor to provide visual and noise attenuation. Develop green framework / boundaries in more open eastern side of the site.

J. **New woodland links / corridors** – enhancing biodiversity and creating new linkages. Opportunities to enhance green framework from high wooded ridge towards coastline in vicinity of Westhill, Culloden, Balloch and in open farmland to link existing woodlands to north east of airport. To be defined in detail with landowners.

K. **Kildrummie Kames ‘geotrail’** – substantial SSSI running from Tornagrain to south west of Nairn. Importance of geological site can be raised by establishing a geotrail with interpretive facilities, informing public of the formations. Establish car park, footpath network which can link to wider network linking Tornagrain and Nairn. Additional geotrail could be considered at Ardersier SSSI.

L. **Wooded edge to western Nairn** – new development on western edge of town has been approved. A very open, coastal landscape which can be improved visually by having a strong landscape ‘frame’ to town edge containing development and linking to established, large forestry areas to south of A96.

M. **Nairn south** – area of development potential. Ensure existing landscape features, particularly strong tree belts surrounding fields are retained and enhanced as part of future developments. Quality and character of River Nairn corridor to be protected. Public access to the river is

important, cycle and footpath links exist but possibility of enhancing on northern side of river. Major constraint is floodplain. Opportunity to introduce SUDS as appropriate.

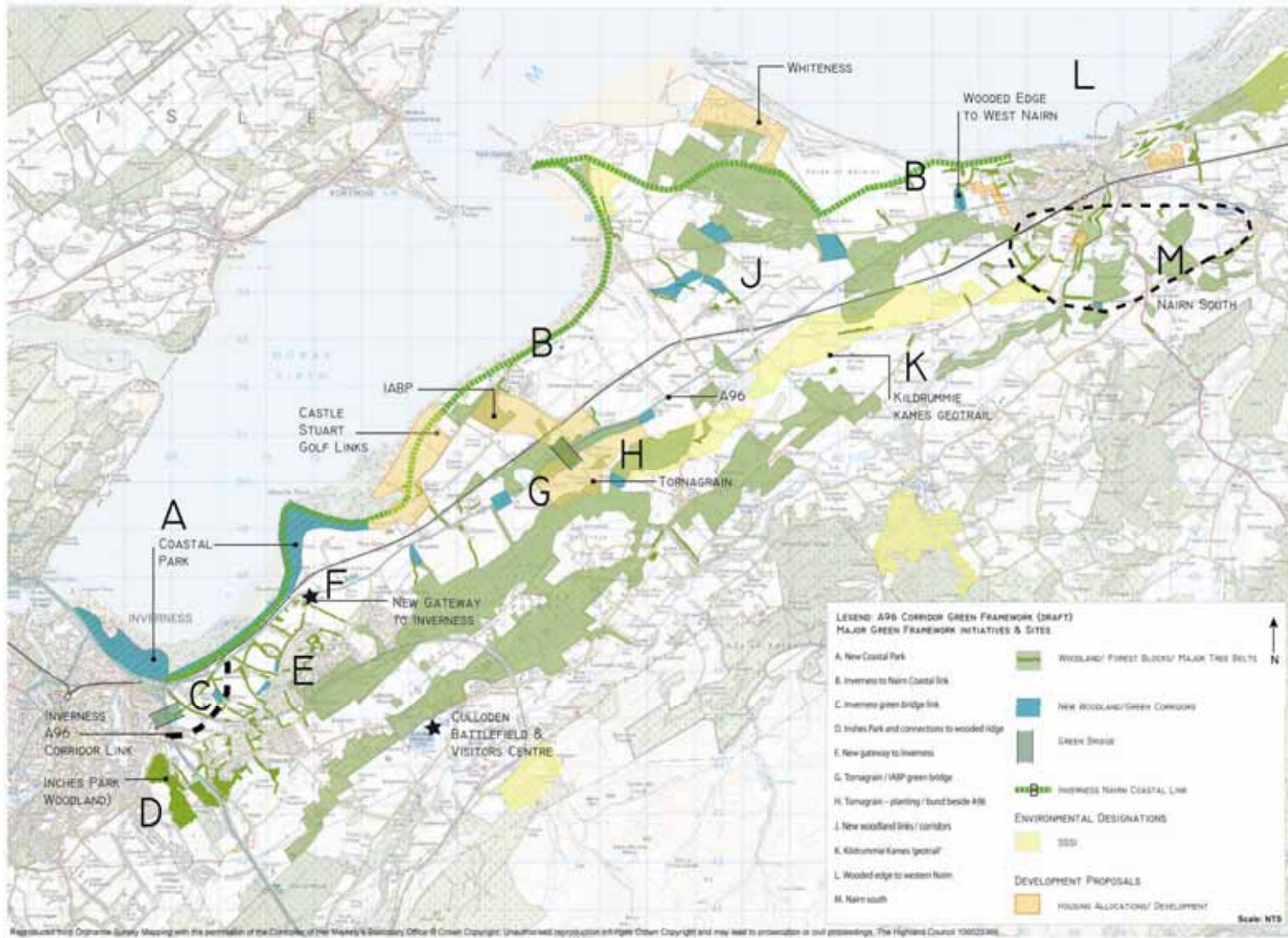
An important aspect of the Green Framework is to provide improved linkages for pedestrians and cyclists throughout the Corridor. A network of routes has been identified including:

