

Appendix 3c: Assessment of Policy Alternatives

The alternatives in this section have been considered through the Main Issues Report consultation. **The summary of comments and recommended responses** explain the reasons for not taking these approaches forward.

Contents

Vision and Spatial Strategy

Vision – Option 2 – An Alternative Vision

Policies

Growing Settlements – Option 2 – More rigid approach

Growing Settlements – Option 3 – More flexible approach

Promoting and Protecting Settlement Centres – Option 2 – More flexible approach

Promoting and Protecting Settlement Centres – Option 3 – More rigid approach

Policy Tools

Special Landscape Areas – Option 2 – No changes to SLA boundaries

Vision and Spatial Strategy

Option 2 – An Alternative Vision - carry forward the existing HwLDP Vision for the Caithness and Sutherland area

Assumptions made when assessing: Any proposal which meets the outcomes of the vision will also be assessed against all relevant policies in HwLDP, Caithness and Sutherland LDP and Supplementary Guidance.

SEA Objective	Timescale			Magnitude		Justification and Assumptions	Mitigation		
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Local	Regional		Measure	Lead Authority	Proposed Timescale
1	+	+	+	+	+	<p>Justification The vision promotes the protection and enhancement of habitats and species and recognises the benefits this brings to the area.</p>	Review vision and spatial strategy during next review of CaSPlan	THC	2021
2	+/-	+	+	+	=	<p>Justification The vision does not specifically mention living environment or improved health of the human population; it does mention a high quality of life and a regenerating place which could go some way to helping achieve this SEA Objective in the medium or longer term.</p>	Review vision and spatial strategy during next review of CaSPlan	THC	2021
3	+/-	+/-	+/-	=	=	<p>Justification The vision makes no explicit mention of soil quality or improving contaminated land however it does promote a high quality natural environment. It does promote the Sutherland Geo-park. It is anticipated that this will ensure a slight positive impact in the short, medium and long term for geodiversity but it is not anticipated that the vision would lead to a reduction in</p>	Review vision and spatial strategy during next review of CaSPlan	THC	2021

						either soil quality or that it would not improve contaminated land. These issues are covered in detail by policies of the HwLDP and will be considered when allocating sites (and providing developer requirements) and determining planning applications on a case by case basis.			
4	+/-	+/-	+/-	=	=	<p>Justification</p> <p>The vision makes no mention of managing and reducing flood risk or protecting the water environment however it does promote a high quality natural environment and adequate water and waste water networks. It is not anticipated that the vision would lead to increased flood risk or that it would not protect the water environment. These issues are covered in detail by policies of the HwLDP and will be considered when allocating sites and determining planning applications on a case by case basis.</p>	Review vision and spatial strategy during next review of CaSPlan	THC	2021
5	+	+	++	++	++	<p>Justification</p> <p>The vision does not make specific reference to climate change however it does mention promoting town centres as service centres, improved telecommunications and broadband coverage which would reduce the need to travel and increased passenger numbers on the far north railway line. It also promotes the area being an international centre of excellence for marine renewables. This will have a significant positive impact at both a local and regional scale. It is likely that each of these will have slight positive impact in the short to medium term but there is potential for significant positive impacts in the long term.</p>	Review vision and spatial strategy during next review of CaSPlan	THC	2021
6	+/-	+/-	+/-	=	=	<p>Justification</p> <p>The vision is unlikely to have any impact on this SEA objective, HwLDP policies and Supplementary Guidance will deal with sustainable use of material assets and in particular waste management.</p>	Review vision and spatial strategy during next review of CaSPlan	THC	2021
7	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	<p>Justification</p> <p>The vision makes provision to make the area a place of outstanding heritage. The historic environment is not explicitly mentioned; however the historic environment will be safeguarded through other policies of the HwLDP and other legislation. In some cases the re-use or enhancement of a</p>	Review vision and spatial strategy during next review of CaSPlan	THC	2021

						historic building or development within the setting of a historic monument could have a negative impact.			
8	+	+	+	+	+	<p>Justification</p> <p>The vision promotes a place of outstanding heritage and the use of this for a high quality tourist industry should mean that the qualities of the landscape and the will be protected and enhanced and visual impact of development minimised. The landscape will be safeguarded through other policies of the HwLDP.</p>	Review vision and spatial strategy during next review of CaSPlan	THC	2021

Commentary

The vision sets out a comprehensive approach to ensuring the heritage of the area is safeguarded and, while not a consideration of SEA, demonstrates how economic growth of the area can be brought forward ensuring limited impact on the environment. It is anticipated that this vision would have little/no negative impacts on the environment but have significant positive effects in relation to SEA Objective 5.

