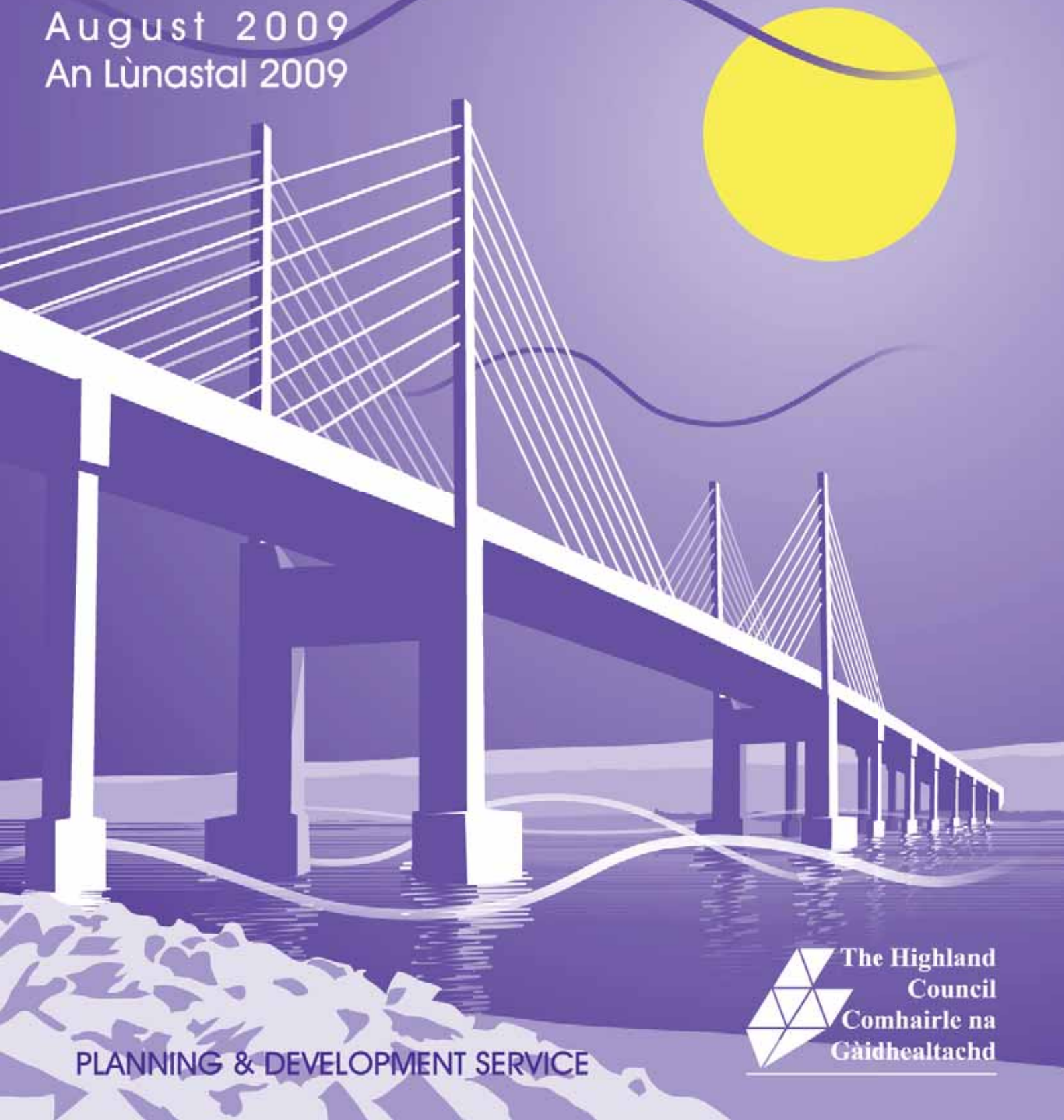


Highland wide Local Development Plan Am Plana Leasachaidh Air Feadh Na Gàidhealtachd

Main Issues Report Aithisg nam Prìomh Chùisean

August 2009
An Lùnastal 2009



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1. Purpose of the Main Issues Report

We have a duty to provide up to date Local Development Plans for the whole of the Highland Council area. These Local Development Plans are used to set out a clear vision of how our City, towns, villages and countryside should develop over the next ten to twenty years. They are also the main documents against which planning applications will be assessed.

In order for us to meet the requirements of the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006, and to make sure that the plans are prepared more quickly than in the past, we intend to prepare four new Local Development Plans over the coming five years (2009 – 2014). The first of these is the Highland wide Local Development Plan.



The purpose of the Highland wide Local Development Plan is to put in place what the policies will be for decisions made on planning applications across the Highland Council area. This Plan will draw together and replace many of the planning policies contained within the existing Local Plans, particularly those that relate to the general approach to development. It will also act as a replacement to the policies in the Highland Structure Plan, which we are no longer required to prepare. It will differ from the previous plans by providing greater consistency, by tackling new issues and by concentrating on topics and areas that can/will change.

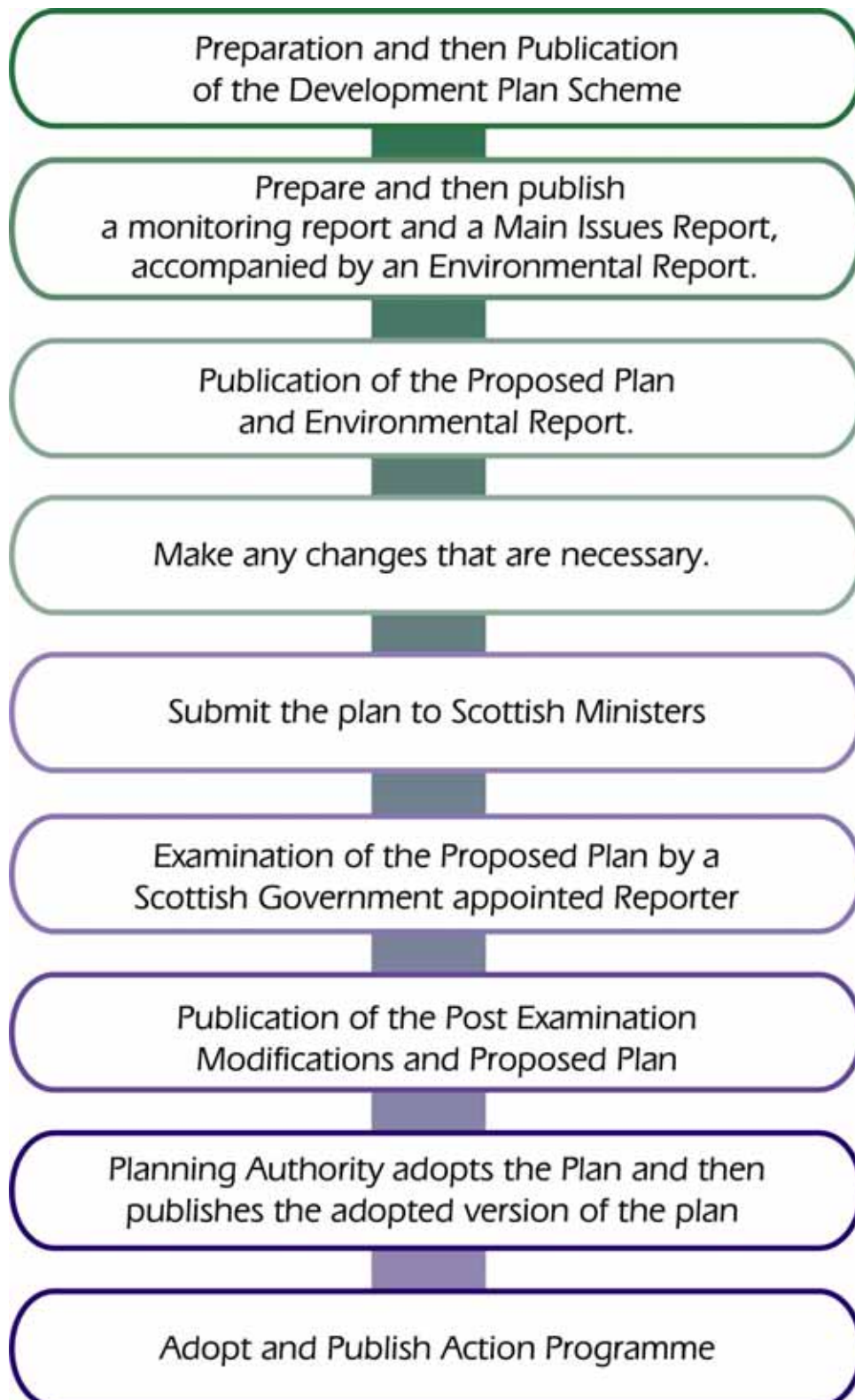
The Highland wide Local Development Plan will set out some of the main growth areas for the Highlands, and put in place guidance on how these specific areas should be developed over the next ten to twenty years.

The first stage in preparing the new Plan is this Main Issues Report. This sets out our general proposals for development in the area and in particular proposals as to where development should and should not occur. It also contains one or more reasonable alternative sets of proposals where appropriate.

This Main Issues Report is a way of starting the debate as to how we want the area to change. The outcomes of the consultation will be used to inform and shape the next stage of the process, which is the publication of the Proposed Plan, which will be a more definite and detailed statement of the Council’s proposed planning policy. The different stages in plan preparation are shown below.

We are therefore seeking the views of the community, the development industry and other interested parties as to their preferred strategy. In doing so, this Main Issues Report seeks to address the issues where the Council is seeking help in finding the best way forward.

Plan Preparation Stages

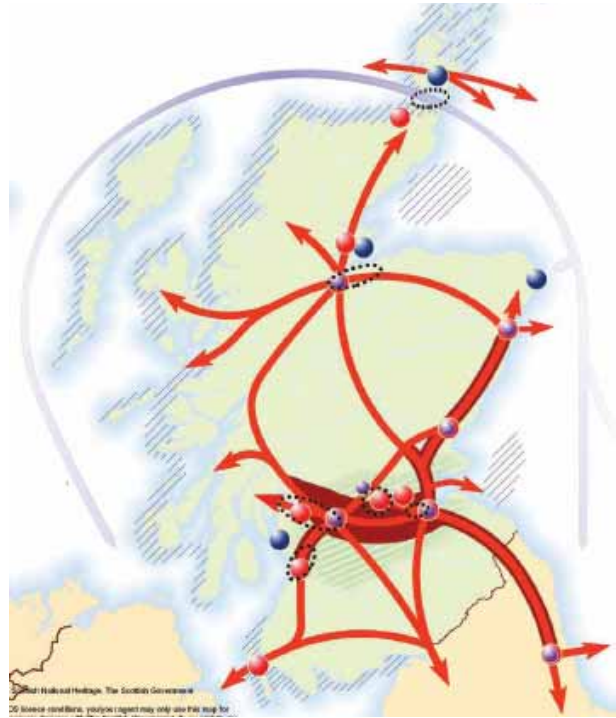


2. National Planning Framework 2 for Scotland and the Highlands

We have to take account of the new National Planning Framework 2 for Scotland in our Local Development Plans.

Key Highland issues identified in the National Planning Framework 2 include:

- ◆ the potential of the A96 Corridor as an area to accommodate development where co-ordinated action is required;
- ◆ energy improvements, including the opportunities in the Pentland Firth for tidal energy;
- ◆ development of the strategy for dealing with the decommissioning of Dounreay;
- ◆ developing opportunities in the Cromarty Firth (including Nigg);
- ◆ opportunities for better use of the Caledonian Canal for freight;
- ◆ the role of Fort William as an expanding service centre;
- ◆ the targeted development of fragile areas of Highland in partnership with Highlands & Islands Enterprise;
- ◆ the important role that the natural heritage of the area plays in terms of tourism, leisure and sustainability; and
- ◆ strategic transport routes that run into and through Highland including the A9, A96, A835 and A82 and the rail lines south to Edinburgh and East to Aberdeen.



The Plan's preferred policy options take account of and incorporate, where appropriate, the key issues outlined above. Similarly, the following Vision takes account of the strategies of other public agencies.

We must also take into account national planning policy as set out in the consolidated Scottish Planning Policy document which was issued for consultation by Scottish Government. This does affect the options that we can take forward and will be an important reference point when we are working on the preparation of our Proposed Plan. It is available at www.scotland.gov.uk.

3. The Vision for the Highlands

The vision for the area is part of the Council's overarching objectives and is set out in our Corporate Plan:

By 2030, the Highlands will be one of Europe's leading regions. We will have created sustainable communities balancing population growth and economic development across the area, and have built a fairer and healthier Highlands.

To deliver this vision, we have suggested a number of plan objectives. These objectives are based around the five local outcomes from the Highland Single Outcome Agreement. The possible options for delivering these objectives form part of this Main Issues Report.

Sustainable Highland Communities

- ◆ To increase the population of the Highlands to achieve a balanced age range by providing opportunities for market housing and affordable housing both within settlements and within the Highland countryside;
- ◆ To provide for developments which cater for Highland's ageing population;
- ◆ To make sure that new development meets the needs of the whole community, both now and in the future, and makes the area a more attractive place for residents and businesses to move to; and
- ◆ To ensure the effective delivery of the plan strategy through efficient and transparent use of developer contributions and the linking in to Council and partner agency development programmes.

Safeguarding our Environment

- ◆ To ensure that development of renewable energy resources are managed effectively with clear guidance on where renewable energy developments should be located;
- ◆ To make sure the quality of the natural, built and cultural environment in Highland is protected and where possible enhanced;
- ◆ To help Highland take the lead in reducing the amount of carbon dioxide released into the air, adapt to the effects of climate change and limit the amount of non-renewable resources development uses; and
- ◆ To put in place the planning framework for the delivery of sustainable waste management proposals set out in the Council's waste strategy and brought forward by the private sector.

A Competitive, Sustainable and Adaptable Highland Economy

- ◆ To provide opportunities which encourage economic development and create new employment across the area, whilst at the same time improving the strategic infrastructure necessary to allow the economy to grow over the long term;
- ◆ To help deliver transport infrastructure improvements across the area in line with the Council's transport strategy and the Scottish Government's Strategic Transport Projects Review;
- ◆ To ensure that new developments contribute towards reducing the need to travel and encourage people to walk, cycle or use public transport; and
- ◆ To ensure that the planning guidance for mineral development, coastal developments, forestry, agriculture and croft land is clear and consistent and that key resources are protected where appropriate.

A Healthier Highlands



- ◆ To provide for the development of places that contribute to increasing healthy lifestyles, opportunities for quality open space provision and access to enjoy the outdoors.

Better opportunities for all / A fairer Highland

- ◆ To provide for investment in services and infrastructure, and opportunities for investment and diversification in the economy, in our deprived areas and areas at risk of long term unemployment as a result of changes in the wider economy (this objective is related to all of those set out above, and to our spatial strategy, so does not have a specific chapter in this Main Issues Report).

Is this the right vision for the area

If not, please tell us why.

Are there any alternatives that you would like to see?

4. Where should growth go and how can we deliver it? (The Spatial Strategy)

We have to identify where the key opportunities lie in developing the Highlands over the next twenty years. The future area Local Development Plans for the Inner Moray Firth, Caithness and Sutherland and West Highland and Islands will identify and provide further detail on most of the individual sites for future housing or business, but it is important to set the overall Highland context.



All parts of the Highlands are important for the future development of the area. However different areas will have different roles because of their characteristics and the future opportunities they offer. This part of the report shows where the key development areas are in Highland, and what some of the important issues are. Because some of the Local Plans in Highland are already out of date, the Highland wide Local

Development Plan will update the provisions for these areas where development is, or could be, held up in the short term.

The spatial strategy for Highland is summed up in the following section. Particular focus is given to the development issues around Inverness and Nairn (the A96 Corridor), Caithness and North Sutherland and Nigg given the development pressures these areas are currently experiencing. The existing Local Plans which cover these areas are beginning to be out of date in respect of these pressures, and it is important these are begun to be dealt with now rather than waiting until the preparation of the Local Development Plans that will follow.

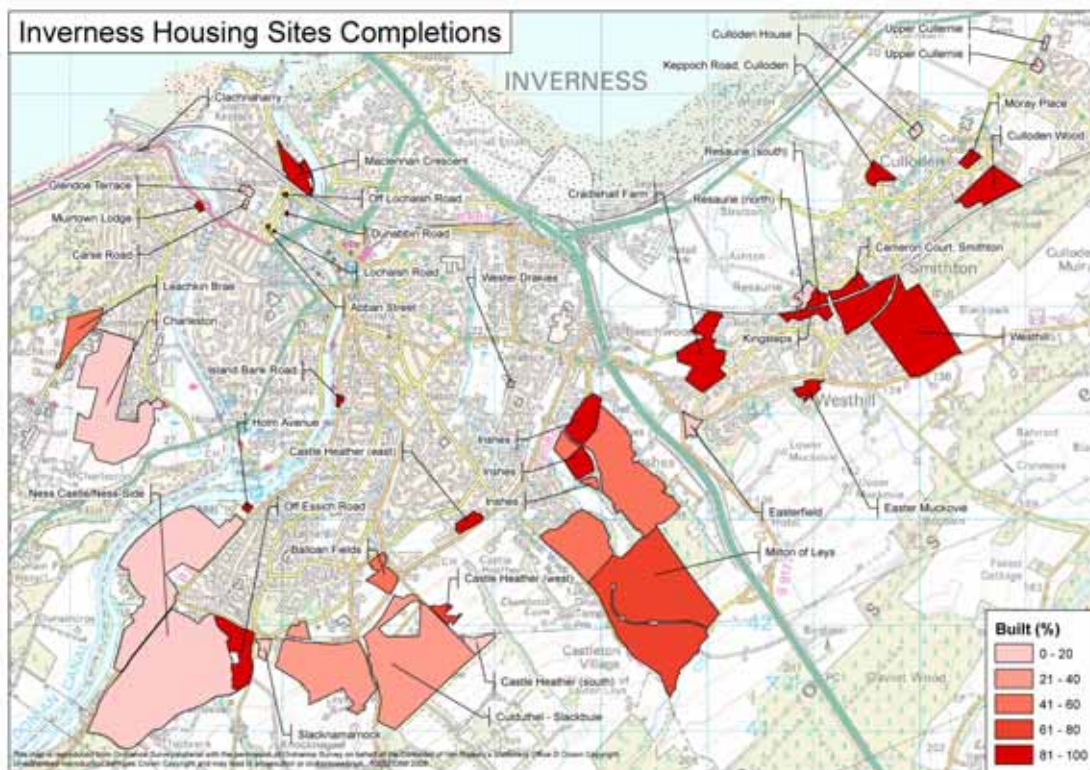
Just as important however to the development strategy of the Highlands as a whole is the role of the other towns and villages and the approach to development of the wider countryside.

