

Appendix 3a: Assessment Matrix Explanation

This appendix details the assessment matrix used and provides information on the SEA Objectives.

The assessment considers:

- What level of impact the vision/spatial strategy/policy/alternative approaches may have in the short/medium/long term on each of the SEA Objectives and;
- At what scale the vision/spatial strategy/policy/alternative approaches may have an impact.

The matrix also includes a justification of the assessment for each SEA objective. This is intended to guide the reader through the decision making process. To aid in this there are assumptions recorded at the beginning of each matrix, which have been made in the decision making process. This is recorded at the start rather than against each SEA Objective as the assumptions made apply to all the Objectives.

For consistency the following scoring system has been used through out the assessment matrices:

Significant Positive Impact	Minimal positive impact	Neutral Impact	Minimal negative impact	Significant negative impact	Possible Positive and Negative Impacts	Unknown Impact
++	+	=	-	--	+/-	??

Each assessment is followed by a concise commentary on the findings of the assessment of the vision/spatial strategy/policy/alternative approaches.

Please note that all assessments have been carried out assuming that the mitigation is already included in the policy.

The assessments are set out in two appendices – appendix 3b for the vision/spatial strategy/policies in the Proposed Plan and appendix 3c for the alternative approaches.

The key considerations which are set out below will be used in the assessment of each of the policies/reasonable alternatives.

<p>1 To conserve and where possible enhance biodiversity and accord to the protection of valued nature conservation habitats and species</p> <p>Will it contribute to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity in Highland?</p> <p>Will it have a detrimental effect on protected species?</p> <p>Will it contribute to achieving local and regional biodiversity action plan targets?</p> <p>Will habitats of importance for biodiversity be protected?</p> <p>Will designated sites be protected?</p> <p>Will it avoid the introduction or spread of non-native species?</p> <p>Will habitat networks and corridors be maintained or enhanced?</p>
<p>2 To improve the living environment for all communities and promote improved health of the human population</p>

Will it ensure better connectivity of open spaces?
Will it create or enhance green networks for people or wildlife?
Will it give additional benefit to human health?
Will human health be significantly reduced?
Will it ensure a healthier lifestyle for the residents within the settlements?

3 Safeguard the soil quality, geodiversity and improve contaminated land

Will it lead to the avoidance of areas of landslide/landslip?
Will it ensure the re-use of brownfield sites?
Will it prevent the sealing of good quality soil on sites?
Will it protect areas of importance for geodiversity in Highland?
Will carbon storage of peat land be protected?

4 Manage and reduce flood risk and protect the water environment

Will it ensure new developments are free from flooding?
Will it reduce the vulnerability of existing areas to flooding?
Will it enhance natural drainage?
Will it ensure SUDS are included in new residential developments?
Will it ensure development is supported by appropriate drainage infrastructure
Will it ensure that development has no detrimental impact on the water environment?
Will it ensure developments enhance the water environment where possible?

5 Reduce greenhouse gases and contribute to the adaptation of the area to climate change

Will it reduce the need to travel?
Will it ensure an increase in use of more sustainable transport methods?
Will it ensure better opportunities for walking and cycling?
Will it ensure more renewable energy production where appropriate?
Will it ensure energy efficiency is taken into consideration in new developments?
Will it ensure suitable connection to electricity infrastructure?
Will it reduce the risk of coastal inundation through sea level rising?

6 Manage, maintain and promote sustainable use of material assets

Will it support the minimisation of waste production?
Will it support the achievement of government targets through the use of the waste management hierarchy?
Will it ensure the waste management facilities comply with National Waste Strategy Objectives,

thus ensuring only residual waste is land filled?

Will it ensure recovery of energy and heat from waste is considered where appropriate?

7 Protect and enhance, where appropriate, the area's rich historic environment

Will it protect and enhance the historic environment?

8 Protect and enhance the character, diversity and unique qualities of the landscape

Will local diversity and distinctiveness be maintained or enhanced?

Will the special qualities of designated areas be maintained or enhanced?

Will existing landscape character be maintained or enhanced?

Will visual impact be minimised?

Will scenic value be maintained or enhanced?

Will it safeguard the ability of people to experience qualities of wildness?

Explanation of Assessment Matrix

SEA Objective	Time Scale			Magnitude		Justification and Assumptions	Mitigation		
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Local	Regional		Measure	Lead Authority	Proposed Timescale
1									

SEA Objective from Environmental Report

Any mitigation measures that will be required to avoid, reduce, remedy or compensate any negative effects identified, when required and who will be required to implement them

When will the effect become apparent: short (0-5yrs), medium (5-10yrs), or long term (10+yrs)

Will the approach have an impact locally (i.e. just within a settlement) or regionally (i.e. right across Caithness and Sutherland)