- A coastal link from Inverness to Nairn taking in the proposed coastal park, Castle Stuart, Fort George and Whiteness
- A route following the A96 (an upgraded dualled A96 would have associated cycle and pedestrian routes along the corridor). This offers a flatter, more direct route along the corridor.
- The existing Sustrans routes which links Inverness to Culloden and the wooded ridge to the Nairn River corridor and into Nairn. A southern route branches off from Culloden. There may be opportunities to offer more section of the route ‘off road’.
- Develop a series of ‘circuits’ offering routes of varying length and character (including woodland routes of interest to mountain bikers), connecting communities to the coast and the wooded ridge and River Nairn corridor.
- Access through ‘green bridges’, improved links and new station halt at IABP.
- Clear signage and publicity – highlight major tourist / recreation routes: linking Inverness to Culloden battlefield to Fort George, Kildrummie Kames SSSI, etc.

Clearly, the development of frameworks for East Inverness and Nairn South, as well as other proposals in the Corridor, will have a significant bearing on the Green Framework.

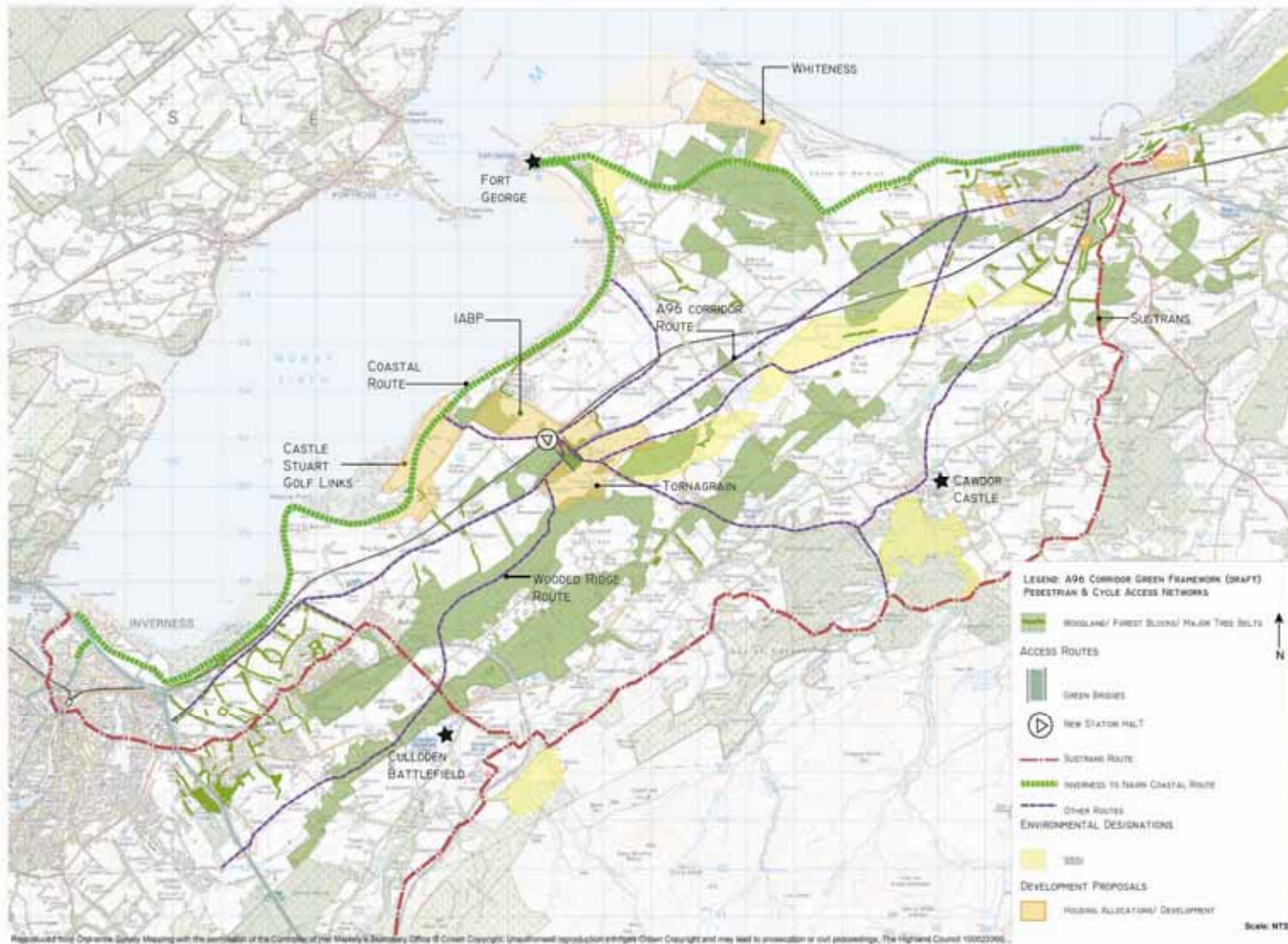


9. Green Framework





9. Green Framework





9. Green Framework



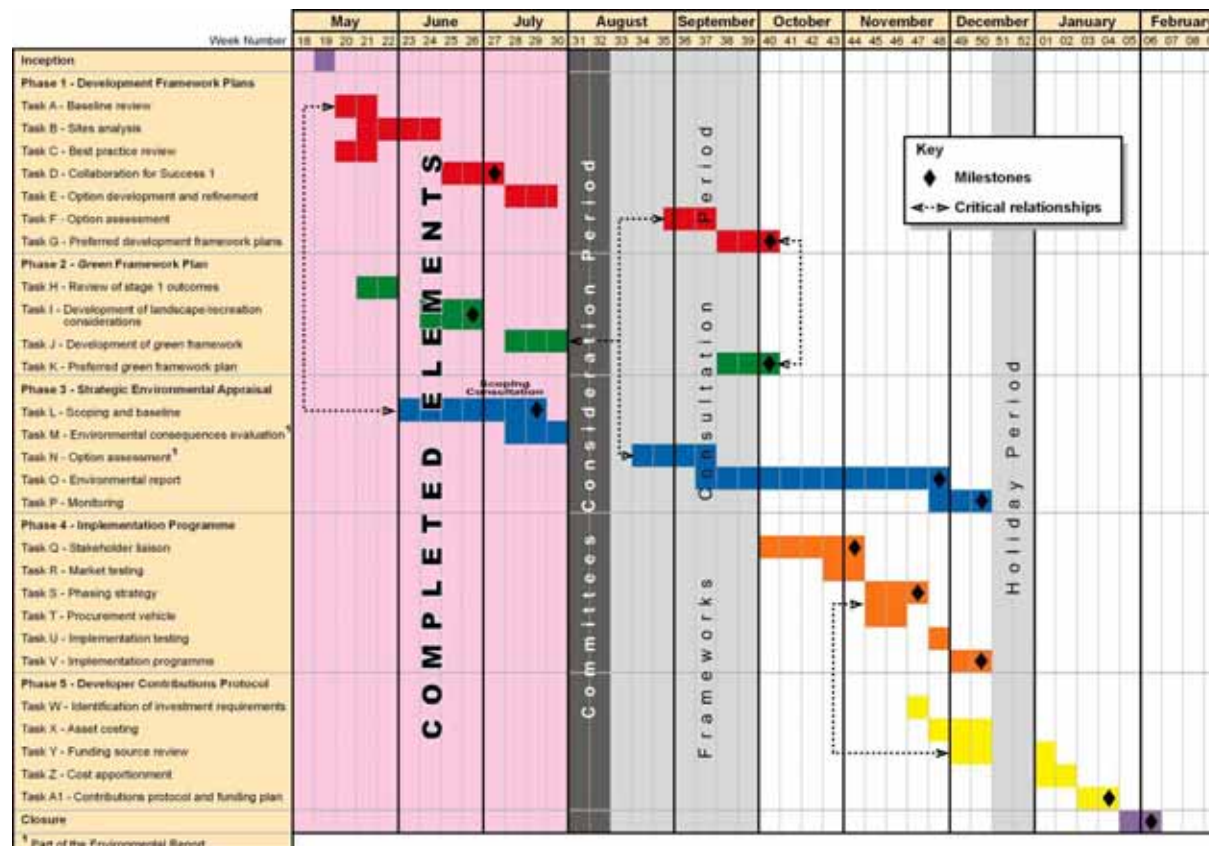
Views of the A96 Corridor from west to east