Inverness and the A96 Corridor

The continued growth and development of Inverness and the surrounding area is essential so that the Highlands can continue to prosper. Parts of the current Local Plans for the Inverness and Nairnshire areas will need to be altered by the Highland wide Local Development Plan, particularly in order to help the long term growth anticipated for this part of Highland.

Inverness

This Main Issues Report is being published partly to help the debate about how the city of Inverness can grow over the next twenty years and beyond. The city of Inverness has seen a lot of development over the last ten years. In particular the number of houses built around the city has led to substantial change and supported economic growth.



The map shows the rates of housing development around the city over the last five to ten years. It shows that the main areas identified for the expansion of the city are being completed and that we need to identify a long term supply of land for housing and other uses.

Some of the sites identified in the current Local Plan for Inverness remain available for development, and are capable of providing for the housing need in the next three to five years. In that respect it may be important that the existing plans for the growth of the city to 2011 are completed before there is major expansion in other areas. Because of the changes in the city, there are other issues that need to be addressed, particularly in terms of improving accessibility and transport, supporting the city centre and increasing the amount of building on land which has been formerly used (brownfield development).

We are working with Architecture and Design Scotland on preparing an updated City Vision for the city of Inverness. During the consultation period on this Main Issues Report we will be seeking views from people as to how that city vision is shaped, so that it will inform our Proposed Plan, and the Local Development Plans that will follow in the future.

Some of the main areas for discussion in identifying how the city of Inverness will develop over the next twenty years are:

- ◆ the need to enable housing development sites at Ness-side and Charleston to the south and west of the city which are held up by the lack of a new car and pedestrian river and canal crossing;
- ◆ the potential that key locations offer for regeneration, including the Muirtown basin, the city centre and surrounding areas at the Longman Industrial area, the former Longman landfill site, Raigmore/Inshes and the Inverness Harbour area;
- ◆ the role of the proposed Beechwood campus and A96-A9 link road in opening up development opportunities to the east of the city;
- ◆ the priorities that there are for transport improvements which will help alleviate some of the current “bottle-necks”, for example at the Inshes roundabout;
- ◆ how the city can further benefit from integrating new development with some of our natural assets like the river, canal, sea-front and landscape;
- ◆ how community facilities can be improved across the city as part of development proposals that come forward; and
- ◆ how the design of new development will complement the historic growth of the city in a way that is sustainable and makes best use of the land available.



What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- prepare an updated city vision to inform where the key development and infrastructure priorities are for the city (such as those detailed above) and include this work in the Proposed Plan;
- highlight the major development sites still to be developed in Inverness in the Proposed Plan (listed above) and prioritise how and when these sites should be developed;
- prepare masterplans to highlight opportunities and provide guidance on how the development of these sites will affect the phasing of development in the A96 Corridor (or alternative);
- link our planning work closely with the work being done on the Local Transport Strategy to ensure that priorities for transport improvements to roads, public transport, cycling or pedestrian facilities are supported.

What is an alternative to this Preferred Option?

Another strategy would be to focus our efforts on opening up opportunities in the A96 Corridor (or alternative) as opposed to seeking the early consolidation and development of the existing areas identified within the city. Whilst this would ensure a long term supply of land for the whole area, it would not guarantee that some of the large sites currently allocated for expansion or regeneration are promoted as early priorities. We would also miss the opportunity to provide an up to date city vision that reflects our current thinking.

Q.1

Do you agree with our Preferred Option? If not, please tell us why. Do you prefer the stated alternative? Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?

The A96 Corridor

A lot of work has been carried out over the last few years on identifying where the long term growth areas for the city of Inverness and the surrounding area should be located. Inverness has a number of constraints to growth, largely based on physical factors.



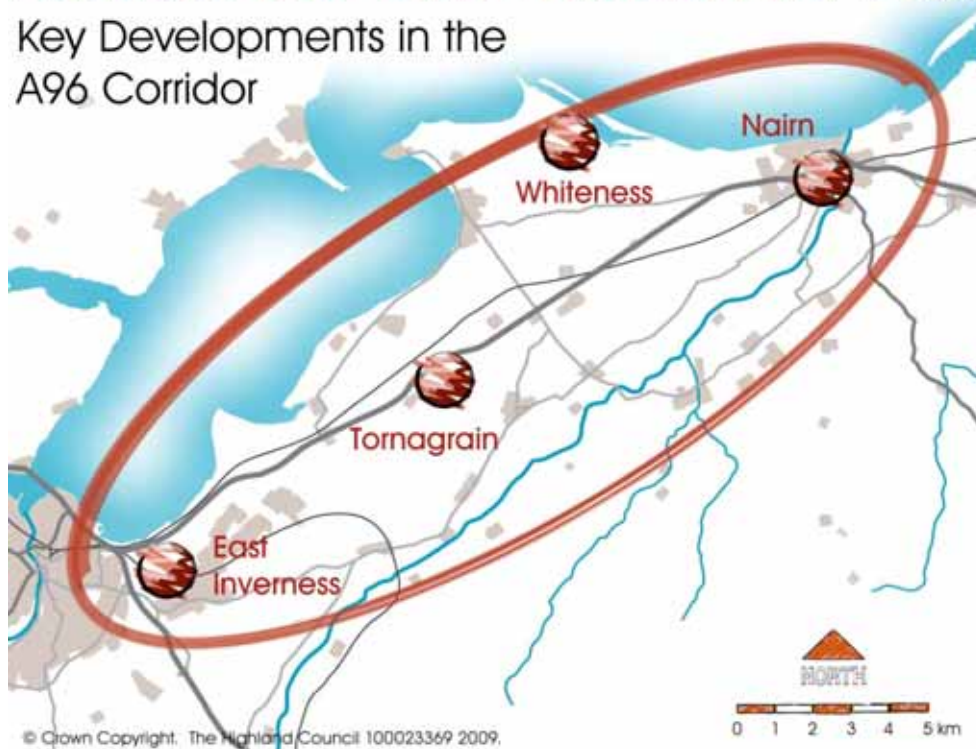
Development opportunities to the west of the city are limited by the canal and river crossings and by the landscape. Land to the south of the city is constrained by the steep slopes.

Opportunities to the north are limited by the Moray Firth and the capacity of its crossing by the Kessock Bridge. As a result development to the east of the city has been identified as the most deliverable long term growth opportunity. This land is also comparatively flatter, better drained, better connected to transport links and offers equivalent or better outlook and climate than the alternatives.

The maps in this section of the report identify the main strategic sites identified for development in the A96 Corridor. The A96 Corridor has been identified in the National Planning Framework as an “area for co-ordinated action”, and is the main focus of growth in the Inner Moray Firth. Since the A96 Corridor Framework was prepared, there have been a number of important questions raised that will affect whether and how the land identified for development can be taken forward in the Highland wide Local Development Plan and future plans that will follow on afterwards. Some of these issues are corridor-wide and some are specific to the individual areas involved (East Inverness, Nairn, Tornagrain and the smaller settlements in the Corridor).

HIGHLAND WIDE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Key Developments in the A96 Corridor



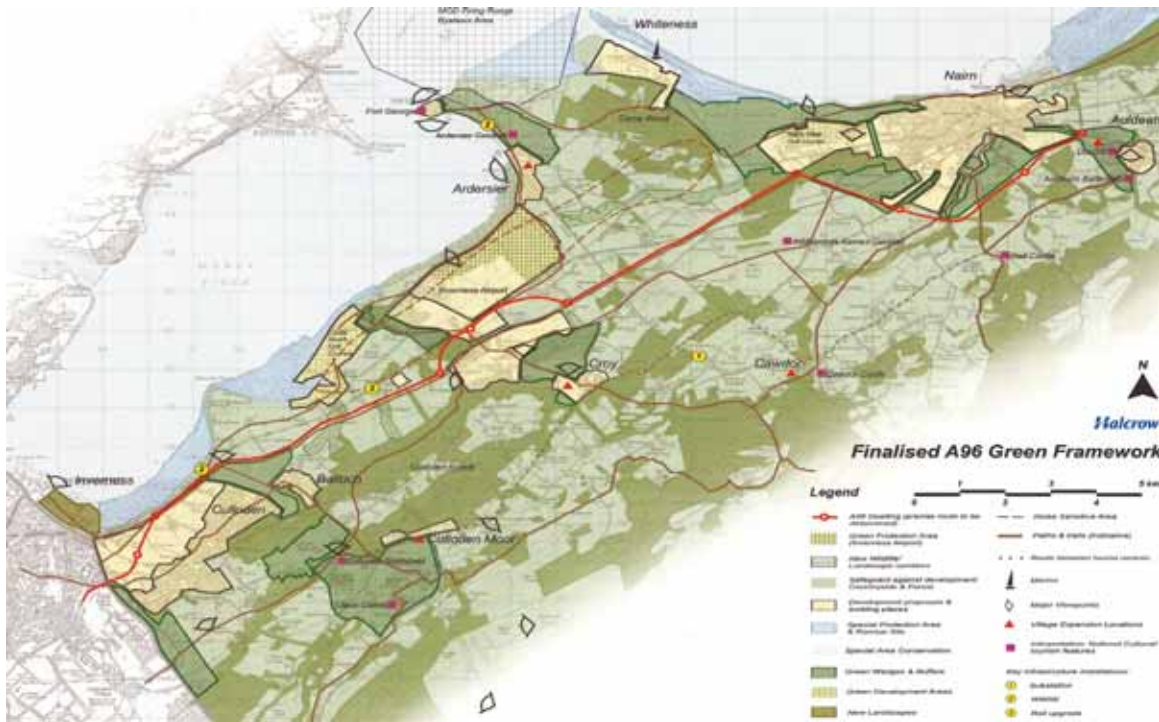
Corridor wide issues

Our view is that the development principles behind the A96 Corridor Framework, particularly in terms of providing a wide choice of development land to meet future housing requirements remain valid. This view is supported by the National Planning Framework 2 prepared by Scottish Government. Our Monitoring Statement and Housing Need and Demand Assessment illustrate the need for more housing in this area. There has however been some opposition to these plans for growth, and this consultation allows people the opportunity to set out or restate their views on where development for the future should go.

Phasing of development (what can happen where, when)

The full development of the A96 Corridor Framework depends upon a number of improvements to the infrastructure between Inverness and Nairn.

These improvements include dualling of the A96, a new bypass for Nairn, a new road link between the A96 and the A9, improvements to wastewater treatment around Nairn and a new water supply for the Inverness and Nairn area as a whole. It will also include the building of new primary and secondary schools and improvements to the community facilities in the area. These needs were demonstrated by a series of studies prepared for the Council when the Framework was being drawn up.



A lot of discussion has been held with agencies responsible for this infrastructure and it remains important that the improvements are put in place as development progresses. The Council is working with Transport Scotland on the phasing of development in the A96 Corridor as it relates to the need for significant improvements to the road network. The Strategic Transport Projects Review which was issued by Scottish Government did identify the improvements to the A96 and the Nairn bypass as priorities, albeit that the delivery dates of these improvements are not known at this time.

In order to ensure that development of the A96 Corridor can take place in a managed way, further work is being undertaken to confirm at what point these improvements to the A96 Corridor are required. This work includes an update to a transport model, so that the results can be included in the Proposed Plan. This will help determine what parts of the developments identified in the Framework can progress before the big improvements such as the A96-A9 link, the upgrade of the A96 and the Nairn bypass are put in place.

An important role for the Local Development Plan is therefore to set out the phasing of development in the A96 Corridor to indicate what development can progress initially within the period between 2011 and 2016 and the period between 2016 and 2021.

What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- identify the development sites set out within the A96 Corridor Framework in the Proposed Plan;
- support early (2011-2016) phases of development across the corridor before major infrastructure is completed but subject to commitments in principle from the development industry and agencies like Transport Scotland and Scottish Water to ensure that all types of infrastructure (whether that be roads, public transport, schools or community facilities) are in place when they are needed;
- set out in the Proposed Plan the amount of development which will be allowed to proceed within the 2011-2016 and 2016-2021 periods across the corridor; and
- link the phasing of development to the outcomes of our work on the existing sites in Inverness (as set out in the previous section).

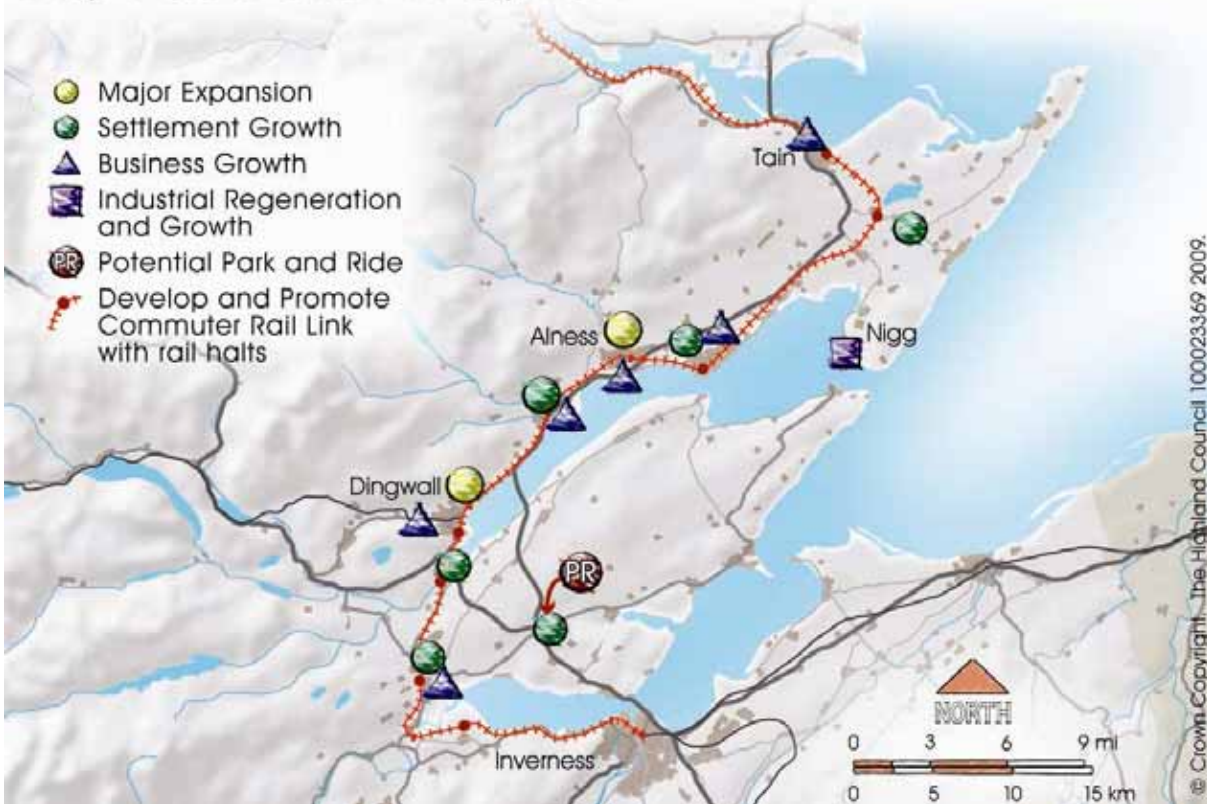
Any other options to this Preferred Option?

1. Another approach would be to allow no further development in the A96 Corridor until major infrastructure improvements are put in place. With the delivery of major transport improvements being subject to future spending reviews and funding allocations, the risk of adopting this approach is that the medium to long term housing land supply in Inverness and Nairn is restricted for a substantial period, with the knock on implications this will have on economic growth in the area. A second implication is that development will proceed on an incremental basis and that we lose the strategic overview that the A96 Framework gives us. There would also be increased pressure for development on greenspace in and around Inverness. Whilst there would be some environmental benefits in that areas currently earmarked for development could not progress, an incremental approach to development might take place. This may increase some of the environmental effects of the development.
2. A further option to developing the A96 Corridor would be to widen the search for long term expansion sites to the rest of the Inner Moray Firth. This could include steering additional development towards other communities in Inverness-shire and in Easter Ross. Whilst existing local plans for these towns and villages do show that enough land is available for the projected growth in housing demand arising locally, the local development plan could look to accommodate a much higher level of growth in these locations, along with a site search for a new settlement. The Council's Inner Moray Firth Ports and Sites Strategy which was approved in 2006, highlighted the potential for long term candidate locations at Fearn-Kildary, Tore, Brahan and Kirkhill.

This approach would involve a major site search and infrastructure study to determine what improvements would be required. This would need to take into account the capacity of these communities to accommodate further significant growth and the capacity of the transport networks, including the Clachnaharry and Kessock Bridge crossings.

HIGHLAND WIDE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Dispersed Growth Option



Q.2

*Do you agree with our Preferred Option? If not, please tell us why.
Do you prefer either of the stated alternatives?
Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?*

Developer Contributions in the A96 Corridor

An important part of the A96 Corridor Framework is the developer contributions protocol. This identifies how the infrastructure improvements we require (including the improvements to the A96, the provision of schools and other facilities and the environmental improvements) will be funded by the private and the public sector. We remain committed to ensuring that a developer contributions protocol exists for the A96 Corridor, and this will be an essential part of any policy set out within the Proposed Plan when it is prepared.

There are a number of issues with the levels of these developer contributions however, not least the changed economic conditions and the need to more fully engage with our partner agencies like Transport Scotland. We are reviewing the developer contributions protocols to ensure that the delivery of infrastructure remains key to all development, and this work will inform the preparation of the proposed plan.

What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- prepare a policy in our Proposed Plan which states that all of the development proposed in the expansion areas across the corridor will contribute to a revised developer contributions protocol. The A96 Corridor Developer Contributions protocol will be an essential requirement for the development proposals in the A96 Corridor; and
- ensure that these developer contribution requirements are reflected in the investment plans of the Council and other infrastructure providers.

What is an alternative to this Preferred Option?

An alternative approach could be to deal with developer contributions on a case by case basis. This would mean that before any large planning applications were agreed by the Council, we would undertake a full assessment of the facilities and infrastructure improvements required. Whilst this could still lead to improvements to infrastructure it could lead to us not being consistent and missing out on opportunities for investment.

Q.3

Do you agree with our Preferred Option? If not, please tell us why.

Do you prefer the stated alternative?

Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?

Area Specific Issues

East Inverness

East Inverness is the most important area for the future expansion of the City in the short term. Along with the significant delivery of housing, business and commercial opportunities for the period after 2011, the delivery of the A96-A9 link and the campus site at Beechwood are immediate priorities supported by the Framework. The map and table below show the detailed proposals for East Inverness. A number of large planning applications are already submitted in this area, and it is important that our Proposed Plan provides guidance as to what can be allowed to be built, particularly in the short term.

