

THURSO WESTERN EXPANSION AREA

Development Brief

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Draft Development Brief

Purpose

This Brief is intended to guide the development of a significant area of land at Pennyland on the west side of Thurso, in line with the provisions of the Caithness Local Plan. It sets out a detailed development framework, including layout and design principles, servicing requirements and environmental factors.

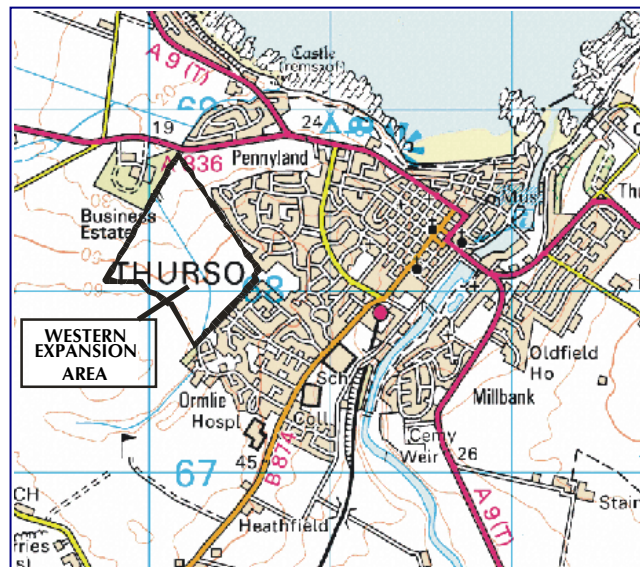


Figure 1: Site Location

Procedure

The Council, in consultation with the other landowner/developer interests, will prepare a Protocol governing developer contributions to accompany this Brief. This will encompass essential developer requirements for the common elements, i.e. the distributor road network, paths, foul and surface water drainage, landscaping, open space and play areas.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The land occupies a strategic location on the western approach to Thurso. It is situated on rising ground south of the A836 (see Fig. 1), between the Thurso Business Park and the Ormlie and Pennyland housing estates. Its north-westerly aspect offers views to Scrabster, Thurso Bay, Holburn Head and Scrabster Hill. The area offers a potentially high quality location for a planned expansion of the town.

1.2 In the **Caithness Local Plan** (adopted September 2002), the land is reserved mainly for housing and business purposes. Provision is also made for associated community and informal outdoor recreation facilities, including a network of paths. Paragraphs 13(b) and 37 of the Thurso Statement (Chapter 12) are the main policies covering the area. Detailed proposals are required to comply with the Framework Plan indicated in Figure 2. A Development Brief or Master Plan is necessary to indicate servicing, phasing and other basic development requirements as follows: -

- The construction of a link road from the A836 south through the area to Provost Cormack Drive in association with development phases.
- The encouragement of substantial early structural tree planting around the fringes and between phases.
- A hydrological assessment to determine the adequacy of any surface water drainage system.
- An overall design concept that respects and complements the topography, characteristics and constraints of the site and its surroundings and includes detailed design and specification of individual buildings.
- An archaeological evaluation prior to development. Developers/landowners are expected to enter into legal Agreements to secure necessary access roads, footpaths, open space/recreation facilities and restrict development over land that should otherwise remain open.