Growing Settlements Policy

Option 2 – An Alternative approach – More rigid approach

Assumptions made when assessing: All proposals will be assessed against all relevant policies in the HwLDP, Caithness and Sutherland LDP and Supplementary Guidance.

SEA Objective	Timescale			Magnitude		Justification and Assumptions	Mitigation		
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Local	Regional		Measure	Lead Authority	Proposed Timescale
1	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	<p>Justification</p> <p>The policy does not specifically make provision for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, habitats or species. Therefore it is not anticipated that this policy would make a contribution towards achieving LBAP targets locally or regionally. General policies within HwLDP make provision for this. However it does include avoiding net loss of amenity/recreational areas and locally important heritage features, which could include areas with local biodiversity value.</p>	Review the policy approach of CaSPlan and HwLDP	THC	2021
2	+	++	++	++	=	<p>Justification</p> <p>The policy aims to help sustain facilities in settlements which could potentially mean that facilities stay within settlements. By encouraging development within active travel distance of facilities you are providing an opportunity for people to walk/cycle to facilities rather than dispersed growth which would encourage them to use private cars. The policy also aims to avoid a net loss of amenity/recreational areas or locally important heritage feature. By maintaining open space you are providing opportunities for people to improve/maintain their health. It is considered that this policy will have more of an</p>	Review the policy approach of CaSPlan and HwLDP	THC	2021

						impact at the local level as opposed to a regional level. It is anticipated that it would have a slight positive impact in the short term and a significant positive effect in the medium and longer term.			
3	=	=	=	=	=	Justification This policy does not address soil quality, geodiversity or contaminated land; these are dealt with via general policies in the HwLDP.	Review the policy approach of CaSPlan and HwLDP	THC	2021
4	+	+	+	+	+	Justification The policy approach considers the capacity of the water and sewerage networks ensuring that development supported by this policy will be supported by appropriate drainage infrastructure and where possible, improved infrastructure. This will help to ensure there is no detrimental impact on the water environment. The issue of flooding is not directly covered by this policy; this is dealt with via general policies in the HwLDP.	Review the policy approach of CaSPlan and HwLDP	THC	2021
5	+	++	++	++	+	Justification The issues of climate change and renewable energy are not directly addressed by this policy however the policy is encouraging growth in defined settlements. By encouraging development within active travel distance of facilities you are providing an opportunity for people to walk/cycle to facilities rather than dispersed growth which would encourage them to use private cars. This will have very localised impacts which may be significantly positive in the medium to long term.	Review the policy approach of CaSPlan and HwLDP	THC	2021
6	=	=	=	=	=	Justification The policy does not directly impact on this SEA objective.	Review the policy approach of CaSPlan and HwLDP	THC	2021
7	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	Justification The policy aims to ensure that no development would have an adverse impact on any locally important heritage feature; it does not specifically deal with enhancement. In some cases the re-use or enhancement of a historic building or development within the setting of a historic monument could have a negative impact. Taken in combination with the general policies of the HwLDP, this may have a positive impact at a	Review the policy approach of CaSPlan and HwLDP	THC	2021

						local level.			
8	+	+	+	+	+	<p>Justification</p> <p>The policy considers how new developments would effect locally important heritage features such as important public viewpoints/vistas. The policy approach does not consider the regionally and nationally important landscape designations such as Special Landscape Areas or National Scenic Areas. This is dealt with via the general policies of the HwLDP. The policy does seek to support development which is similar in terms of spacing, character and density with a settlement; this should go some way in helping to ensure landscape character in maintained and visual impact of development minimised. In addition by the considerations set out in this policy the cumulative impact on the landscape of existing development and new development is taken into consideration.</p>	Review the policy approach of CaSPlan and HwLDP	THC	2021

Commentary

This approach is not dissimilar to the preferred approach therefore the assessment results are the same. The exception is that because all criteria must be met then the likelihood of negative impacts is lessened. This policy approach is likely to have significant positive environmental effects on SEA Objectives 2 and 5. It is not anticipated that there will be any negative environmental effects from this policy approach.

Option 3 – An Alternative approach – More flexible approach

Assumptions made when assessing: All proposals will be assessed against all relevant policies in the HwLDP, Caithness and Sutherland LDP and Supplementary Guidance.