Some of the key issues for the East Inverness area are:

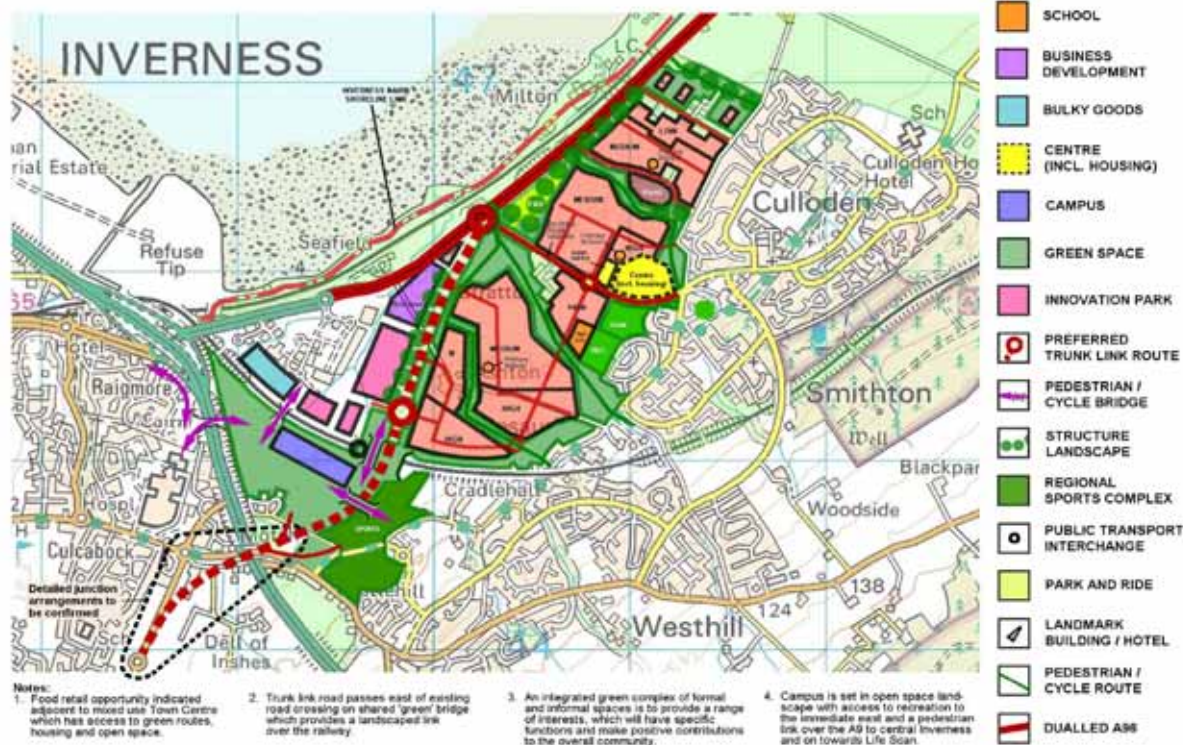
- ◆ the development of the Beechwood campus and the provision of access improvements which will allow the development of Inverness College and related activities to progress;
- ◆ for further work to be carried out with Transport Scotland on the proposals for the A96 – A9 link and other public transport improvements such as Park and Ride, which will improve access to the east of Inverness and help in opening up the A96 Corridor for long term development;
- ◆ the need to work with developers and the community to identify improvements to improve the traffic interchange at Inshes, and to provide certainty to all those who might be affected; and
- ◆ to identify what level of development might be acceptable in the east Inverness area (including at the Inverness Retail and Business Park) before major improvements are required.

What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- support early (2011-2016) phases of development at East Inverness before major infrastructure is completed but subject to commitments in principle from the development industry and agencies like Transport Scotland and Scottish Water to ensure that all types of infrastructure (whether that be roads, public transport, schools or community facilities) are in place when they are needed;
- seek early gains on infrastructure provision associated with the first phase:
- set out the priorities for development in the area in the period from 2016 to 2021; and
- identify how these development priorities can assist in delivering improvements to open space provision, transport improvements (for example the A96-A9 link, park and ride facilities or better provision of walking and cycling networks in the area).

EAST INVERNESS FRAMEWORK PLAN



FRAMEWORK OUTCOMES	
Residential Units	3,471 @1,500 high, 1,872 medium, 99 low density
Population	7,250 people
Business	55,000m ²
Employment	3,750 jobs
Retail	22,000m ²
Centre	Centre of 8,000m ²
Education	55,000m ² Campus and 24,000m ² Schools
Leisure	100 bed Hotel & 6,000m ² sports provision
Open Space	13 ha

What is an alternative to this Preferred Option?

An alternative approach we could adopt would be to only identify the sites in East Inverness area that would be developed in the period up to 2016. Whilst this would have some environmental benefits, it would not reflect the levels of growth needed for the long term, and could result in a more incremental approach to development in the area and increased pressure for development on inappropriate greenspace in and around Inverness.

Q.4

**Do you agree with our Preferred Option? If not, please tell us why.
Do you prefer the stated alternative?
Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?**

Nairn

The expansion of Nairn is an important element of the A96 Corridor Framework. The map and table below shows the areas of land that are identified within the A96 Corridor Framework. The development of these growth areas are closely tied in to the provision of a much needed bypass of the town. The phasing of development in Nairn will be important. Some land is identified in the current Nairnshire Local Plan for housing development at Lochloy and Sandown, and these are still considered to be the priority areas for development. The land identified for future growth to the west and south of Nairn can however also contribute to meeting housing demand in the area, and this will have to happen in a way which delivers the community facilities and services that Nairn will need in the future.

We are working with Transport Scotland on the delivery of the Nairn by-pass, although its delivery is likely to be some years away. It is important that the future development sites in Nairn contribute towards the ultimate delivery of the by-pass.

Some of the key issues for Nairn are:

- ◆ the need to confirm in the Local Development Plan the proposal for the town bypass and the requirement for longer term development proposals to contribute to its provision;
- ◆ to ensure that longer term proposals around Nairn enhance the distinctive role and historical development of the town;
- ◆ for new development to complement efforts to regenerate the town centre; and
- ◆ to work with the community and developers in the area on a realistic and deliverable phasing of development, with community facilities, education and open space improvements being central to delivery

NAIRN FRAMEWORK PLAN



- HOUSING
- HOUSING ALLOCATION
- COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT
- EXISTING QUARRY
- DISTRICT CENTRE (INCL. HOUSING)
- GOLF COURSE
- GREEN SPACE
- PREFERRED BYPASS ROUTE
- PEDESTRIAN/ CYCLE ROUTES
- STRUCTURE LANDSCAPE
- ENHANCED PEDESTRIAN ACCESSIBILITY
- TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION
- SCHOOL

Notes:
 1. A residential expansion is indicated approximately double the existing residential population.
 2. The Timber Merchants at Saltair Road is proposed to be retained, with the opportunity for associated uses to be developed to the immediate south.
 3. The post-2041 bypass route option would require assessment at that time. It is provided here as an indication of Nairn's long-term potential.

FRAMEWORK OUTCOMES	
Residential Units	4,629 @ 1,542 high, 2,873 medium, 99 low density
Population	9,700 people
Business	78,000m ²
Industry	50,000 m ²
Employment	5,000 jobs
Retail	7,000m ²
Centres	2 District Centres of 11,000m ² & 4,000m ²
Education	18,000m ² of Schools
Leisure	2 x 50 bed Hotel and 1 x 100 bed Hotel
Open Space	Circa 165 ha (including Country Park)

What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- reflect the existing Local Plan sites within the updated strategy for the town including a broad corridor where the bypass can be delivered;
- identify the expansion sites at Delnies and Nairn South in the Proposed Plan;
- seek views from people on the type and mix of development identified in these areas;
- identify where development should be allowed to take place in the 2011-2021 period on all of the expansion sites; and
- identify where infrastructure improvements are required both before and after the by-pass is physically delivered and how these development sites fit with the long term proposals for the by-pass itself.

What is an alternative to this Preferred Option?

The alternative to this approach is to restrict development in Nairn to those sites already identified in the existing Local Plan, until such time as they are completed. Only then would development on the sites at Delnies or Nairn South or other small scale extensions to the town be appropriate. Whilst this approach would allow control of development, it might lead to a restriction in choice for new housing in Nairn, and reduce the opportunity there is to deliver the Nairn bypass. It might also lead to an incremental approach to development.

Q.5

Do you agree with our Preferred Option? If not, please tell us why.

Do you prefer the stated alternative?

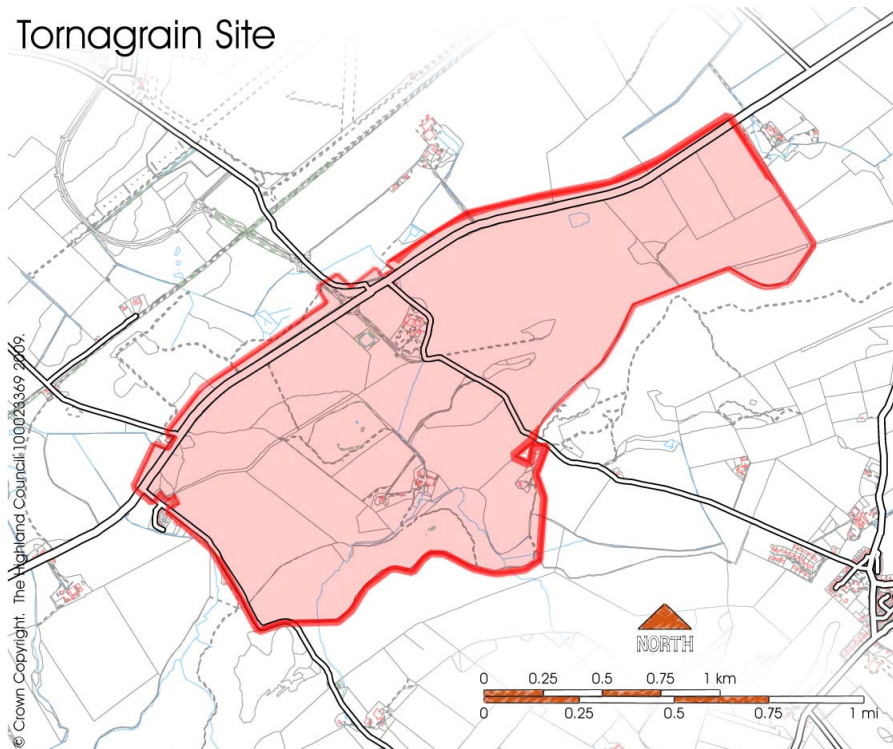
Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?

Tornagrain

Tornagrain is a new settlement proposal in the centre of the Corridor, capable of providing almost 5000 houses over the next 30-40 years. It has been selected as one of the Scottish Government's Sustainable Community Initiative proposals. The potential for a new settlement in the Inner Moray Firth was identified in the Highland Structure Plan. Tornagrain was specifically identified as a potential location for a new settlement as part of the A96 Corridor Framework work. A planning application has now been submitted for the new settlement.

The principle of a new settlement at Tornagrain is supported as part of the long term development strategy for this area. The design principles are based around the delivery of new homes, jobs and services within a compact and sustainable town. This will increase the choice of locations within the A96 Corridor and support the case for transport and access improvements. It will also divert development pressure from more inappropriate locations and therefore allow for the retention and creation of green space and green networks.

Tornagrain Site



Some of the key issues that need to be addressed in relation to Tornagrain are:

- ◆ the detailed phasing of development to ensure that infrastructure is provided and that the design principles are delivered in the forms that are currently envisaged;
- ◆ the linkages between the potential dualling of the A96 and the design and delivery of Tornagrain.

What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

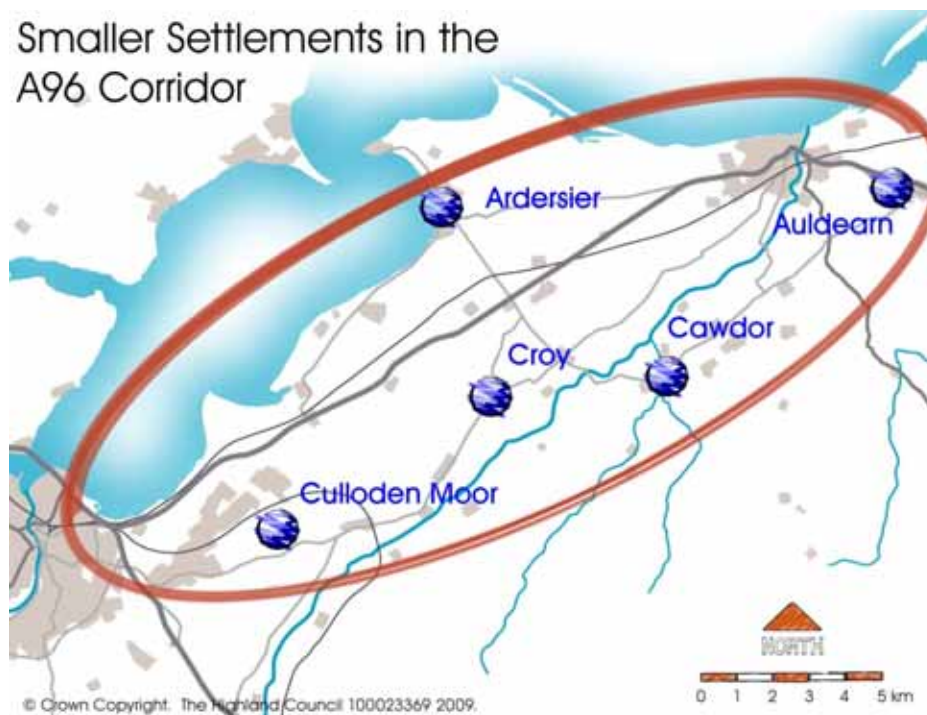
- support the role of Tornagrain as a means of meeting the long term housing needs of the area;
- identify the safeguards that must be put in place to deliver the services and facilities that a new settlement such as this will require; and
- support early (2011-2016) phases of development at Tornagrain before major infrastructure is completed but subject to commitments in principle from the development industry and agencies like Transport Scotland and Scottish Water to ensure that all types of infrastructure (whether that be roads, public transport, schools or community facilities) are in place when they are needed. This phasing strategy will be an important part of our Proposed Plan.

The Council has not identified any reasonable alternatives to the Preferred Option on this issue.

Q.6 *Do you agree with our Preferred Option? If not, please tell us why. Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?*

Smaller Settlements in the A96 Corridor

The A96 Corridor Framework highlights that there is scope for expansion of the smaller settlements of Auldearn, Culloden Moor, Croy, Ardersier and Cawdor in the corridor as part of our long term development strategy. A number of sites identified in the existing Local Plans remain available for housing or business development. The main pressure for development is at Cawdor, where there are proposals being drawn up for the expansion of the village. In other villages like Ardersier the emphasis is very much on local regeneration and enhancement of community facilities. The role of these, and indeed any other proposals that come forward, must be considered as part of the development strategy and included within the Proposed Plan where appropriate.



What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- identify the potential for growth of the smaller villages in the A96 Corridor area as set out in the A96 Framework; and
- identify the appropriate scale of development that may be expected in these areas.

The Council has not identified any reasonable alternatives to the Preferred Option on this issue.

Q.7 Do you agree with our Preferred Option? If not, please tell us why. Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?

Caithness and North Sutherland



For 50 years the Dounreay nuclear site has been at the heart of the Caithness & North Sutherland economy. In July 2001 decisions made by Government began the process of decommissioning the site. This will have an impact on the economy of Caithness and North Sutherland.

The Caithness & North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership, made up of a number of different public agencies, has been set up to help deliver economic development in the area. As part of this initiative, key areas of activity were identified to help develop a strong, sustainable and competitive economy. The strategy which has been developed can be viewed online at <http://www.cnsrp.org.uk/>.

The Pentland Firth offers huge potential for the development of marine renewable energy. The Scottish Government is working with partners on the Pentland Firth Tidal Energy Project and marine spatial planning activities. The Pentland Firth has been identified as an area for co-ordinated action in the National Planning Framework 2. The Local Development Plan must enable and support the delivery of on-shore facilities, services and sites to ensure that this important inward investment opportunity is capable of being delivered.

The existing Caithness Local Plan was prepared by us in 2001, and some parts of it are no longer up to date. The Highland wide Local Development Plan must address some of the key regeneration issues in Caithness and North Sutherland as a priority. The Main Issues as they relate to Caithness and North Sutherland are:

- ◆ to make sure that provisions are in place to allow development of housing opportunities within the main centres, but also in the surrounding rural areas – this is covered further in the section of this report on Housing in the Countryside;
- ◆ to make sure that the priorities identified within the strategy for Caithness and North Sutherland (see map) are supported in the Proposed Plan;
- ◆ to make sure that the Dounreay Planning Framework is updated and referred to in the Proposed Plan; and
- ◆ to make sure that proposals for marine renewables related development are supported.

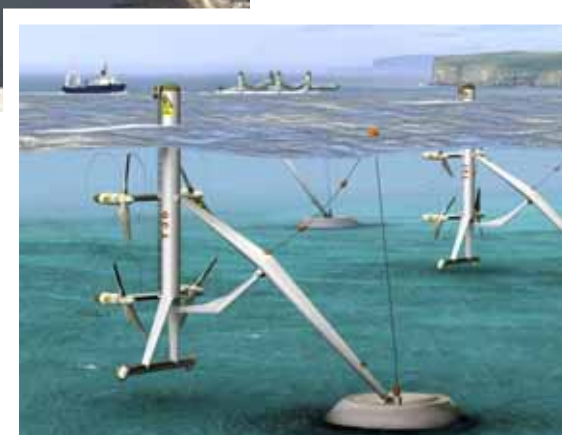
What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- identify the key development priorities for Caithness in the Proposed Plan;
- put in place policies which support the growth of marine renewables in the Pentland Firth and the facilities and industry required to support them; and
- provide updated guidance in the form of an updated Dounreay Planning Framework which will be adopted as Supplementary Guidance.