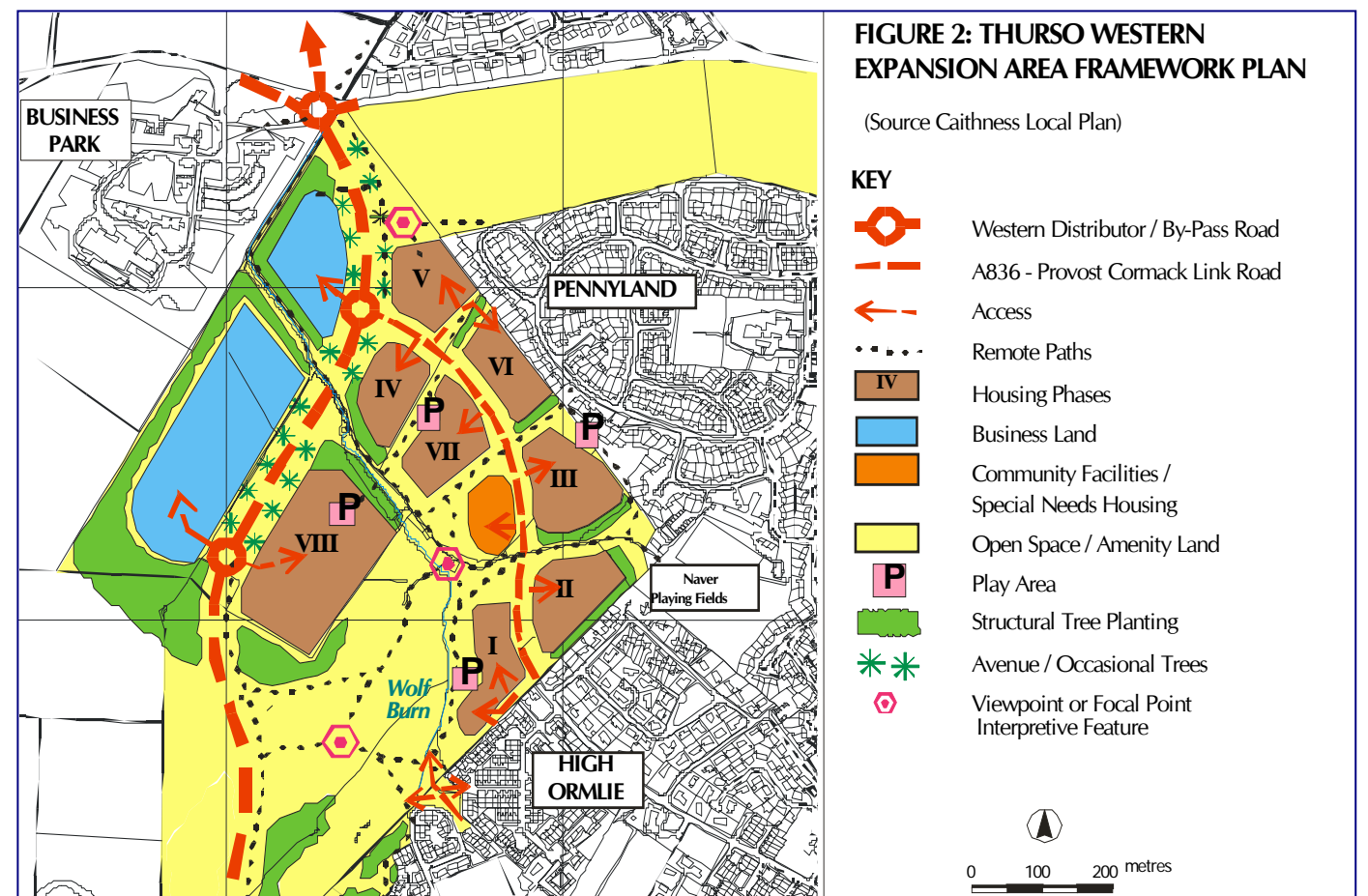
1.3 Whilst most of the land is reserved for medium to longer term development, the Thurso area is experiencing a significant upsurge in the demand for housing, mainly in relation to increased decommissioning activity at the Dounreay nuclear establishment. There is also a need to continue to offer high quality business land to accommodate associated activities and to help diversify the local economy. As such, there is now a need to bring forward detailed guidance for the development of the land.

1.4 The principal development opportunities are for 275 to 300 houses in five main phases and a major expansion to the Thurso Business Park with associated

distributor/access roads, landscaping, open space and path networks. More significant outdoor recreation, leisure and tourist related development potential exists over adjoining land to the east and west, which will be the subject of separate consideration from this draft Brief.

1.5 Most of the land forms part of Pennyland Farm, which is no longer worked as a single agricultural unit. The Thurso Bay Trading Company (see Figure 3) owns the farm. The Highland Council owns the remaining land known as Pennyland South, which includes a mainly overgrown part of the Ormlie Moors. This is a locally important area of informal recreational and wildlife interest, which also contains a number of recorded archaeological features, significantly in the vicinity of the Wolf Burn. The area contains no designated nature conservation areas, but three Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are located relatively close to the western margins. While the development sites do not directly affect these, it is important that any potential disturbance to the SSSI during the building phase is identified and mitigated against early on in the process. Accordingly, developers should consult with Scottish Natural Heritage when preparing detailed proposals.

1.6 The former Caithness District Council acquired just over 10 ha. of land at Pennyland South, adjacent to Ormlie, in the late 1980's. This should have been developed to meet the need for low cost housing, but changes in funding regulations prevented public sector development. This land is covered by the provisions of paragraph 13(b) in the Thurso Statement of the Local Plan. This retains the original principle to accommodate a proportion of affordable housing needs, including private plots with Rural Home Ownership Grant support and rented accommodation, possibly for management by a housing association. This area has scope to accommodate a significant amount of the **affordable housing requirement across the land as a whole (25%)**. However, a more even distribution or integration of affordable housing across the area is not precluded. Half of the affordable housing provision should be for low cost home ownership, aimed at attracting economically active people to the area and providing a mix of tenures. Land should also be reserved for rented accommodation to meet future needs when funding permits.



1.7 The social, economic and physical regeneration of the High Ormlie area to the south is being progressed under the Government's Social Inclusion Partnership initiative. Development over adjoining land should have regard to the major objectives of this initiative, notably:

- the need to encourage more economically active persons to live in the area and a mix of tenures;
- improving access to and from the area via the surrounding road and footpath networks, notably across the Moors, towards the Business Park and to Pennyland; and
- reducing traffic speeds and giving priority to pedestrians through a pilot *Home Zone*.

The ongoing work at Ormlie has also highlighted the need to create safe and secure high quality environments from the outset of development through the application of design principles promoted by initiatives such as *Safer Routes to School*, *Safe Kids* and *Secure By Design*.