10. Next steps

Progress

Preparation of the Frameworks is progressing to programme as shown below.



Continuing Frameworks' Preparation

Council considerations

The Inverness East and Nairn South Framework options and the draft Green Framework are proposed for consideration by the Inverness and Area Committee (31 July), Nairnshire Committee (8 August), and Planning, Development, Europe and Tourism Committee (16 August). Approval to undertake public consultation will be sought. This will be undertaken by The Highland Council.

In parallel with the above, the following steps will drive forward development of the Frameworks.

Technical option assessment

This will involve property demand and service planning considerations to ensure that proposed allocations are realistic and achievable through place threshold assessment.

In particular we will:

- Examine the requirements for building socially sustainable communities by engaging with key service providers relating to education, community services, health, social services and recreation and leisure⁴.
- Establish a commercially robust threshold required to viable and vital centres including the type, quality and sizes of retail/commercial service required.

⁴ Through this consultation we will establish population thresholds for the provision of differing services within communities. The requirements the recently adopted Inverness Local Plan at policy GP2 – Urban Structure will be a key consideration in these matters. This will, of course, take into account existing and other projected communities (i.e. Whiteness and Tornagrain) within the A96 Corridor.



10. Next steps

- Consider value for money and practicality issues in delivery.

Further, each option will require a planning assessment related to:

Delivering viable and vital places

- promoting local shops and facilities
- town size and urban form to ensure sustainable centres
- education and health service thresholds

Transport and access

- providing accessibility / transportation choices
- integrating access with adjoining communities
- encouraging walking and cycle links
- accessibility to public transport routes
- capacity of road and rail

Suitability for a Sustainable Urban Drainage System that positively contributes

- Flood risk
- Sensitive water environments

Use of land

- conserve built/cultural resources
- development uses site(s) to best advantage
- promotes accessibility demand to location of development type
- contribute to range of housing (type and tenure)
- take advantage of the location's natural topography
- promote development that responds positively to the location's characteristics
- assesses existing land use impacts

Landscape

- protecting/enhancing visual landscape, local character and landscape quality
- respect the established landscape framework
- appropriate areas for development

Environment

- preserve and enhance critical environmental areas
- protect/enhance wildlife habitats and their connectivity
- increase tree cover
- improve/maintain public access to open spaces
- wildlife areas and the countryside

Stakeholder option assessment

Session 2 of *Collaboration for Success*, as outlined above, will be undertaken during this task. For each location, all four groups of stakeholders will be brought together. Through facilitated workshops a sustainability appraisal of each option will be undertaken. This will identify stakeholder's preferred option/s for Inverness East and Nairn South.

Infrastructure option assessment

In support of these assessments, we recommend that utility/transport considerations of each option need to be undertaken. To facilitate these considerations we will present each option in the context of the detailed zoning map shown below.



Detailed Zoning Map for Investigations

Together with consultation outcomes, these considerations will allow preferred development framework plans for Nairn South and Inverness East to emerge.

A full report on the option assessment process and findings will be prepared.

Green Framework development

Working closely with the Green Framework Planning Group we will develop proposals to establish a green framework for the Corridor as a whole. This will take into account comments received in consultation, the emerging detailed proposals for Tornagrain, *Collaboration for Success*

Preferred development framework plans

Having identified a preferred option for each location, we will prepare preferred development framework plans for Inverness East and Nairn South.