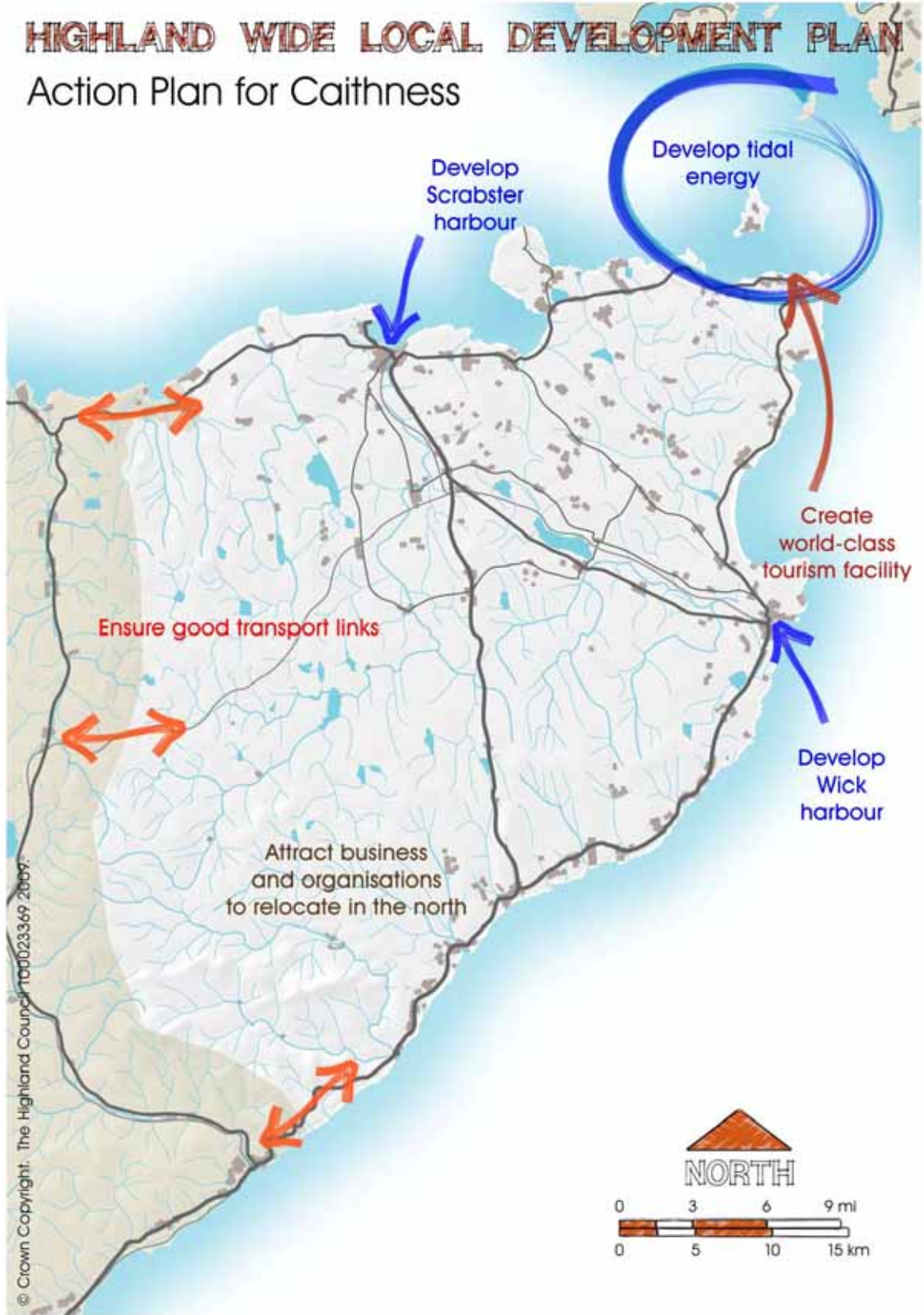
The Council has not identified any reasonable alternatives to the Preferred Option on this issue.

Q.8 *Do you agree with our Preferred Option? If not, please tell us why. Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?*



HIGHLAND WIDE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Action Plan for Caithness



Easter Ross and Nigg

The Nigg yard has been vacant for the past five years and unlocking development potential at Nigg will contribute substantially to the economy. We have prepared a Nigg Development Master Plan in partnership with Highlands & Islands Enterprise to maximise the site's strategic development potential and employment opportunities over the next 15 to 20 years.



The spin off development for Easter Ross from Nigg being reopened would be substantial. A review of the available land for housing development in the area has identified that by and large there is sufficient land available in the short term to support growth. This need will be reviewed as the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan is prepared.

There are also a number of other strategic economic development sites in the Cromarty Firth, at Invergordon and at Evanton which need to be supported by our development strategy.

Action Plan for Nigg and Easter Ross



What is important in the short term is that the important role of the redevelopment of Nigg is highlighted within the strategy of the Highland wide Local Development Plan. This is the preferred approach that we intend to take forward.

What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

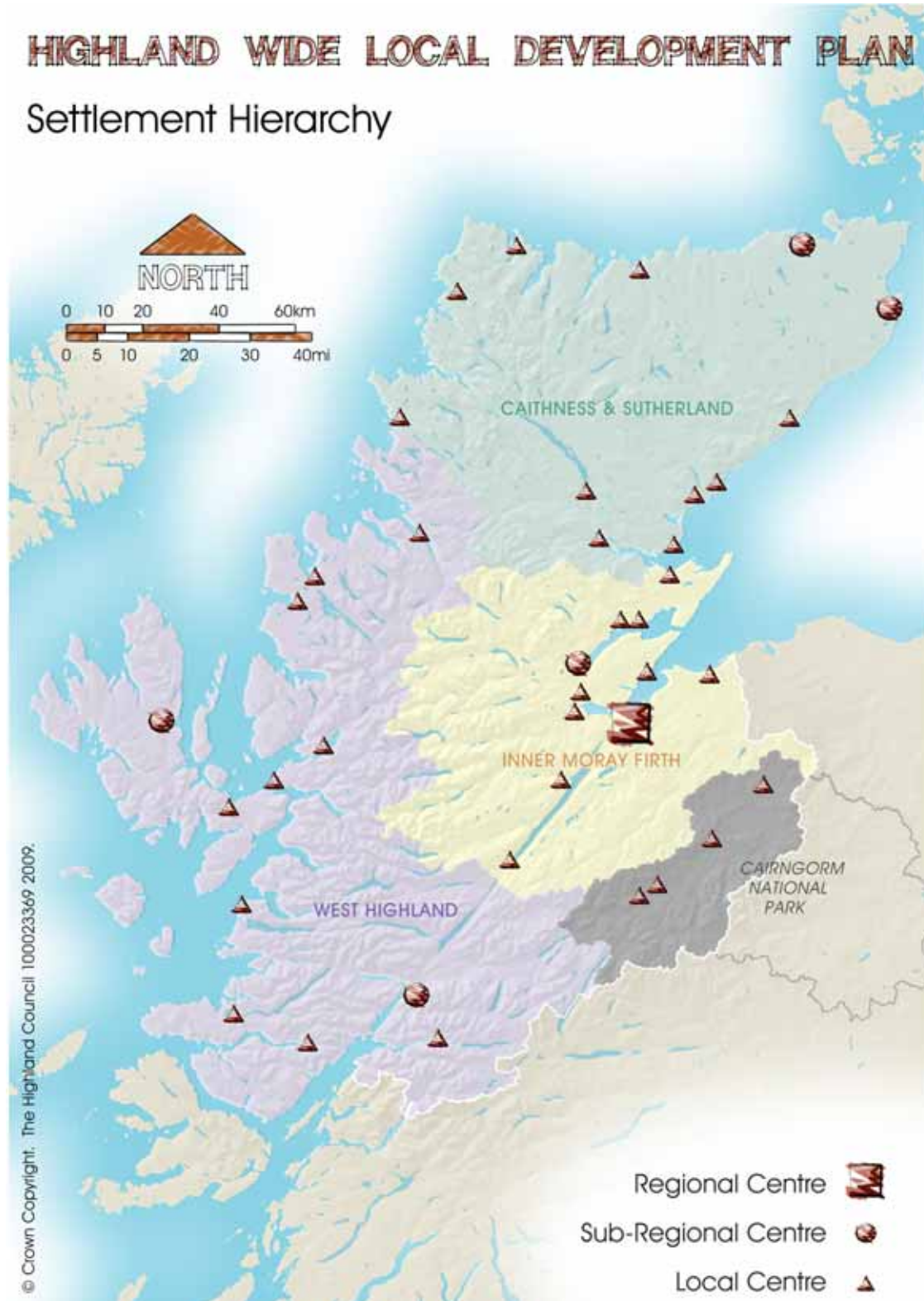
- identify the Nigg Yard as a strategic development site for the Highlands;
- put in place a policy which updates the provisions of the current Ross & Cromarty East Local Plan, and which recognises and supports the framework set out within the Nigg Masterplan; and
- support the economic development of other strategic sites in the Cromarty Firth.

The Council has not identified any reasonable alternatives to the Preferred Option on this issue.

Q.9 *Do you agree with our Preferred Option? If not, please tell us why. Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?*

Development of Local Centres

The development of Inverness and the surrounding areas should not be at the expense of other parts of Highland. The smaller towns like Fort William, Wick, Thurso, Portree, Dingwall or key villages like Ullapool, Durness and Broadford are equally important in our strategy.



It is important that the role and function of places in supporting housing, jobs, services and facilities at a local level can be maintained ensuring that the right developments are located in the right place to best serve the community.

Tourism is one of the most important roles for the key centres in Highland making the need for good quality and accessible services important for not just the residents of the town or village but also the visiting population.

We are preparing updated local plans for the West Highlands and Islands area and the Sutherland area. These local plans will ensure that local centres such as Fort William, Portree, Dornoch, Brora and Golspie have enough land identified to cater for growth of housing, business and other uses. Similarly, the Wester Ross and Ross & Cromarty East Local Plans have been prepared in 2006 and 2007 respectively and the towns and villages in these areas are well provided for in terms of land for most types of development. We will however ensure that the role of the smaller towns and villages in Highland is maintained and that the future area Local Development Plans provide for any needs that emerge over the coming years.

The Cairngorms National Park Authority is responsible for the preparation of Local Development Plans in the National Park area. Our Local Development Plan should complement and support the work of the Park Authority in delivering their aims, whilst ensuring that the services and infrastructure for which the Council is still responsible for (roads, schools, open spaces) are delivered effectively.

What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- emphasise the important role that all towns and villages play in the future development of the Highlands;
- identify the role that each settlement plays in the local and Highland context by setting out a settlement hierarchy; and
- take into account any shortages of housing or other land that might be identified through this consultation so that these can be addressed within the Proposed Plan, or prioritised for future Local Development Plans.

The Council has not identified any reasonable alternatives to the Preferred Option on this issue.

Q.10 Do you agree with our Preferred Option? If not, please tell us why. Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?

Wider Countryside and Fragile Areas

Given the very rural nature of parts of Highland, our plans have to identify opportunities for development in the countryside, whilst seeking to ensure that there are negative impacts on the environment are reduced. Whilst the preference is for development to happen in existing towns and villages where people are close to schools, shops and services, the strategy set out in the Local Development Plan must allow for appropriate development in the Highland countryside.

Appropriate development in the countryside will help support communities in fragile areas. We will continue to work with Highlands and Islands Enterprise in the fragile areas identified in the National Planning Framework 2 and the Highland and Islands Enterprise Operating Plan (see strategy map) to enable disadvantaged communities to generate economic growth and create the right conditions to help to retain population and in time grow.

At present we have different approaches in each of the Local Plans for assessing development in the countryside. In some plans these have been known as background policies. It might therefore be useful as part of the Highland wide Local Development Plan to make policies such as these consistent so that the planning system is easier to understand. Our preferred approach is to put in place a new approach to development in the wider countryside which will follow the approach used in the most recent Local Plans we have prepared (in Sutherland and West Highland & Islands). The preferred policy approach is set out in the appendix to this Main Issues Report.

What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

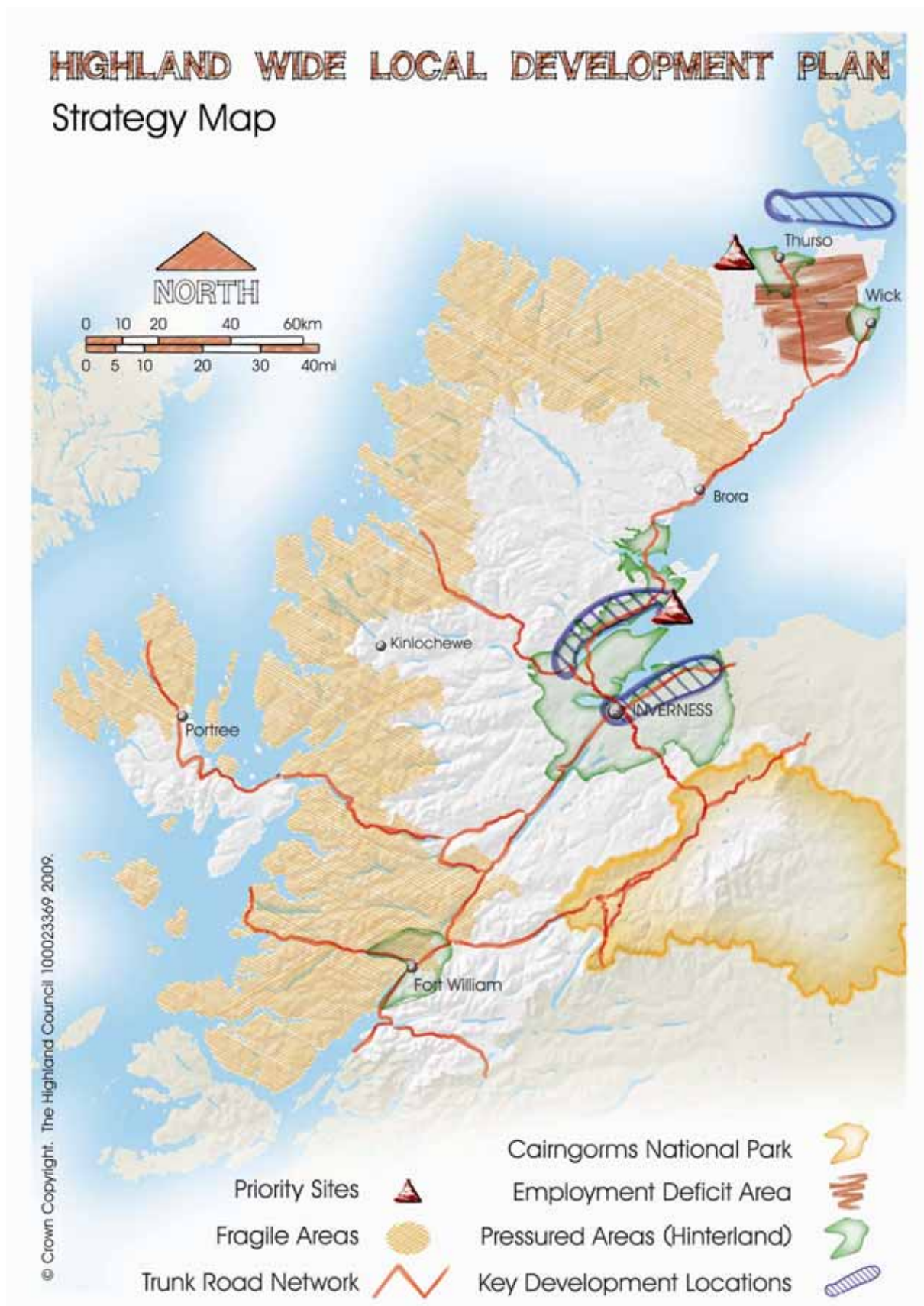
We think we should:

- put in place a consistent approach to development in the Highland countryside, by identifying the important areas to be protected, and other constraints that will apply;
- identify the areas of countryside around our main settlements where there will continue to be high demand for housing development in the countryside and protect these areas; and
- support development in fragile areas, where there is a need to retain and grow population, and sustain local services.

The Council has not identified any reasonable alternatives to the Preferred Option on this issue.

Q.11 Do you agree with our Preferred Option? If not, please tell us why. Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?

Strategy Map



5. Policy options for the Highland wide Local Development Plan

The new Local Development Plan must update the policies we use to guide development across the area. We have identified the main issues for each of the suggested objectives for the plan, along with the Council's preferred approach to dealing with them. The Council has not yet reached a firm view and remains open to consider different ideas that come forward.

The main issues raised here have been identified following input from Highland Council Councillors and from discussion with the key agencies (such as Scottish Natural Heritage and Scottish Environment Protection Agency), Scottish Government and neighbouring authorities. They have also been informed by feedback received from the public during recent consultation events on plans and strategies of the Council and on feedback we have received on our Highland Development Plan Scheme 2009. They do not cover all policy areas that may appear in our Proposed Plan, but are the ones where there is some change from our current plan coverage and where further work is required.

Sustainable Highland Communities

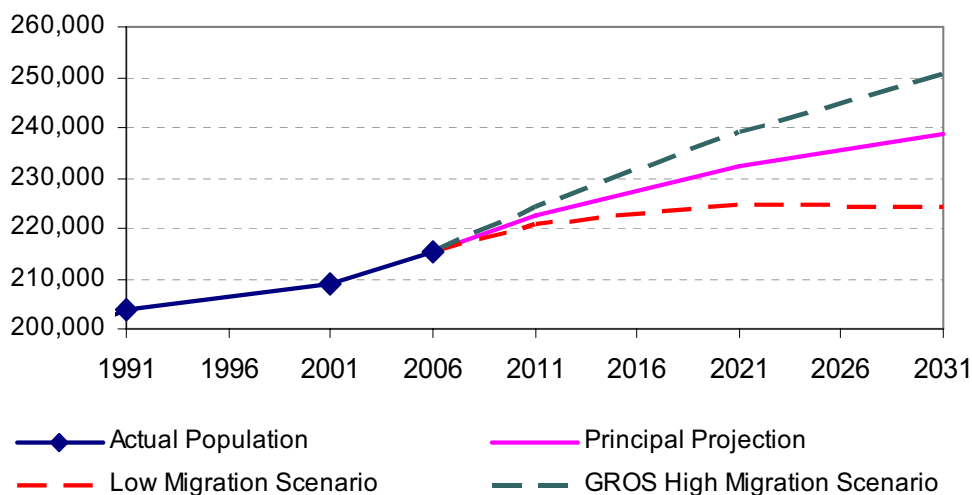
Population and Housing

Population Change

The population of Highland in 2008 was over 219,000 people, which continues long term trends of population growth. Recent growth has exceeded previous estimates for the area. Inward migration has been the driver in maintaining and growing the population during this period.

We have prepared population projection scenarios based on different levels of growth including the high migration scenario as required by Scottish Planning Policy 3. National Planning Framework 2 also supports the strategy of strong sustainable growth in all parts of Scotland.

Historic and Projected Population Change



The overall population is projected to grow between 4% and 16%, between the 3 scenarios of population growth. The low and principal scenarios use different levels of historical in-migration trends. The high migration scenario looks to an increase on previous in-migration rates driven by moves from the rest of UK and overseas.



We need to translate these projected overall increases in population into our future planning for housing and other developments. We have used the high growth scenario as the basis for our preferred options for development. We believe that this fits with the Scottish Government's aspirations for Scotland, and the Highland & Islands Enterprise strategy of increasing population growth of their area to 500,000.

There are significant differences in projected population change between the former areas of Highland, with high rates of projected growth in Inverness, Nairn and Badenoch & Strathspey, and projected falls in population in Caithness and Sutherland.

Household Change

To accommodate increases in the overall population we need to take account of growing numbers of households that will be associated with this. Household growth, however, relates not only to increases in population but to wider social changes in how people live, with a move to smaller households being part of a trend that has been ongoing for decades. This results in a significant increase in the number of households and consequent demands on the requirement for housing.

Highland's Housing Needs and Demand Assessment has been produced using Scottish Government guidance and the findings are summarised below. The full document is available on the Highland Council web-site at www.highland.gov.uk.