SEA Objective	Timescale			Magnitude		Justification and Assumptions	Mitigation		
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Local	Regional		Measure	Lead Authority	Proposed Timescale
1	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	<p>Justification The policy does not specifically make provision for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, habitats or species. Therefore it is not anticipated that this policy would make a contribution towards achieving LBAP targets locally or regionally. General policies within HwLDP make provision for this. It does however include avoiding net loss of amenity/recreational areas and locally important heritage features, which could include areas with local biodiversity value. However while this may be the case, under this approach this criteria does not need to be met therefore it is unknown whether there would be positive or negative effects on this SEA Objective arising from development.</p>	Review the policy approach of CaSPlan and HwLDP	THC	2021
2	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	<p>Justification The policy aims to help sustain facilities in settlements which could potentially mean that facilities stay within settlements. By encouraging development within active travel distance of facilities you are providing an opportunity for people to walk/cycle to facilities rather than dispersed growth which would encourage them to use private cars. The policy also aims to avoid a net loss of amenity/recreational areas or locally important heritage feature. By maintaining open space you are providing opportunities for people to improve/maintain their health. It is considered that this policy will have more of an impact at the local level as opposed to a regional level. It is anticipated that it would have a slight positive impact in the</p>	Review the policy approach of CaSPlan and HwLDP	THC	2021

						short term and a significant positive effect in the medium and longer term. However while this may be the case, under this approach this criteria does not need to be met therefore it is unknown whether there would be positive or negatives effects on this SEA Objective arising from development.			
3	=	=	=	=	=	Justification This policy does not address soil quality, geodiversity or contaminated land; these are dealt with via general policies in the HwLDP.	Review the policy approach of CaSPlan and HwLDP	THC	2021
4	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	Justification The policy approach considers the capacity of the water and sewerage networks ensuring that development supported by this policy will be supported by appropriate drainage infrastructure and where possible, improved infrastructure. This will help to ensure there is no detrimental impact on the water environment. The issue of flooding is not directly covered by this policy; this is dealt with via general policies in the HwLDP. However while this may be the case, under this approach this criteria does not need to be met therefore it is unknown whether there would be positive or negatives effects on this SEA Objective arising from development.	Review the policy approach of CaSPlan and HwLDP	THC	2021
5	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	Justification The issues of climate change and renewable energy are not directly addressed by this policy however the policy is encouraging growth in defined settlements. By encouraging development within active travel distance of facilities you are providing an opportunity for people to walk/cycle to facilities rather than dispersed growth which would encourage them to use private cars. This will have very localised impacts which may be significantly positive in the medium to long term. However while this may be the case, under this approach this criteria does not need to be met therefore it is unknown whether there would be positive or negatives effects on this SEA Objective arising from development.	Review the policy approach of CaSPlan and HwLDP	THC	2021
6	=	=	=	=	=	Justification The policy does not directly impact on this SEA objective.	Review the policy approach of CaSPlan and HwLDP	THC	2021

7	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	<p>Justification The policy aims to ensure that no development would have an adverse impact on any locally important heritage feature; it does not specifically deal with enhancement. In some cases the re-use or enhancement of a historic building or development within the setting of a historic monument could have a negative impact. Taken in combination with the general policies of the HwLDP, this may have a positive impact at a local level. However while this may be the case, under this approach this criteria does not need to be met therefore it is unknown whether there would be positive or negatives effects on this SEA Objective arising from development.</p>	Review the policy approach of CaSPlan and HwLDP	THC	2021
8	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	<p>Justification The policy considers how new developments would effect locally important heritage features such as important public viewpoints/vistas. The policy approach does not consider the regionally and nationally important landscape designations such as Special Landscape Areas or National Scenic Areas. This is dealt with via the general policies of the HwLDP. The policy does seek to support development which is similar in terms of spacing, character and density with a settlement; this should go some way in helping to ensure landscape character in maintained and visual impact of development minimised. In addition by the considerations set out in this policy the cumulative impact on the landscape of existing development and new development is taken into consideration. However while this may be the case, under this approach this criteria does not need to be met therefore it is unknown whether there would be positive or negatives effects on this SEA Objective arising from development.</p>	Review the policy approach of CaSPlan and HwLDP	THC	2021

Commentary

It is not anticipated there will be any negative or significantly negative effects arising from this policy approach. However given that this alternative approach means only some of the criteria need to be met then it is not possible to determine whether there would be positive or negative effects from the policy.