Preferred green framework plan

Having identified a preferred green framework, we will prepare a preferred plan for green infrastructure provision across the Corridor, as a whole.



11. Conclusion

Relationship to wider policy and practice Issues

The preparation of development framework options for Inverness East and Nairn South and a draft Green Framework continue a process of collaboratively addressing policy and practice issues for accommodating the creation of a city-region along the A96 Corridor. This collaborative approach extends through strategic policy, local policy and into the A96 Corridor Masterplan's preparation (Stages 1 and 2). Developments in these respects are briefly reviewed in the following paragraphs.

Housing - Housing is a critical part of the way communities will develop and grow along the A96 Corridor. By using Highland Smart Growth approaches to create a wider range of housing choices, communities can be created with a strong foundation of neighbourhood legibility and permeability, transit stops, commercial centres and other services.

No single type of housing can serve the varied needs of today's and tomorrow's diverse households, particularly in retaining the best talent from the Highlands. The Smart Growth proposals that begin to emerge for Inverness East and Nairn South through this interim report represents an opportunity to increase housing choice that can support a more diverse population and allow more equitable distribution of households of all income levels.

Movement - Providing people with more choices in housing, shopping, communities and transportation is a key fundamental established through the Highland Smart Growth Development Principles set out in the A96 Corridor masterplan Stage 1 Report. The implementation of new approaches to transportation planning, such as better co-ordinating land use and transportation, increasing the availability of high quality transit service and ensuring connectivity between pedestrian, bike, transit and road facilities is offered through the emerging proposals for frameworks at Inverness East and Nairn South.

Quality of Life - Growth can improve quality of life by adding services, creating opportunity and enhancing access to amenities. Preliminary work with businesses, community leaders, developers, Highland Council, etc. has allowed them to work together to ensure that new growth improves the economy and environment of new and existing communities. This collaborative approach to deliver good quality of life outcomes across the Corridor as a whole will continue as the project develops.

Urban Design - By promoting the principles of mixed use neighbourhoods, walkable communities and high density, low impact development; communities will be created that will provide environmental, economic, social and health benefits for all.

Economics - Frameworks are beginning to emerge that will clearly create places that will encourage investment and provide quality environments for highly skilled people to live in. In the new knowledge economy distinctive places that have the talent, technology and infrastructure to sustain competitive advantage are highly valued. Talent is attracted to sociable communities - places with destinations, public and civic spaces and environmental amenities. Proposal need to provide housing of varying types and costs, development patterns that are predictable, and transportation systems which increase mobility are required. Emerging options for Inverness East and Nairn South have the potential to deliver on these expectations. Of course, efficient and effective connectivity to specialised commercial and industrial allocations across the A96 Corridor is a focus in creating a Smart Growth solution.

Environment - Balancing open space protection and development objectives through the appropriate integration of development activity and natural areas has been considered. This is balanced through ensuring good accessibility and integration with appropriate environmental areas through the development of green infrastructure focused through a Green Framework.

Health - The way in which our communities are laid out directly impacts on public health. Conventional suburban design contributes to increased vehicle use and poor health outcomes. The Smart Growth approach for the A96 Corridor Masterplan promotes healthier communities as it improves pedestrian safety and engages people in more active, healthy lifestyles. The promotion of compact, walkable neighbourhoods with mixed uses makes walking and cycling become attractive. The emerging Frameworks for Inverness East and Nairn South combined with recreational proposals in the Green Framework will help establish this healthier context.

In developing Frameworks for the A96 Corridor, practical concerns will need to be addressed. These include:

- Ensuring proposals will work and be attractive to the market.
- Providing responses to political leadership and expectations.
- Continuing approaches that ensure all stakeholders are engaged and can support solutions developed through collaborative working.
- Securing solutions that are deliverable and implementable in the longer term.
- Recognising that conservative interests that promote a conventional approach to growth are powerful and these must be guarded against.

The A96 Corridor Masterplan offers an opportunity to innovatively and practically address these issues. Emerging proposals for Inverness East, Nairn South and green infrastructure for the Corridor as a whole grasps this opportunity.

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26 July 2006

The logo for Halcrow, featuring the word "Halcrow" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The letter "H" is stylized with a diagonal slash through it.

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