Housing land requirement and supply

The growth in population and households will need a consequent provision of available and effective housing land. Although house building activity has increased with some 1,800 homes being completed during 2007, there is a need to ensure that enough land is available to meet increasing demands.

The overall housing land requirement has been projected for each Housing Market Area in Highland. In line with national guidance, we have made allowances for non-effective stock, meeting the backlog in affordable housing provision and providing market flexibility. This takes account of the Scottish Government's aim of increasing house building across Scotland.

The Table below shows the housing land requirement needed to deliver homes for the projected increases in households. The existing land supply, as identified in the 2007 Housing Land Audit, shows the existing effective housing land supply.

Housing Land Requirement	2010 to 2019*		2020 to 2029
Housing Market Area	Land Requirement (high migration scenario)	Housing Land ¹ Audit 2007 (effective land supply)	Land Requirement (high migration scenario)
Caithness	739	2,771	138
Inverness	9,456	7,266	6,664
Lochaber	1,650	4,328	783
Nairn	1,631	868	938
East Ross	2,180	3,093	1,206
Mid Ross	2,212	2,709	1,404
West Ross	945	1,291	606
Skye & Lochalsh	1,385	2,757	886
Sutherland	981	2,246	348
Highland	21,179	27,329	12,973

* includes allowance to address affordable backlog

¹ excludes A96 corridor and Whiteness

In terms of the current housing land supply against the projected 10 year plan period, there is a clearly identifiable deficit in the existing land supply in the housing market areas of Inverness and Nairn. The preferred options for dealing with this deficit are set out in the spatial strategy section of this report.

Whilst other areas appear to have an adequacy of effective land within other areas, these may need significant investment in infrastructure; as a consequence we need to increase the overall supply to provide alternative sites.

Looking to the following 10 year period, projections indicate a housing land requirement for a further 14,118 houses. We can see that Inverness and Nairn will have a further significant shortfall against the current effective supply; in addition the 3 Ross-shire Housing Market Areas also show shortages in land supply.

The release of identified housing land is important to the delivery of housing across Highland. The availability of land will be a major consideration in determining what land is shown for development in our local development plan. Previous experience has made clear that just because land is identified within Local Development Plans, it is not always developed in the timescales required. That can be for a number of different reasons, including ownership, costs and the physical difficulties in providing the infrastructure that is required to be put in place. We believe that a generous identification of housing land across the Highlands is a positive approach that we should adopt.

What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these issues?

We think we should:

- adopt a positive approach to the delivery of effective allocated housing land to address the highest rate of projected population and housing growth

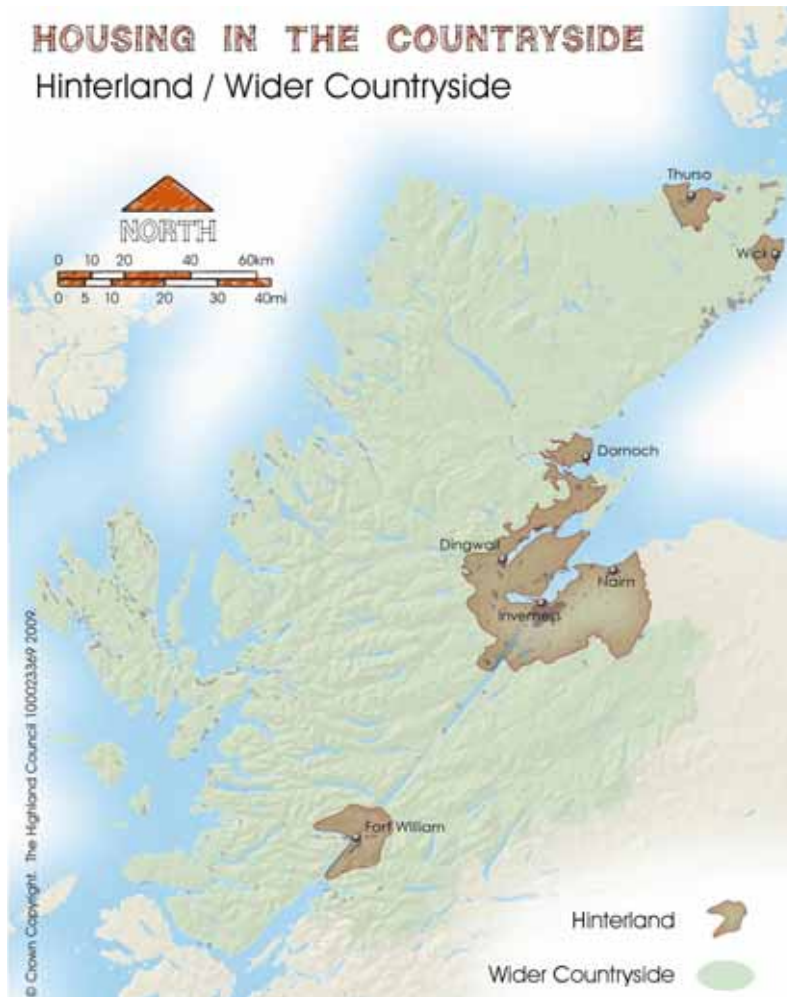
What are the alternatives to this Preferred Option?

Develop policy in line with a lower level of projected population growth based on assumptions of declining in-migration and a consequent slow down in economic growth.

Q.12

***Do you agree with our Preferred Option? If not, please tell us why.
Do you prefer the stated alternative?
Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?***

Housing in the Countryside



One of the most common pressures for development in the Highlands has been from people who wish to live in accessible parts of the countryside while continuing to work in Inverness and other towns and villages. Others wish to live and work in the countryside. We need to assess these demands and decide how, and where, to accommodate them.

Particular areas of pressure have been in and around the Inner Moray Firth, around Fort William and in Caithness. We have recently prepared updated guidance on the approach we will take to planning applications for houses in the countryside in the pressured areas around these places (known as the hinterland areas).

This approach supports the development of more houses in the countryside within existing groups of houses, particularly where the siting and design of these does not lead to an unacceptable impact on the landscape or infrastructure needed to support them. It also seeks to encourage the reuse and redevelopment of existing buildings and derelict sites in the countryside.

We need to confirm our updated approach which allows acceptable development in the countryside within these areas of pressure, whilst ensuring that the impacts of these developments do not take away from the quality of these countryside areas.

However, given the specific regeneration needs of Caithness we do need to consider whether a different approach is required there. To support the approach we decide on we will prepare supplementary design guidance for housing in the countryside.



What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- identify areas of development pressure for housing in the countryside;
- put in place an approach which supports the development of well sited and designed houses in the countryside within these areas;
- prepare a Housing in the Countryside Design Guide which will be used as supplementary guidance; and
- review the approach we currently take in Caithness, given the need for regeneration to be a key priority.

What are the alternatives to this Preferred Option?

1. One alternative is to restrict further building in the countryside, beyond that which is required for agricultural or other rural business needs. This would have environmental benefits in protecting the countryside from development, but would not offer the opportunity for further development that fits well with the landscape and with existing housing groups.
2. To have a less restrictive policy, with much smaller pressured areas, mainly located around the edges of the city and towns. This would open up the opportunity for a much greater level of housing in the countryside, whilst protecting the areas surrounding our major settlements. It could however lead to the development of additional housing in locations which are not suitable.

Q.13 *Do you agree with our Preferred Option? If not, please tell us why.
Do you prefer the stated alternative?
Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?*

Affordable Housing

The Housing Needs and Demand Assessment shows that we have a significant backlog of need for affordable housing and that this trend will continue into the future. In some areas of Highland there is a greater need for affordable housing than in others. For example, Skye & Lochalsh, Wester Ross and Mid Ross are shown to have a specific and acute long term need. Figures for Caithness show a growing surplus of affordable housing.

There is a need for up to 850 additional (new) affordable houses per year on average for the next 10 years if we are to catch up with the current unmet need for households who cannot afford to buy or rent privately. A significant increase in the delivery of affordable housing can only be achieved through increased funding, an increase in the percentage of affordable houses being built in each development, or a more pro-active approach to the allocation of land specifically for affordable housing or a combination of these which may be necessary. Other innovative ways to fund and enable the building of new affordable housing will be considered.



The current Highland Council planning policy on affordable housing is that a minimum of 25% of houses on sites where more than a certain number of houses can be built must be affordable (4 in some areas and 10 in others). There needs to be a consistent approach to this throughout Highland.

Any policies we create must be able to ensure that both the current and future markets can deal effectively with the provision of affordable housing and assisting people in accessing housing they can afford.

What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- amend the requirement for affordable housing in line with the outcomes of the Housing Needs and Demand Assessment;
- reduce the threshold for affordable housing provision from 10 to 4 houses in areas where this is justified by the evidence from the Housing Needs and Demand Assessment;
- consider increasing the percentage of affordable housing provided by developers where this is justified by local needs; and
- consider innovative methods of delivery of affordable housing.

What are the alternatives to this Preferred Option?

1. Continue with the existing policy of 25% of affordable houses on sites of 4 or more in Lochaber, West Ross, Skye & Lochalsh and Sutherland, and sites of 10 or more in across the rest of Highland. This means it will be harder to address the existing backlog of need and serious shortages in many communities may continue.
2. Decrease the threshold to 4 throughout Highland. This would increase the potential delivery by some 5% but with more significant local impacts. On its own this is not considered to be a viable option as it does not make a significant improvement in overall delivery.

Q.14

Do you agree with our Preferred Option?

If not, please tell us why.

Do you prefer the stated alternative?

Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?

Planning for an Ageing Population

The Scottish Government require us to take account of the housing needs of particular groups within society. Older people and disabled are important groups: their needs are not identical, but disability tends to increase with age with the result that suitably adapted housing could, in principle, meet the needs of both groups.

The population of Highland is ageing. The number of people aged 65 and over currently varies between 25% and 12% across Highland. Population projections estimate that across Highland as a whole the number of people aged 65 and over – and particularly those over 75 - will only increase.

The Highland Council and NHS Highland have produced estimates of the number of older people who might require care in the home in the future. These estimates suggest an increase of between 50% and 60% in the number of home care clients between 2006 and 2021.



National and Council policy is that older people should be cared for in their own homes wherever possible. However, one of the key issues for the Council is also the provision of specialist accommodation such as care homes for older people. A number of private care homes have also been developed in the Highlands. It is important that the Plan provides guidance on where these care homes are required, and how they link to existing communities.

What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- identify the need for housing suitable for older people with partners such as NHS Highland and preferred new build solutions;
- put in place a policy that will help identify housing sites that are particularly suitable for older people and people with disabilities and encourage them to be brought forward for this use (particularly those sites which are centrally located in communities and / or close to appropriate facilities);
- identify the proportion of new housing (both affordable and open market) on appropriate sites which must be delivered as housing suitable for older and / or disabled people and prepare supplementary guidance to enable this delivery; and
- include guidance in our Proposed Plan on the needs for and locational requirements of care home provision.

What are the alternatives to this Preferred Option?

1. Do nothing – rely on market forces to deliver adapted housing through a combination of: conversion of existing properties, “retirement villages” and similar, and purpose built semi sheltered accommodation. This may not be a viable option as it does not meet the requirements of Scottish Planning Policy 3 and the Housing Need and Demand Assessment Guidance issued by Scottish Government.

2. Continue with existing Structure Plan Policy H7 (Housing for varying needs) which encourages the provision of a range of house types, particularly lifetime homes. The increase in the number of houses suitable for older and disabled between 1998 and 2007 did not keep pace with the growth in the population of older people and it is unlikely that this policy, as currently written, can meet increasing rates of need.

Q.15

Do you agree with our Preferred Option?

If not, please tell us why.

Do you prefer the stated alternative?

Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?

Gypsies / Travellers

It is important that new development meets the needs of the whole community, including the specific needs of Gypsies / Travellers.

We recognise Gypsies / Travellers' right to travel and their specific housing needs. Where a need has been identified in the Local Housing Strategy we must help to provide appropriate sites in suitable locations for Gypsies / Travellers' sites to avoid the unauthorised use of land for this purpose. At present, none of our Local Plans provide guidance on this issue.

Through the completion of the Gypsies / Travellers' needs assessment, our Plan must provide for any proposals that do come forward whether by the Council or by private landowners.

What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- set out the tests against which the need for proposed new gypsy traveller sites will be assessed;
- utilise the findings of the Gypsies / Travellers' needs assessment and take into account the need for new sites, considering the impact on surrounding properties and communities and the availability of services and management; and
- use any information we gather on this to inform the Council's approach to transit and temporary stop over sites.

What are the alternatives to this Preferred Option?

We could deal with proposals for Gypsies / Traveller sites on a case by case basis. This would however potentially lead to an inconsistent approach across the area and an increase in the number of unauthorised sites.

Q.16

Do you agree with our Preferred Option?

If not, please tell us why.

Do you prefer the stated alternative?

Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?

Retailing

Shopping is an essential part of everyday life and makes an important contribution to Highland communities, employment and the economy. Government advice is that city, town and district centres should continue to be the focus for a mix of uses including retail. Recent major retail developments in Highland have been largely on sites that are on district centres or outside existing town centres.

Whilst it is not intended to substantially change existing policy on retailing from that contained within the Highland Structure Plan and individual Local Plans, current concerns over the impact of out of centre retail development means that it is important that we review what we currently have in place. We want to increase choice and accessibility to shopping, whilst at the same time ensuring that existing city, town and village centres are not affected.

The provision of local shopping facilities in large new developments has also been an issue in Highland. In some cases, local facilities are not provided until the development areas are largely complete. We want to work with the development industry to identify innovative ways of ensuring that local facilities are provided early in developments, for example by including the opportunities for retail facilities on the ground floor of flatted developments, which if not taken up can be easily used for flats in the future.

What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- put in place policy which supports the role that town centres will continue to play in meeting shopping needs;
- identify a hierarchy of larger retail centres and encourage appropriately sized development in these areas;
- assess proposals outwith the retail centres against their impact on the retail centres and the relative accessibility of the sites proposed; and
- develop a policy which supports the delivery of local retail facilities as part of the masterplanning of major expansion sites.

What are the alternatives to this Preferred Option?

1. Let developers lead on the location of retail proposals, with the Council judging each proposal on a case by case basis.
2. Direct retail development to specific sites. Also we could draw very tight boundaries around existing retail areas and outside of this boundary assess any retail development proposals against specific criteria such as accessibility.

Q.17

***Do you agree with our Preferred Option? If not, please tell us why.
Do you prefer the stated alternative?
Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?***

Developer Contributions

It is important that development proposals take into account the need for new services, facilities or infrastructure. This might be something straightforward like the widening of a road to serve a new housing development but could also relate to other impacts such as the possible need for more school places.

We believe that developer contributions should be sought for all development that has off-site impacts. In our current Local Plans different approaches are taken in different areas, leading to an inconsistent approach. We have a commitment to prepare more detailed supplementary guidance to provide certainty on when, why, and how we will seek contributions, and how much we will seek.

So that sustainable economic growth is not undermined, contributions could be adjusted downwards if a developer can demonstrate by open book accounting that a proposal will not go ahead because of the level of contributions sought.

We believe that a new approach could seek to offset impacts in terms of education, health, transportation, infrastructure, community & sports facilities, waste, and landscaping/open space/paths, but this list is not exhaustive.

In smaller settlements in the rural areas where there is no lead developer, impacts are more incremental and require a tailored solution. We could therefore adopt an approach where developers pay a small contribution into a shared pot until there are sufficient monies to undertake improvements. For example this would apply to single house developments along a section of single track road that has condition or capacity issues.

What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- seek proportionate developer contributions where an additional pressure would be put on existing facilities in a community as a result of new development; and
- bring forward a consistent, transparent method of collecting and recording these contributions across Highland.

What are the alternatives to this Preferred Option?

We could continue to react on a case by case basis to the need for developer contributions. This ensures each case is considered on its merits but it can dramatically slow down the planning system and future development. This can also lead to an inconsistent approach to developer contributions with not all developments being treated the same. Using this approach would offer no certainty to developers on what level of developer contributions the Council may seek.

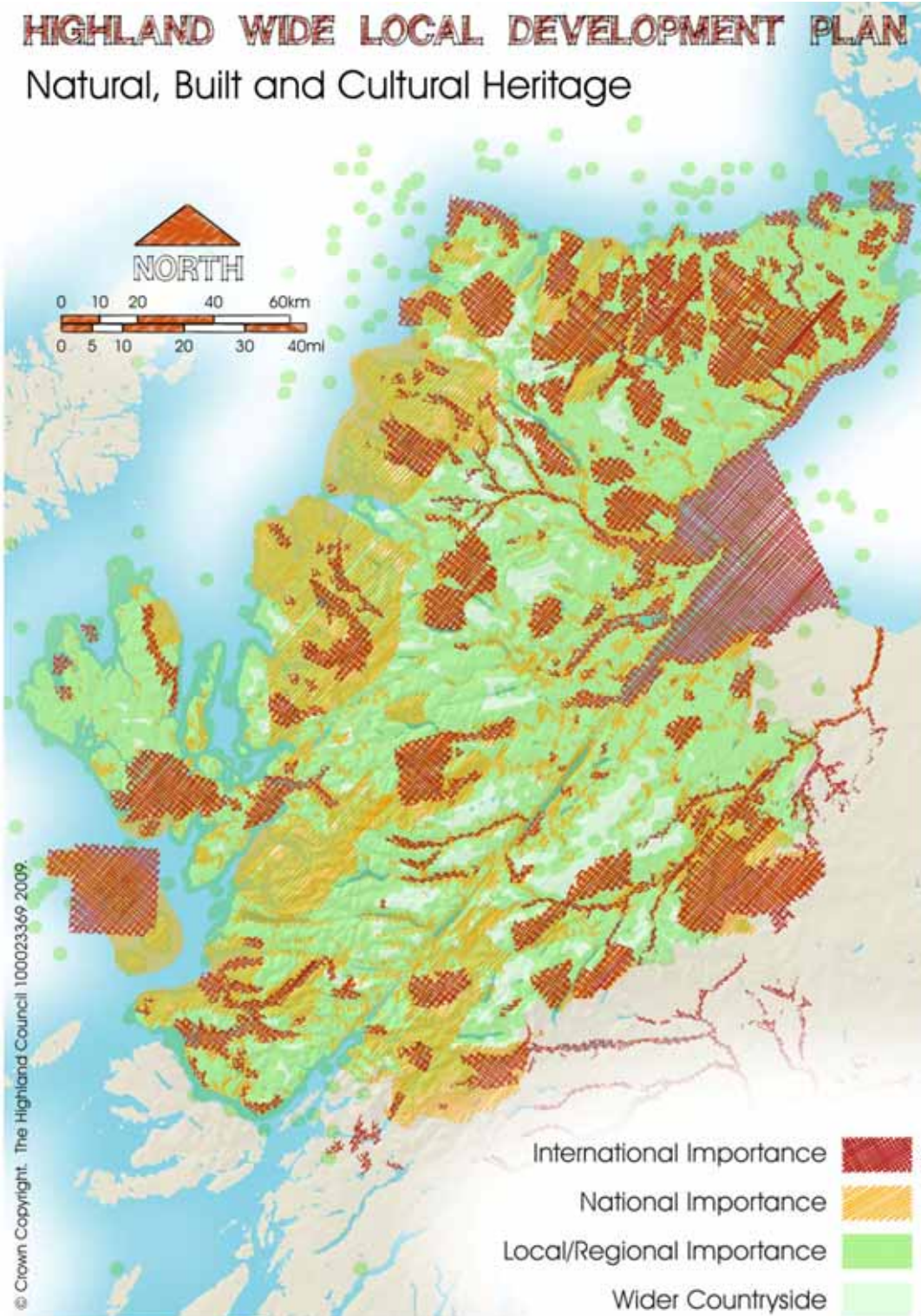
Q.18

***Do you agree with our Preferred Option? If not, please tell us why.
Do you prefer the stated alternative?
Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?***

Safeguarding Our Environment

Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage

Highland is well-known for its outstanding natural, built and cultural heritage. It is important that this should be protected and where possible enhanced. Much of this heritage already benefits from protection in law and national policy however it is important that we put this into a Highland context.