Promoting And Protecting Settlement Centres

Option 2 - More Flexible Approach

Assumptions made when assessing: All proposals will be assessed against all relevant policies in the HwLDP, Caithness and Sutherland LDP and Supplementary Guidance.

SEA Objective	Timescale			Magnitude		Justification and Assumptions	Mitigation		
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Local	Regional		Measure	Lead Authority	Proposed Timescale
1	=	=	=	=	=	Justification It is not considered that this policy approach will have an impact on the SEA Objective as the policy is solely concerned with directing growth to town centres.	Review the policy approach through CaSPlan	THC	2021
2	+	+	+	+	=	Justification It is anticipated that this approach will have a positive effect on this SEA Objective in the short, medium and long term due to the sequential approach to site location set out in Policy 40 of the HwLDP which primarily directs retail development to city/town/village centres. This should provide better opportunities for active travel to these facilities which may lead to a healthier lifestyle for the human population. The positive effect will be at local level.	Review the policy approach through CaSPlan	THC	2021
3	+	+	+	+	+	Justification It is anticipated that continuing to rely on HwLDP general policies will have a positive effect on this SEA Objective in the short, medium and long term by encouraging new retail development towards existing centres, which may mean re-use of brownfield land rather than greenfield land.	Review the policy approach through CaSPlan	THC	2021
4	=	=	=	=	=	Justification It is not considered that this approach would have any effect on this SEA Objective as it is solely concerned with directing retail development towards town/village centre locations.	Review the policy approach through CaSPlan	THC	2021

5	+	+	+	+	=	Justification This approach encourages retail development towards town/village centres where the opportunity to use public transport is generally improved and it is likely that the location will promote active travel. It is likely that this will have an impact at a local level, but not a regional level as the impact will be on a settlement by settlement basis.	Review the policy approach through CaSPlan	THC	2021
6	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	Justification It is unlikely that this approach will have any direct effect on the SEA Objective. However proposals for new retail development will be expected to make a contribution towards the provision of appropriate waste management.	Review the policy approach through CaSPlan	THC	2021
7	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	Justification It is unlikely that this approach will have a direct effect on this SEA Objective.	Review the policy approach through CaSPlan	THC	2021
8	=	=	=	=	=	Justification It is not considered that this approach would have an effect on the SEA Objective.	Review the policy approach through CaSPlan	THC	2021

Commentary

This approach means there is no additional policy in CaSPlan, with a continuing reliance on using the general policies of the HwLDP, particularly Policy 40. It is anticipated that the approach will have a positive effect on SEA Objectives 2, 3 and 5. This is mainly due to the approach directing new retail development towards town/village centres.

Option 3 – More Rigid Approach

Assumptions made when assessing: All proposals will be assessed against all relevant policies in the HwLDP, Caithness and Sutherland LDP and Supplementary Guidance.

SEA Objective	Timescale			Magnitude		Justification and Assumptions	Mitigation		
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Local	Regional		Measure	Lead Authority	Proposed Timescale
1	=	=	=	=	=	<p>Justification It is not considered that this policy will have an impact on the SEA Objective as the policy is solely concerned with directing growth to town centres.</p>	Review the policy approach through CaSPlan	THC	2021
2	+	+	+	+	-	<p>Justification By directing development to town centres, services that people need will be available in a location which is accessible and it may encourage people to walk to the facility rather than use private transport. It is likely that this policy will have a slight positive impact at a local level but it is unlikely to have any impact on a regional level as the impact will be on a settlement by settlement basis.</p>	Review the policy approach through CaSPlan	THC	2021
3	+	+	+	+	+	<p>Justification It is not likely that this policy will have a direct impact on geodiversity. However by encouraging re-use and redevelopment of existing sites and buildings there could be a positive impact on the improvement of contaminated land and it will have an indirect positive impact on soil quality as it is encouraging development of brownfield sites rather than the use of greenfield sites.</p>	Review the policy approach through CaSPlan	THC	2021
4	=	=	=	=	=	<p>Justification It is not considered that this policy will have an effect on the SEA Objective as the policy is solely concerned about directing growth to town centres.</p>	Review the policy approach through CaSPlan	THC	2021