Our most recent local plans establish a hierarchy of importance of heritage features and a corresponding degree of support for or against development. Exceptions are explained. To address issues outwith designated sites policies are also included on species and habitats.



What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- take account of natural, built and cultural heritage by mapping known features and protecting them in accordance with their importance;
- provide a link to the relevant legislation and national policy that provides more detailed guidance; and
- encourage a positive and holistic approach to biodiversity by asking developers to address all species and habitats issues across their sites and adjoining areas arising from the development.

What are the alternatives to this Preferred Option?

A more formal heritage designations led-approach could be used which would map every feature individually and detail the particular legal or national policy protection that applies to it. This would add considerably to the Plan length and repeat policy and guidance that is stated elsewhere. It would also not address heritage interests outwith designated sites.

Q.19

***Do you agree with our Preferred Option? If not, please tell us why.
Do you prefer the stated alternative?
Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?***

Previously Used Land



National policy encourages the use of previously used land in preference to green field land. A high percentage of the vacant and derelict sites identified within Scotland are located in Highland (10% by area). Large areas of vacant and derelict land are located within settlements, offering opportunity for the redevelopment of these for other uses that will give benefit to the wider community and bring about environmental improvement. It is important that we increase the opportunities for development on such sites.

What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- identify a Highland wide target for development on previously used land within our Proposed Plan; and
- develop a policy which will require site investigations and risk assessment which will identify remediation works to bring sites to a standard suitable for new use.

Q.20

Do you agree with our Preferred Option?

If not, please tell us why.

Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?

Wild Land

The Highlands contain land areas that are largely unaffected by permanent human influence. These areas are rare in a national and European context and are worthy of protection because they are places where local residents and tourists can enjoy a sense of tranquillity and wildness.



What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- identify areas of wild land and include these as a development constraint within our Proposed Plan; and
- put in place a policy to assess planning applications which come forward in these areas which will take into account the level of impact, the degree of wildness of the area and any proposed mitigation.

What are the alternatives to this Preferred Option?

The alternative to this approach is not to identify Wild Land as a constraint on development, as it is a local designation and is not contained within any legislation.

Q.21

***Do you agree with our Preferred Option? If not, please tell us why.
Do you prefer the stated alternative?
Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?***

Water Environment

A good quality water environment has many benefits. In recognising the value of a good quality water environment and aiming for its conservation and enhancement, the European Union has adopted the Water Framework Directive. This sets out how and why water quality should be protected and enhanced.

To work towards this the Scottish Environment Protection Agency is currently preparing River Basin Management Plans. These can be viewed on the SEPA website at www.sepa.org.uk/water/river_basin_planning.aspx.



Our current local plans do not include reference to these documents and it is important that these Plans are considered, as development proposals can cause impacts on water quality. We could therefore promote the aims of the River Basin Management Plan for the Scotland River Basin District and Area Management Plans by addressing development-related issues.

What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- clearly indicate the quality and status of water bodies in the Local Development Plan;
- ensure the water environment will be an important consideration in making decisions on planning applications; and
- not support development that is shown to have a negative impact if there are no acceptable plans in place to reduce that impact.

What is an alternative to this Preferred Option?

A reasonable alternative is not to include a policy on this within the Highland wide Local Development Plan. If this was the case, greater reliance would be placed on the role of the Scottish Environment Protection Agency for the conservation and enhancement of the water environment and the Highland Council would continue to consult SEPA on individual applications.

Q22

***Do you agree with our Preferred Option? If not, please tell us why.
Do you prefer the stated alternative?
Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?***

Sustainable Development and Climate Change

The challenges of achieving sustainable development and dealing with the causes and impacts of climate change are some of the most serious we will face over the period of this plan.

The Scottish Government has committed to a long-term target of an 80% reduction in emissions by 2050. Energy conservation measures and greater energy efficiency, making the most of Scotland's renewable energy potential and encouraging power and heat generation from clean, low carbon sources will all be important. The Scottish Government has set a target of generating 50% of the electricity Scotland uses from renewable sources by 2020 and is committed to working towards deriving 20% of total energy use from renewable sources by 2020.

This section of the main issues report sets out how we will encourage new developments to be designed and built using resources more efficiently so that we can work with others to make a positive impact on the environment.

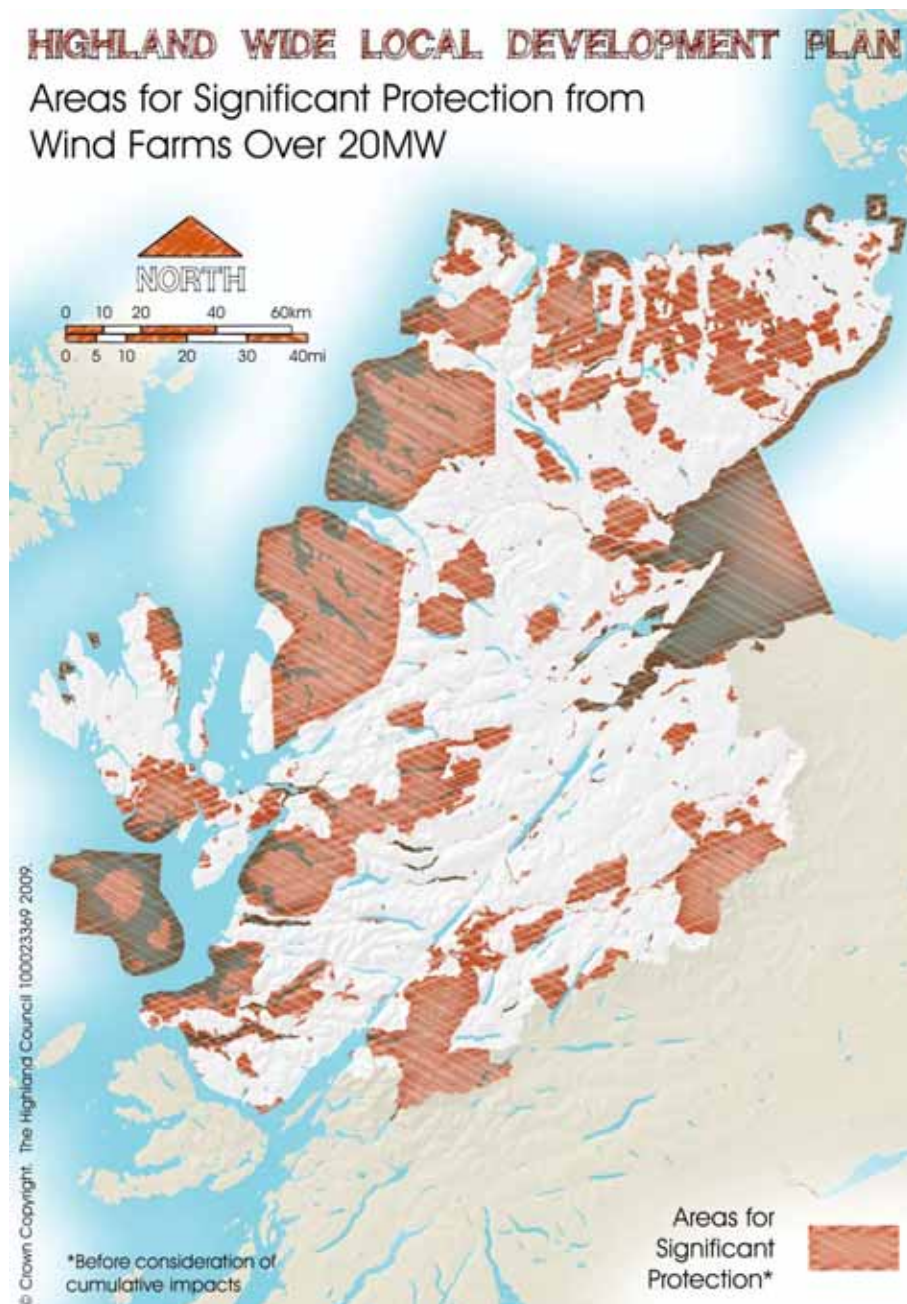
Renewable Energy

Whether it is wind, hydro or tidal it is widely recognised that the Highland area has great potential for renewable energy production with ambitious targets for production using renewable sources set internationally, nationally and regionally. It is a national priority that the electricity network heading both south and east is improved to take advantage of this potential. The location and capacity of the grid (and its limitations) have been a major driver in the location of wind farms (see map).

Onshore wind and hydro electric power is making a huge contribution to renewable energy production and this is being joined by other technologies such as biomass, energy from waste, landfill gas and the marine renewables including offshore wind, wave and tidal. The vision set out in National Planning Framework for Scotland 2 for a sub-sea electricity network is supported by the Council. In Highland there is also the opportunity for greater use of micro-generation of renewable energy.



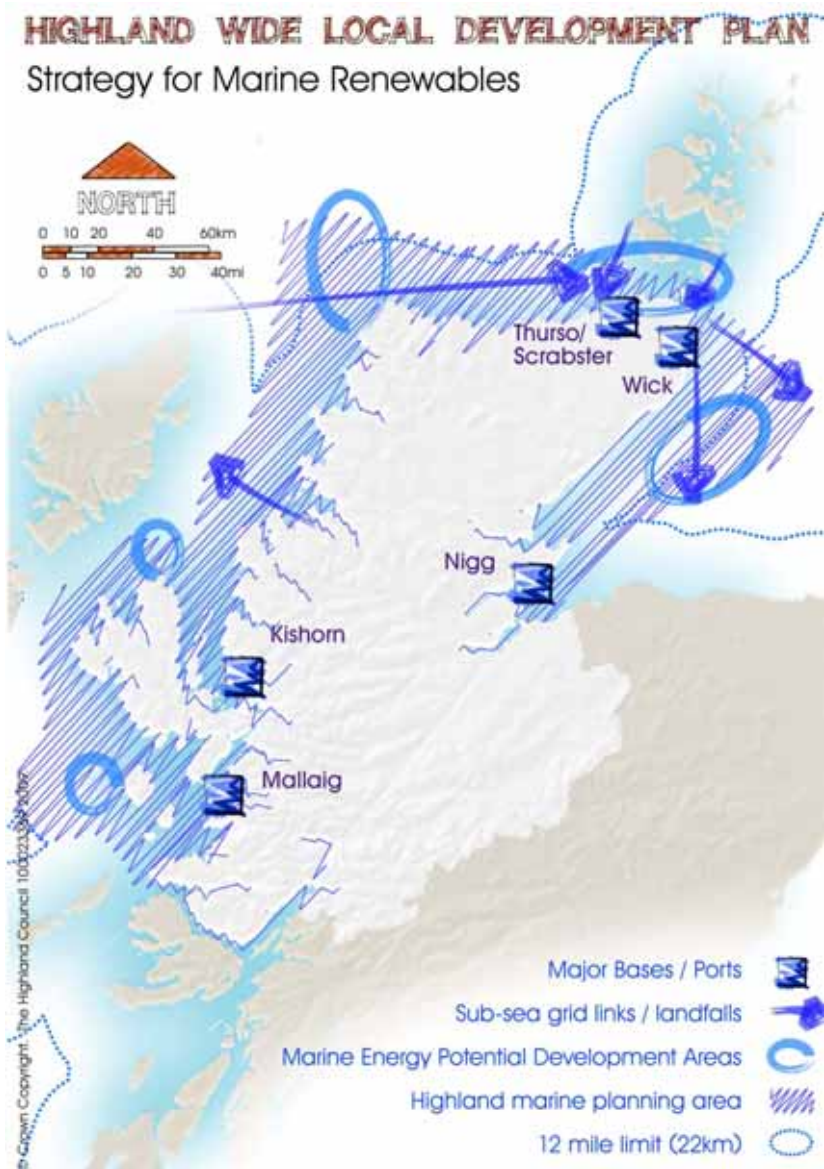
The Scottish Government expects local planning authorities to prepare a policy framework to deal with wind energy. The Council has a Renewable Energy Strategy but parts need updating. We have started reviewing parts of the strategy and are preparing new guidance on wind energy.



This will form an important piece of our supplementary guidance to the new Local Development Plan.

It will identify areas to be afforded significant protection from windfarms due to their national or international natural heritage value (see this map) or having regard to cumulative impacts.

It will also identify broad areas of search for windfarms and set out criteria for the consideration of proposals in other areas.



There is growing interest in the development of marine renewables and it is recognised by the Scottish and UK Governments that there is much marine energy potential off Highland’s north and west coasts, and in the Moray Firth. Working in partnership will help us to make significant contributions towards regional and national renewable targets, as well as helping to regenerate parts of Caithness and North Sutherland. An outline of how we can harness our resources will be brought forward through the Scottish Government’s marine spatial planning activities. We will be working closely with the Scottish Government to ensure that the proposals in the marine spatial planning activities fit well with the aims of our Highland wide Local Development Plan.

There are a number of areas which the Council considers could hold particular potential for marine energy (see map), having regard to the resource and to constraints. Each area will be suitable to a particular technology or combination of technologies. For example, the Outer Moray Firth is more suitable for offshore wind (than for tidal or wave). Further consideration of these areas may help to focus and plan for land based supporting development for marine renewables.

What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- set out updated targets for energy developments of different types – these targets will be a guide, and not a “ceiling”;
- identify broad areas of search where different types of renewable energy technology developments, especially larger on-shore wind and the location of land based supporting development for marine renewables, could take place. This will be included within supplementary guidance;
- identify areas to be given protection from these types of development and this will also be included within this supplementary guidance;
- set out criteria for consideration of proposals in the rest of the Highland area for these types of development and this will also be included within this supplementary guidance;
- identify the opportunities and potential locations for any supporting infrastructure relating to manufacturing, assembly, servicing and maintenance; and
- support smaller developments for micro-renewables.



What is an alternative to this Preferred Option?

We could only allow renewable energy developments to take place where there is capacity in the national grid to take the additional electrical load and only allow more developments as grid reinforcement works proceed geographically.

Q.23

**Do you agree with our Preferred Option? If not, please tell us why.
Do you prefer the stated alternative?
Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?**

Flooding

We will also address more detailed, technical issues such as sustainable drainage systems and culverts. These will be detailed within supplementary guidance on flooding that we will prepare at the same time as the Local Development Plan.



What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- require developers to produce a flood risk assessment to accompany any planning application in areas within or adjoining areas of unacceptable risk;
- identify areas of flood risk on maps to help direct development away from areas at risk from flooding; and
- only support proposals within areas of flood risk if adequate mitigation can be secured.

What is an alternative to this Preferred Option?

The Council could adopt a more prescriptive policy which would resist certain types of development within specific, mapped areas. This would use the best data currently available to map areas of unacceptable risk and would presume against specified types of development within these areas. This approach would be effective in directing development away from flood risk areas, but might not allow for solutions to provide further protection from flooding in the area to be put in place.

***Q.24 Do you agree with our Preferred Option? If not, please tell us why.
Do you prefer the stated alternative?
Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?***

Waste Management

Everyone in Highland produces waste. It is important to continue to reduce the amount of waste generated, reuse items where appropriate and increase recycling. To make sure this happens, we will need to develop additional waste management facilities of various types and sizes to serve parts of Highland. At the moment only some of our local development plans contain a reference to waste management, so it is important that we have an up to date position for the whole of the Highlands.

Our waste must be seen as a potential resource, be it through reusing or recycling or by recovering heat and energy from it before finally disposing of the residue. Materials recycling, in-vessel composting and energy from waste all have a part to play in the Council's waste strategy for municipal waste (waste that the Council is responsible for collecting). Although recycling continues to increase, an unsustainable amount of waste is transported out of the area to be landfilled. The Highland wide Local Development Plan needs to help on the delivery of more local facilities, such as those indicated in the Council's waste strategy (see map).

The Local Development Plan also needs to provide advice on other waste management facilities that may be required, for example to handle commercial and industrial wastes not collected or disposed of by the Council.



The scale and location of these will depend on working with private developers when they come forward with their preferred sites.

Communities of the future must be designed to minimise waste. New development should be provided in a way that allows for waste recycling and collection. This should include the provision of local recycling points and community composting facilities within larger developments. We also need to identify specific opportunities for development areas to be served by energy from waste facilities where waste heat or energy are used locally. Scottish Government are working with us to develop a map for the Highlands which will help us to identify such opportunities.



What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- have a waste management policy which directs waste management facilities to existing or proposed industrial and business sites in the first instance;
- examine other sites to ensure a range of opportunities exist. This could include the potential for energy from waste proposals to be included as part of major housing or commercial proposals;
- outline specific requirements for the design of new developments to provide for the provision of local facilities, for the submission of site waste management plans and by the identification of particular opportunities for district heating schemes; and
- require developers to deliver these benefits as part of major development schemes.

What is an alternative to this Preferred Option?

We could seek to allocate land specifically to accommodate strategic waste management facilities. This would have the benefit of providing certainty about the intention for particular sites and communities would know that sites were specifically for these particular facilities. However, this would require certainty about the requirements and would not be flexible to accommodate change if the sites were not available in the time period needed.

Q.25 *Do you agree with our Preferred Option? If not, please tell us why. Do you prefer the stated alternative? Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?*

Air Quality

The high quality of the air in Highland is sometimes taken for granted, however there are some areas where air quality is deteriorating. This may be due to an increase in traffic, the burning of fossil fuels or industrial uses in an area. It is important that we monitor these areas to ensure there is not going to be an impact on the health of people in Highland or the quality of the environment because of these uses.

What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- ensure that new developments are designed to minimise their impact on air quality; and
- ensure proposals which may affect air quality are assessed against a recognised standard.

The Council has not identified any reasonable alternatives to the Preferred Option on this issue.

Q.26

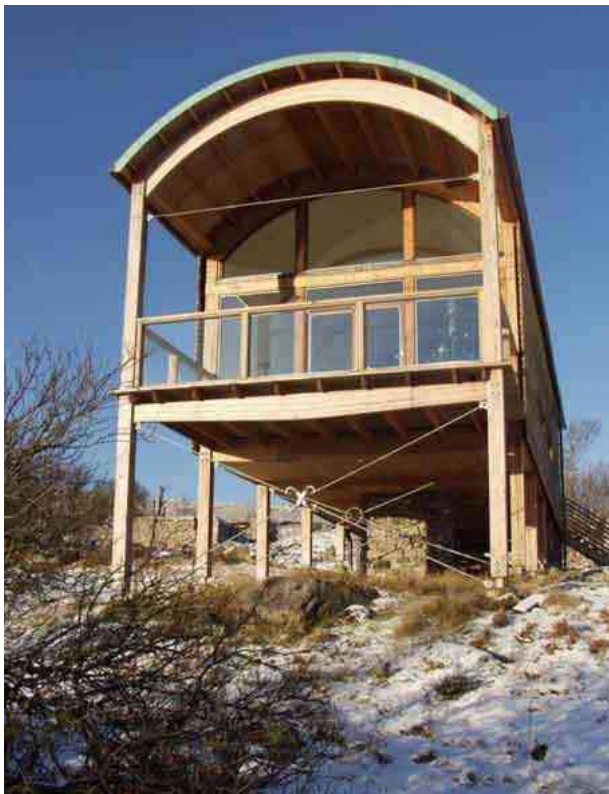
Do you agree with our Preferred Option

If not, please tell us why.

Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?

Sustainable Design

The need to reduce energy consumption and to encourage development in a sustainable manner forms a key message from Scottish Government. The use of more sustainable building practices and the incorporation of renewable sources of energy can provide a valuable contribution towards reducing the carbon footprint of development.



The layout of new developments is equally important, and we need to drive standards of design higher. The quality of different places is not just determined by buildings but by how they work together and how the streets and spaces between buildings work.

For smaller scale development the provision of advice on things to consider when developing will assist in the move to sustainable thinking. Issues to cover are advice on site selection and siting, orientation to utilise solar energy, increasing insulation levels and utilising locally sourced materials where possible.

What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- develop policy in line with government guidance seeking a reduction in emissions for larger scale developments; and
- put in place supplementary guidance on sustainable design and residential layout.

The Council has not identified any reasonable alternatives to the Preferred Option on this issue.

Q.27

Do you agree with our Preferred Option?

If not, please tell us why.

Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?

A Competitive, Sustainable & Adaptable Highland Economy

Business and Industrial Land

It is essential that enough land is identified in the right places to provide for sustainable economic growth. The local development plan is an essential tool to help deal with the impacts of the current recession and ensure that the land and infrastructure is in place for economic recovery. Both the Highland Structure Plan and the existing Local Plans identify strategic development sites, and we work closely with Highlands & Islands Enterprise to make sure that supply meets demand. Other documents like the Inner Moray Firth Ports and Sites Strategy will also be useful to highlight opportunities for economic development.



We need to be prepared to adopt a pro-active and welcoming approach to proposals which come forward, particularly those related to the development of marine renewables in areas such as Caithness. A planning approach which allows significant inward investment projects to be promoted in acceptable locations could be an important step in building our competitive advantage.

One of the key aims of the Scottish Government is to ensure that plans identify the opportunities for low impact industrial, business and service uses which can co-exist with housing and other sensitive uses. This has not always happened under existing policies; we will address this issue through the Highland wide Local Development Plan.

Tourism is one of the key sectors in Highland, and our planning documents must be receptive and welcoming to high quality tourism related development in appropriate locations.

What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- identify the strategic sites for economic development in the Highlands;
- put in place a policy which supports economic development proposals in the right location;
- adopt a flexible and pro-active approach to proposals for major inward investment;
- promote the role of small scale rural businesses;
- put in place a policy which encourages developers to bring forward mixed use proposals which allow for appropriate small scale business and commercial developments to be co-located with major housing developments. This could be made a requirement of large scale masterplanning proposals for over 100 houses; and
- support high quality tourism proposals in appropriate locations.

What is an alternative to this Preferred Option?

The Local Development Plan could only support development of land identified specifically for business and industrial land. Whilst ensuring that development would be more tightly controlled, and therefore having a lesser impact on the environment, this would run the risk of not being flexible enough to accommodate major development proposals which come forward in specific areas where no such land is available at that time. It would also not allow development of housing and business opportunities to take place in conjunction with one another.

Q.28A***Do you agree with our Preferred Option?******If not, please tell us why.******Do you prefer the stated alternative?******Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?***

Accessibility and Transport

National policy sets out that the planning system should support a pattern of development that reduces the need to travel, facilitates travel by public transport and freight movement by rail or water, and provides safe and convenient opportunities for walking and cycling.

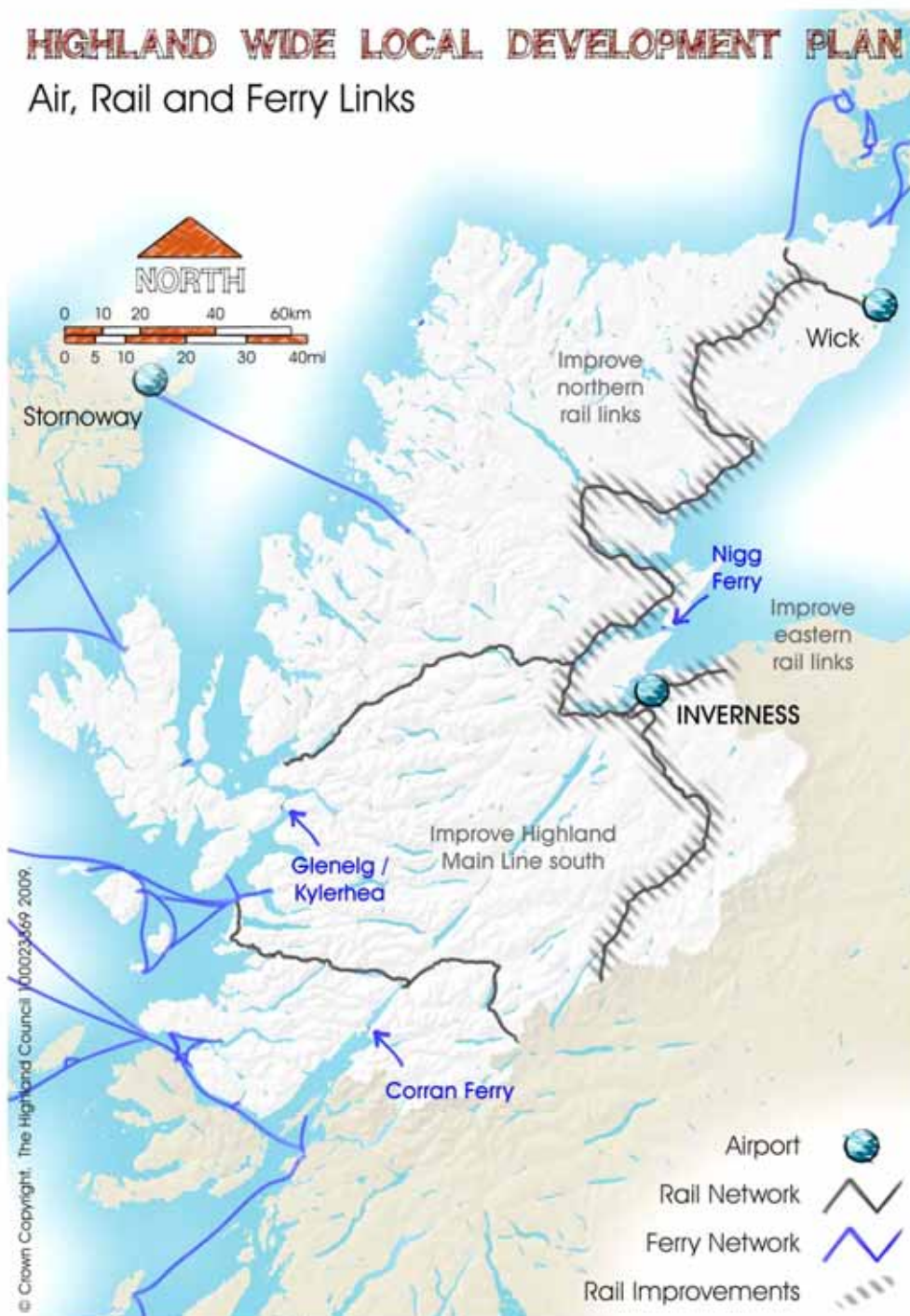
The Highlands and Islands depend on good transport links for economic and social reasons. Both the National Planning Framework and the Strategic Transport Projects Review have identified areas for strategic improvement, notably the dualling of the A96 and A9 and improvements to a number of other routes including the A9 north and the A82. These improvements along with an emphasis on integrated transport should reduce journey times and increase the viability and attractiveness to business in the area with a faster and more reliable service.

It is essential that the Local Transport Strategy (LTS) prepared by the Council and the Highland wide Local Development Plan are developed together. When complete, the Local Transport Strategy will be a document that will be referred to in decision making on development proposals. The draft Local Transport Strategy is being consulted on at the same time as this Main Issues Report.

The Local Transport Strategy identifies a number of key issues for transport in the Highlands, and this will help update the current policies contained within the Highland Structure Plan. These are illustrated on the maps below for the Highlands as a whole and for the city of Inverness. These include:

- ◆ ensuring that new developments contribute towards an improvement in transport infrastructure and services where they have an impact;
- ◆ highlighting priorities for investment in the Highlands, including the development of our “locally significant roads” which connect local communities to the main strategic routes throughout the area;
- ◆ highlighting the role that improvements to the trunk roads – particularly the A96, the A9 and the A82 – can make to increasing accessibility to and from our area;
- ◆ improving the pedestrian and cycle network, through the preparation of Active Travel Plans for our major settlements. These can be used to help inform planning applications that will be submitted in these areas;
- ◆ identifying the main public transport improvements required, including the provision of Park and Ride sites around Inverness, and the provision of bus lanes;
- ◆ improving the rail, air and ferry routes in the area;
- ◆ putting in place consistent and relevant parking standards for new developments; and
- ◆ highlighting the opportunities for improved freight transport throughout the area, including the use of rail and the Caledonian Canal.

We will also use these priorities as the basis for improving the transport network. The emphasis in the design and development of new housing and business sites must be to provide sustainable transport choices for people in a way that our previous plans and strategies have perhaps not done. The role of park and ride sites (for example at Tore, Dalcross and in the other locations around Inverness) could be a very real improvement to the transport network in Highland over the next twenty years.



Our development strategy should also highlight the opportunities to support an effective and sustainable network of rural filling stations, to support the sustainability of our most rural communities. There has been concern that the loss of these important facilities will lead to difficulties in retaining people and businesses.

HIGHLAND WIDE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Transport Strategy Map





What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- identify priority routes to improve investment opportunities in the Highlands;
- provide a clear link with the objectives and policies highlighted within the Local Transport Strategy (and shown above);
- where appropriate seek contributions from new developments for projects outlined in the Council’s strategy and/or identified in the Scottish Government Strategic Transport Projects Review;
- place an emphasis on the reduction of emissions and promote the use of cleaner fuels; and
- seek to support the delivery of an effective network of rural fuel stations throughout Highland.

The Council has not identified any reasonable alternatives to the Preferred Option on this issue.

Q.28B *Do you agree with our Preferred Option?
 If not, please tell us why.
 Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?*

Crofting and Agriculture

Crofting and farming are essential to the continued growth and prosperity of the Highlands. The quality of farm and croft land needs to be taken into account so that as much of our good quality land is retained as possible.

Agricultural land is divided into different types. Prime land is classed as the best and is a finite national resource. Government guidance on this type of land is that development should not be permitted unless it is an essential component of the settlement strategy or is necessary for major infrastructure development, where no other suitable site is available. The Local Development Plan must set this policy out in the local Highland context.



The Crofting Reform Bill, which is currently being finalised by the Scottish Government, will have significant implications for crofting as a whole. As part of this Bill the Scottish Government is looking to address the issue of using crofts for the development of second homes. There is also support for croft housing and agriculture with the emphasis being to support new entrants and making more public land available for the creation of new crofts. There is support of woodland crofts and the National Land Forest Scheme has potential to make a significant contribution to its development.

Highlands and Islands Enterprise will be responsible for support crofting communities in the preparation of Crofting Township Plans through their new role as a development body for crofting. These Township Plans could have linkages with our Local Development Plans.

One of the ways to better protect croft land is to improve communication with crofting communities, and make the most of working arrangements with the Crofters Commission.

In the Highland wide Local Development Plan we need to set out a policy so when a planning application comes in for development on croft land we can see whether it would be acceptable to lose that land to development. It is also important that we set out our policy approach for considering potential future development on croft land within Local Development Plans. We believe it would be beneficial for our crofting policies to be adaptable so they can cover both agricultural and woodland crofts.

Agricultural land

What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- protect prime agricultural land in either class 1, 2 or 3.1 of the Macaulay Institute classification; and
- allow development of prime agricultural land only if the development is an essential component of the settlement strategy or necessary to meet an established need.

What is an alternative to this Preferred Option?

There may be merit in protecting additional agricultural land such as that not in the 'prime agricultural' classifications. This would lead to a greater level of protection for agricultural land but may also limit development opportunities of particular areas.

Q.29

***Do you agree with our Preferred Option? If not, please tell us why.
Do you prefer the stated alternative?
Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?***

Subdivision of Existing Crofts

What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- protect croft land through joint working between the Highland Council and the Crofters Commission and the Scottish Government;
- encourage the Scottish Government to carry out an assessment of the crofting impact of the development of a single house on a croft before a planning application is determined; and
- ensure that opinions on the agricultural value of land for crofting purposes can be taken into account in the planning decision.

What is an alternative to this Preferred Option?

We could allow no more than one additional house on a croft. This would provide effective protection of croft land from cumulative single house development.

Q.30

***Do you agree with our Preferred Option? If not, please tell us why.
Do you prefer the stated alternative?
Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?***

Allocation of inbye land

What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- create a selection process which looks to examine options for development outwith crofting in-bye or on common grazings; and
- consult Grazings Committees on land they wish to put forward for consideration for development.

What is an alternative to this Preferred Option?

No further development on inbye land is the most effective approach for preserving the best croft land. However, particularly outwith our Hinterland of Towns where development prospects are marginal, and large estates control a large percentage of the land, this could have a negative impact on effective land supply.

Q.31

***Do you agree with our Preferred Option If not, please tell us why.
Do you prefer the stated alternative?
Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?***

New Crofting Township

What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- provide a policy basis for considering proposals for new crofting townships; and
- encourage community consultation to be carried out before submission of a planning application.

What is an alternative to this Preferred Option?

We could require that these proposals must always come through and be considered as part of an Area Local Development Plan review or not consider proposals within the Hinterlands of Towns (pressured areas for housing). This provides scope within the more fragile areas, but would not support new entrants within the Hinterland of Towns.

Q.32

***Do you agree with our Preferred Option If not, please tell us why.
Do you prefer the stated alternative?
Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?***



Small Scale New Crofts

What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- consider proposals under our Housing in the Countryside policy;
- require a woodland management plan, which meets UK Forestry Standard, to be submitted with any planning application for a new woodland croft; and
- ensure that before planning applications are determined that the proposed development is on a genuine croft which is registered with the Crofters Commission. Working arrangements with Crofters Commission and Forestry Commission are critical.

What is an alternative to this Preferred Option?

It is possible that we could alter the Housing in the Countryside guidance to require proof of need to be onsite for essential care of a croft. This provides effective safeguards but would constrain woodland crofts which are much less likely to justify onsite for essential care.

Q.33

***Do you agree with our Preferred Option? If not, please tell us why.
Do you prefer the stated alternative?
Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?***

Coastal Development

The Council currently has Aquaculture Framework Plans which help guide development to appropriate areas and minimise conflicts of interest. However in our coastal areas there is a need for better integration in our approach dealing with land and sea together, particularly in light of expansion of certain sectors such as marine renewables, and in aquaculture where there is a move towards larger installations. It will take time for the new marine planning system to be established and implementation at a regional level will not fit with the timescales of this review. However we can progress with improvements in the short term and we are consulting on a Coastal Development Strategy alongside this Main Issues Report.

We will incorporate principles proposed for the new marine planning system prior to its introduction. The Coastal Development Strategy will develop the Council's vision for the coastal zone. This identifies activity on the coastal zone and provides a vision which can usefully inform future Local Development Plans. For example the Coastal Development Strategy will highlight where small jetties, harbours and piers may be priorities for improvement and diversification activities.

What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- provide a clear link between the Local Development Plan and the Coastal Development Strategy to ensure that the right development can take place in coastal areas;
- put in place a general policy covering this topic to ensure appropriate development is not hindered where it will not have an impact on any specific designation or the character of the area; and
- put in place a general policy on fish farming and other aquaculture activities to ensure there is an appropriate and consistent framework for assessing planning applications that can be applied Highland wide. This could be done by preparing supplementary guidance.

What is an alternative to this Preferred Option?

Identify search areas that are sensitive either for scenic, ecological or environmental reasons to fish farm development and other areas that are potentially suitable or if there is conflict with other regulatory regimes. This would be subject to detailed location and environmental consideration.

Q.34

Do you agree with our Preferred Option If not, please tell us why.