5	+	+	+	+	=	Justification By encouraging development to town centres there would be opportunity to have development in the most accessible locations by public transport, walking and cycling which would help to reduce the need to travel by private car. It is likely that this policy will have a slight positive impact at a local level but it is unlikely to have any impact on a regional level as the impact will be on a settlement by settlement basis.	Review the policy approach through CaSPlan	THC	2021
6	+	+	+	++	+	Justification This policy encourages the re-use and redevelopment of existing sites and buildings in town centres. Coupled with policies in HwLDP, This will have a significant positive impact on a local scale as it encourages the re-use of vacant buildings.	Review the policy approach through CaSPlan	THC	2021
7	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	Justification This policy may have a positive impact on this SEA Objective. The re-use of historic buildings in town centres may have a positive impact if it is done correctly and sympathetically.	Review the policy approach through CaSPlan	THC	2021
8	=	=	=	=	=	Justification It is not considered that this policy will have an impact on the SEA Objective as the policy is solely concerned with directing growth to town centres.	Review the policy approach through CaSPlan	THC	2021

Commentary

This approach is similar to the preferred approach except that it would apply to all settlements in the plan area and not just the ones listed in the preferred approach. Therefore the assessment results are the same. This policy is likely to have some positive environmental effects but have significant positive effects in relation to SEA Objective 6. Due to the nature of the policy there are many SEA Objectives where there will be little or no impacts. However the application of this policy in combination with the general policies of the Highland wide Local Development Plan, it is likely that the overall effect would be positive.

Special Landscape Areas

Option 2 – An alternative - Carry forward all the SLAs unchanged from the HwLDP

Assumptions made when assessing: All proposals will be assessed against all relevant policies in the HwLDP, Caithness and Sutherland LDP and Supplementary Guidance.

SEA Objective	Timescale			Magnitude		Justification and Assumptions	Mitigation		
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Local	Regional		Measure	Lead Authority	Proposed Timescale
1	=	=	=	=	=	<p>Justification It is unlikely that the SLA boundary will have any effect on this SEA objective as it is dependant on the application of policy within the area. The policy approach which will be taken with regard to development within SLAs has been subject to SEA via the Highland wide LDP.</p>	Review the boundaries and the related policy approaches of HwLDP	THC	HwLDP review to commence 2015
2	=	=	=	=	=	<p>Justification It is unlikely that the SLA boundary will have any effect on this SEA objective as it is dependant on the application of policy within the area. The policy approach which will be taken with regard to development within SLAs has been subject to SEA via the Highland wide LDP.</p>	Review the boundaries and the related policy approaches of HwLDP	THC	HwLDP review to commence 2015
3	=	=	=	=	=	<p>Justification It is unlikely that the SLA boundary will have any effect on this SEA objective as it is dependant on the application of policy within the area. The policy approach which will be taken with regard to development within SLAs has been subject to SEA via the Highland wide LDP.</p>	Review the boundaries and the related policy approaches of HwLDP	THC	HwLDP review to commence 2015
4	=	=	=	=	=	<p>Justification It is unlikely that the SLA boundary will have any effect on this SEA objective as it is dependant on the application of policy</p>	Review the boundaries and the related policy	THC	HwLDP review to

						within the area. The policy approach which will be taken with regard to development within SLAs has been subject to SEA via the Highland wide LDP.	approaches of HwLDP		commence 2015
5	=	=	=	=	=	Justification It is unlikely that the SLA boundary will have any effect on this SEA objective as it is dependant on the application of policy within the area. The policy approach which will be taken with regard to development within SLAs has been subject to SEA via the Highland wide LDP.	Review the boundaries and the related policy approaches of HwLDP	THC	HwLDP review to commence 2015
6	=	=	=	=	=	Justification It is unlikely that the SLA boundary will have any effect on this SEA objective as it is dependant on the application of policy within the area. The policy approach which will be taken with regard to development within SLAs has been subject to SEA via the Highland wide LDP.	Review the boundaries and the related policy approaches of HwLDP	THC	HwLDP review to commence 2015
7	=	=	=	=	=	Justification It is unlikely that the SLA boundary will have any effect on this SEA objective as it is dependant on the application of policy within the area. The policy approach which will be taken with regard to development within SLAs has been subject to SEA via the Highland wide LDP.	Review the boundaries and the related policy approaches of HwLDP	THC	HwLDP review to commence 2015
8	=	=	=	=	=	Justification It is unlikely that the SLA boundary will have any effect on this SEA objective as it is dependant on the application of policy within the area. The policy approach which will be taken with regard to development within SLAs has been subject to SEA via the Highland wide LDP.	Review the boundaries and the related policy approaches of HwLDP	THC	HwLDP review to commence 2015

Commentary

It is unlikely that this approach will have an effect on any of the SEA Objectives as there will be no changes to any of the boundaries. The protective policy approach from the Highland wide Local Development Plan will be applied to the same area as present.