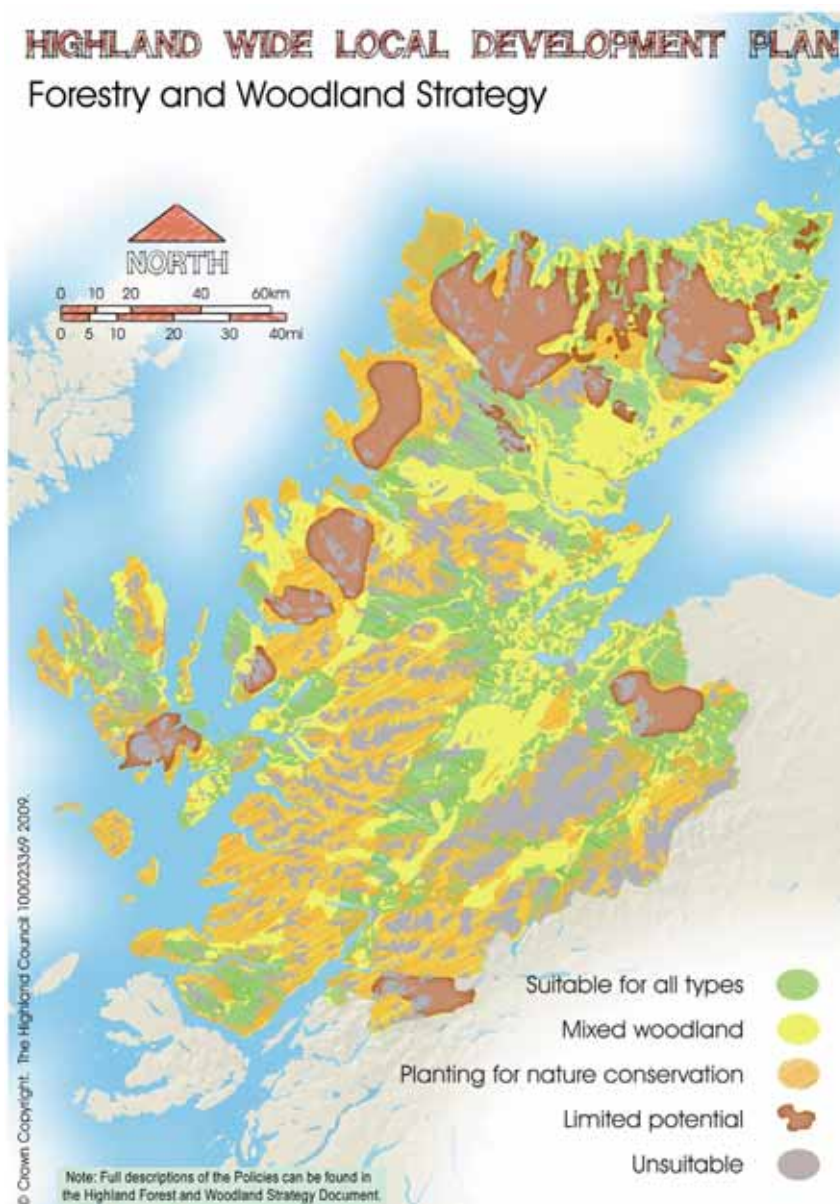
Do you prefer the stated alternative?

Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?

Forestry and Woodland

Forestry covers 13% of the land area in the Highlands making it a significant resource, and an important sector of the economy. At a national level the Scottish Forestry Strategy provides a framework and this guides Regional Indicative Forestry Strategies.

The Scottish Forestry Strategy reaffirmed the Government’s expectation that an increase in woodland cover in Scotland would be needed to deliver the vision from the current 17% to around 25% by the second half of the century. This will have a number of benefits, including climate change mitigation, economic development potential, biodiversity and environmental improvements and community and regeneration spin-offs.



As part of the Highland wide Local Development Plan we will endorse the existing Highland Forest and Woodland Strategy produced in 2006.

The main function of this strategy document is to guide the development and management of our forests.

The current strategy is mapped here.



What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- manage the resource whilst maximising multiple benefits and direct development in a way that allows forest and woodland management to integrate well with other land uses in an area;
- provide a link to the Highland Forest and Woodland Strategy 2006 to maximise opportunities for new and existing forests and woodlands;
- consult shortly on an interim revision of the Highland Forest and Woodland Strategy 2006, focussing only on areas of change such as climate change (with full review in 5 years); and
- provide supplementary guidance on protection of trees/ woodland and on new woodland cover/ landscaping for new developments.

What is an alternative to this Preferred Option?

Do not have an interim review of Highland Forest and Woodland Strategy 2006 and wait for full review in five years. Do not offer supplementary guidance and rely instead on enhanced consideration of tree and woodland issues at planning application stage particularly through new major applications process (assessment on a case by case basis).

Q.35

Do you agree with our Preferred Option If not, please tell us why.

Do you prefer the stated alternative?

Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?

Minerals

Minerals are important natural resources with an economic value. However, their inappropriate extraction and processing can also have an environmental cost. Demand for Highland's principally hard rock and sand and gravel resources are cyclical and largely development industry dependent. There are unlikely to be deficiencies in supply within the period of this Plan. Therefore, we believe that its planning policy should concentrate on safeguarding, improving and possibly extending existing reserves / operations.

What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- safeguard all economically significant mineral reserves from incompatible development;
- create a buffer zone around quarries so that incompatible uses such as housing are not located too close to quarries; and
- expect all new and extension minerals developments to deliver a package of mitigation and restoration that will not damage:
 - the local environment;
 - residential amenity; and
 - infrastructure capacities.

What is an alternative to this Preferred Option?

The Council could specifically identify sites for new quarries or broader areas of search could be mapped which would show economically significant mineral reserves where they occur in areas of few environmental and other constraints.

Q.36 *Do you agree with our Preferred Option? If not, please tell us why.
Do you prefer the stated alternative?
Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?*

A Healthier Highlands

Open Space and Physical Activity

High quality, fit for purpose, accessible open spaces help to enhance the Highland area as a place in which to live and work. They can enhance the feel of the local area and provide opportunities for people to meet up and to take part in physical activity. Poor quality open space will fail to create distinctiveness in an area, support a healthy lifestyle or help to create a feeling of community safety. We have recently updated our guidance on open space provision and it is important that this is now included in our Local Development Plan.

We also believe it is important that where possible greenspaces link together to create a green network. Green networks have the potential to deliver a range of benefits for both people and wildlife as they can contribute to delivering sustainable economic growth and adaptation to climate change. We are working with Scottish Natural Heritage to define green frameworks within the area between Inverness and Nairn and these will be identified in the finalised A96 Corridor Framework. In the future these green network areas will be mapped across the Highlands.

The Highland Physical Activity and Sport Strategy aims to encourage physical activity throughout Highland in partnership with NHS Highland and a number of other key partners. We have in place a Facilities Planning Model which identifies where new or improved sports facilities are needed, and it is important that this is used to assess the potential for new developments to deliver some of these facilities.

What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- have a Highland wide policy which will protect open space and where appropriate improve open space through the use of developer contributions;
- put in place a policy to make sure that our supplementary guidance on Open Space in New Residential Development is used in places where additional pressure on open space is caused by new development;
- identify opportunities for green networks and the role that they play in improving opportunities for access and open space provision; and
- ensure that the Facilities Planning Model, which identifies where additional facilities are desirable, is taken into account when we decide on planning applications.

The Council has not identified any reasonable alternatives to the Preferred Option on this issue.

Q.37

***Do you agree with our Preferred Option If not, please tell us why.
Do you prefer the stated alternative?
Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?***

Access to the Outdoors

Access to the outdoors is important to Highland for leisure, recreation and tourism and it can help to maintain a healthy lifestyle. The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 formalised the access rights to the outdoors across Scotland and to aid the Council in meeting the aspirations of the Act the Council have produced an Access Strategy which aims to:

- ◆ develop a comprehensive access network for a wider range of abilities and interest;
- ◆ encourage local communities and user groups to work in partnership with land managers in the development of better facilities and to support rural economies;
- ◆ provide access opportunities which conserve and enhance local character and provide clear economic, environmental and social benefits compatible with the themes of the Community Plan; and
- ◆ remove barriers to the exercise of general access rights and build links so that everyone is able to enjoy and explore the Highlands to the best of their ability.

To support the implementation of the Access Strategy we have produced Core Path Plans. These set out where important paths have been identified by members of the public which promote wider access to the countryside and in and around the villages, towns and city in Highland. These plans are not yet formally part of our Local Development Plans, and we need to ensure that they carry weight in decision making.

What is our Preferred Option for dealing with these Issues?

We think we should:

- make sure that our Core Path Plans are adopted as supplementary guidance to the Local Development Plan and used effectively when decisions are being taken on planning applications;
- protect access rights and improve provision for access to the outdoors;
- encourage developers to take account of access issues when new proposals are being brought forward; and
- support the long distance routes, due to the economic benefits that these bring to the Highlands.

The Council has not identified any reasonable alternatives to the Preferred Option on this issue.

Q.38

***Do you agree with our Preferred Option? If not, please tell us why.
Do you prefer the stated alternative?
Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?***

6. Getting Involved

This document sets out the main options for planning policy in Highland for the next twenty years. We would like you to tell us what you think about each of our issues which we have outlined above and about how you have found the consultation on the Main Issues Report. You may wish only wish to comment on some, not all, of the issues.

It would also be useful to indicate whether we have missed any key issues.

You can send us comments via e-mail devplans@highland.gov.uk

Fax 01463 702298

Letter Director of Planning and Development
The Highland Council
Freepost SCO5568
Inverness
IV3 5BR

These comments must be made by 5pm on Monday 9th November 2009.

You can also come to tell us your views at the following locations:

31st August 2009	The Assembly Rooms, Wick
2nd September 2009	Durness Village Hall, Durness
3rd September 2009	Town Hall, Thurso
9th September 2009	Lochaber House, Fort William
11th September 2009	Community Centre, Portree
15th September 2009	Ullapool Village Hall, Ullapool
16th September 2009	Duthac Centre, Tain
21st September 2009	Blairbeg Hall, Drumnadrochit
23rd September 2009	Community Centre, Gairloch
24th September 2009	Mallaig and Morar Community Centre, Mallaig
2nd October 2009	Community Centre, Nairn
5th October 2009	Town House, Inverness
6th October 2009	Town Hall, Dingwall
9th October 2009	Community Centre, Golspie

Appendix: Suggested policy approach for development in the wider Countryside

Suggested Highland wide policy for dealing with proposals in the wider countryside as set out in our most recent Local Plans:

“Outwith Settlement Development Areas, development proposals will be assessed for the extent to which they:

- are considered acceptable in terms of design;
- are sympathetic to existing patterns of development in the area;
- are compatible with landscape character and capacity;
- avoid, where possible, the loss of locally important croft land; and
- account for drainage constraints or can otherwise be adequately serviced and do not involve undue public expenditure or infrastructure out of keeping with the rural character of the area.

Development proposals may be supported if they are judged to be not significantly detrimental under the terms of this policy. In considering proposals, regard will also be had to the extent to which they would help, if at all, to support communities in fragile areas in maintaining their population and services by helping to repopulate communities and strengthen services.”

Glossary

Access Rights – Part 1 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 gives everyone statutory access rights to most land and inland water. People only have these rights if they exercise them responsibly by respecting people's privacy, safety and livelihoods, and Scotland's environment.

Accessibility - The ability of people to have access to goods, services, employment and other facilities.

Affordable housing and housing for varying needs - can be broadly defined as housing of a reasonable quality that is affordable to people on modest incomes. See the councils affordable housing SPG for further guidance.

Allocation – Land identified in a local plan as appropriate for a specific use or mix of uses.

Biomass – biological material derived from living, or recently living organisms. In the context of biomass for energy this is often used to mean plant based material, but biomass can equally apply to both animal and vegetable derived material.

Brownfield site - A site which has previously been developed or used for some purpose which has ceased.

Coastal Zone – For the purposes of our Coastal Development Strategy within 1 km of the coast and the inshore marine area out to 3 nautical miles

Culverts – a conduit used to enclose a flowing body of water. It may be used to allow water to pass underneath a road, railway, or embankment for example.

Common Grazings – land held in common by neighbouring crofts, normally a large area of rough hill pasture, used to graze animals and to take peat/seaweed if available.

Developer Contributions – Payments made to us or another agency, or work in kind, to help improve the infrastructure (for example, roads, open space, waste-water treatment, restoring worked-out mineral sites) so that the development can go ahead.

Development Plan – sets out how land could be used over the next few years. By law the Council need to produce a development plan for the whole area

Development Plan Scheme – The document setting out the Council's intentions for preparing development plans in the next few years.

District Heating Schemes – the distribution of heat energy around a community or district through combined heat and power generation. Electricity generated by the CHP plant is also supplied to residents with excess sold to the grid.

Effective Housing Land Supply – Identified land which is free or expected to be free of development constraints in the plan period under consideration.

Energy from Waste (EfW)– Energy that is recovered by thermally treating waste i.e. incinerating.

Fragile areas - Areas which are in decline or in danger of becoming so as a consequence of remoteness and socio-economic factors, such as population loss, erosion of services and facilities and lack of employment opportunities.

Grazings Committees – have responsibility for making and regulating stock numbers and other matters affecting ‘the fair exercise’ of their joint rights.

Hinterland – areas of land around settlements that fall under pressure from commuter driven housing development

Housing Market Areas – A geographical area which is relatively self-contained in terms of housing demand.

Housing Requirement – The number of housing units for which land must be identified to meet future demand.

In-migration – to move into or come to live in a region or community especially as part of a large-scale and continuing movement of population

Inbye Land – normally arable ground on which the crofter’s house is usually built.

Infrastructure – The basic services and facilities needed to support development. These include road access and water and sewerage facilities.

In-Vessel Composting – Shredded waste is placed inside a chamber or container through which air is forced. This speeds up the composting process.

Landfill/form - Landfill being an area of land identified for the deposit of waste. Landform being then deposit of waste on or above the existing contours of the ground.

Landscape Character – The distinct and recognisable pattern of landscape elements that occurs consistently in a particular area, and how these are perceived by people, that makes one landscape different from another.

Main Strategic Routes – Transport routes which are vital for local communities.

Marine Renewable Energy – the generation of electricity from wave, tidal or (off-shore) wind resources, as appropriate to a location.

Material Recycling Facility – A site provided by the local authority for local residents to dispose of bulky household waste, garden waste and recyclable materials.

Micro-generation – the production of energy on the smallest of scales, for individual buildings or communities.

Mitigation – works to reduce the effects of an adverse action.

Mixed Use – This refers to the practice of allowing more than one type of use on a site. This can for example mean a combination of housing, business, and community uses, or that any of these uses are suitable on the site. The Plan specifies the appropriate uses in each case.

Non-Renewable Resources - Resources that will run out and cannot be replaced. Non-renewable energy sources include coal, gas and oil.

Open Space – Areas of public open space within SDAs which are greenspace cherished by the local community and which Local Plans specifically allocate to safeguard them from development. The Council has prepared an SPG on Open Space.

Previously used land - includes brownfield sites, and sites where redevelopment proposals will need to consider impacts of existing activities, includes potentially contaminated sites

Proposal - An intended action of significance to the Plan area, to be carried out by The Council itself or in partnership with other public agencies and private bodies.

Proposed Plan – This document will be developed from the Main Issues Report and consultation responses received at that stage. It essentially forms the plan that Highland Council would wish to see adopted and will require to be fully consulted upon. At this stage the Proposed Plan will have some materiality in relation to planning applications.

Regeneration – to improve the physical and economic prospects of an area that has experienced decline

Renewables – technologies that utilise renewable sources for energy generation

Restoration – A process of returning land and/or buildings to a state comparable to that prior to development/degradation.

Scottish Planning Policy - Statements of the Scottish Government's policies on national land use and other planning matters, such as housing, transport and green belts.

Settlement Development Areas (SDAs) – Areas defined in and around certain existing settlements, being the preferred areas for most types of development.

Settlement Hierarchy – The definition of settlements, for example as 'regional', 'sub regional' or 'local' centres, depending on the size of their population and the services they contain (for example, education, health, transport and retail).

Settlement Strategy – A justified overview of the distribution of development and roles of settlements.

Settlements – Groups of houses, some that do and some that don't have facilities, identified through the settlement hierarchy. You can find a more detailed definition in the 'Development Plan Policy Guideline Housing in the Countryside'.

Spatial Strategy – should encapsulate the headline changes that the Plan seeks to achieve and provide locational guidance for new development

Strategic Development Site – sites identified as providing opportunity for large scale investment providing for the economic growth of the area

Strategic Infrastructure - This is major investment in large-scale infrastructure (see above). This can include main roads, major junctions, water reservoirs, waste-water treatment works, pumping stations, secondary schools and hospitals.

Sustainable - something that will last because it has tackled its current and longer-term environmental, social and economic effects and does not rely on non-renewable resources.

Transport Infrastructure – Transport services and facilities needed to allow development to take place, including; roads, bus services, rail and ferry links.

Viability – a measure of the capacity to attract ongoing investment, for maintenance, improvement and adaptation to changing needs.

Vision Statement – a broad statement of how the development of an area could and should occur and matters that may affect that development.

Waste Management Facilities – Facilities for the sorting, recycling, treatment and disposal of municipal and commercial waste.

Water Bodies - Places where water is found such as rivers, burns, lochs, ponds, boggy wet land, water held under the ground and coastal waters.

Wild land – These areas also offer qualities of remoteness, a relative lack of evidence of human activity or change, a seeming high degree of naturalness, and a sense of enclosure or space.

Useful Documents

A96 Growth Corridor Development Framework – <http://www.highland.gov.uk/businessinformation/economicdevelopment/regeneration/a96-corridor-masterplan.htm>

Access Strategy - <http://www.highland.gov.uk/leisureandtourism/what-to-see/countrysideaccess/accessstrategy.htm>

Active Travel Masterplans -
www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/roadsandtransport/transportplanning/ActiveTravelMasterplans.htm

Aquaculture Framework Plans -
<http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/planning/coastalplanning/aquacultureframeworkplans/>

Coastal Development Strategy – www.highland.gov.uk/planning/hcnds

Core Path Plans – <http://www.highland.gov.uk/leisureandtourism/what-to-see/countrysideaccess/corepathplans.htm>

Corporate Plan – <http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourcouncil/corporateplan/>

Crofting Reform Bill – <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/05/11145108/0>

Dounreay Planning Framework –
<http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/planning/developmentplans/localplans/dounreay-planning-framework.htm>

Highland and Islands Enterprise Operating Plan –
<http://www.hie.co.uk/operating-plan-2009-2012.htm>

Highland Forest and Woodland Strategy 2006 –
<http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/agriculturefisheriesandforestry/treesandforestry/highland-forest-and-woodland-strategy.htm>

Highland Physical Activity and Sport Strategy –
<http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourcouncil/news/newsreleases/2008/June/2008-06-10-01.htm>

Housing Needs and Demand Assessment –
<http://www.highland.gov.uk/livinghere/housing/housingstrategiesandinitiatives/housingneedsassessment.htm>

Inner Moray Firth Ports and Sites Strategy 2006 –
<http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/planning/developmentplans/localplans/inverness-development-briefs-and-framework-plans.htm>

Land Reform Act 2003 –
http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/acts2003/en/aspn_20030002_en_1.htm

Local Housing Strategy –
<http://www.highland.gov.uk/livinghere/housing/housingstrategiesandinitiatives/>

Local Transport Strategy –
www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/roadsandtransport/transportplanning/localtransportstrategy.htm

Marine Spatial Planning – <http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/planning/coastalplanning/>

National Forest Land Scheme – <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/nfls>

National Planning Framework 2 – <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/07/02105627/0>

Nigg Development Masterplan – <http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/planning/nigg.htm>

Pentland Firth Tidal Energy Project –
<http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/planning/energyplanning/renewbleenergy/default.htm>

Renewable Energy Strategy –
<http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/planning/energyplanning/renewbleenergy/default.htm>

Scottish Forestry Strategy – <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/sfs>

Single Outcome Agreement – <http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourcouncil/soa/>

Strategic Transport Projects Review – <http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/stpr>

Waste Strategy – www.highland.gov.uk/yourcouncil/news/newsreleases/2007/June/2007-06-28-0.htm

Water Framework Directive – <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/Water/WFD>