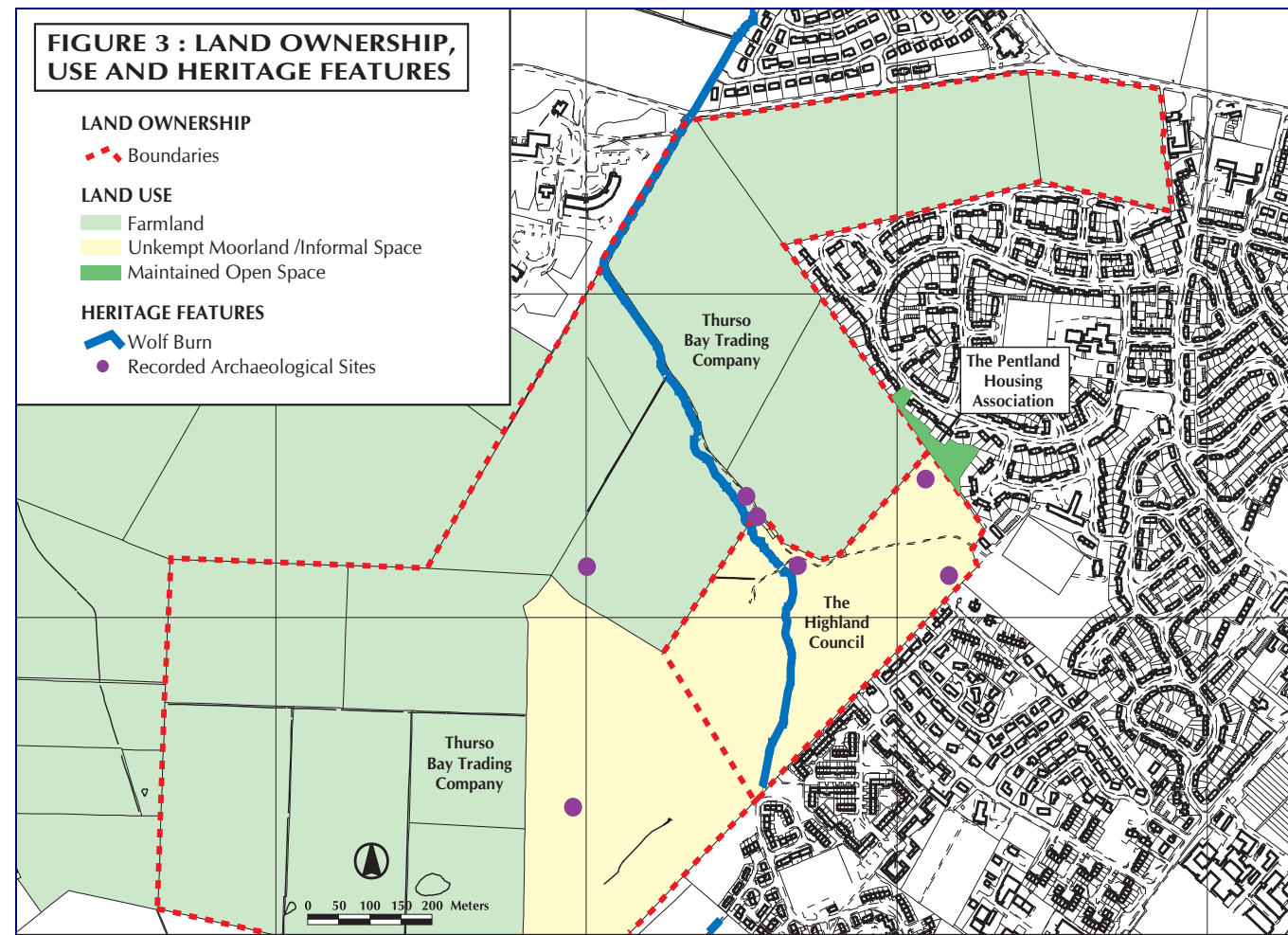


View towards Scrabster

2. DESIGN AND SUSTAINABLE CONSTRUCTION

2.1 To help achieve the fundamental objective of ensuring that development becomes sustainable, as required by Policy G2 in the Highland Structure Plan, development proposals will need to demonstrate that they represent good design. Developers are required to demonstrate that account has been taken of the following issues, which are considered to be important aspects of good design: -

- Location, transport and wider accessibility.
- Layout and orientation, aesthetic, accessibility, urban design and community safety concerns.
- Landscape, biodiversity and ecological concerns, including waterbodies and sustainable urban drainage systems.
- Sustainable construction concerns incorporating:
 - (a) design for 21st century performance (energy, water efficiency and livability);



- (b) design for health, using non-toxic materials, processes and products to address public health issues and pollution;
 - (c) waste minimisation, including design for re-use and recyclability;
 - (d) local and natural materials to address pollution and energy use (both associated transport energy and embodied energy).
- Use of renewable energy, including for heating purposes.

The Council is in the process of preparing full policy guidance on design and sustainable construction that will be available in due course as supplementary Development Plan Policy Guidelines to the Structure and Local Plans. SEPA also promotes their Habitat Enhancement Initiative to incorporate ecological design aspects into development proposals.

2.2 The design of new buildings should relate to the traditional structures of Thurso town, particularly their scale, orientation shape and materials. However, they

should also reflect their specific location, function and the present day, so that they appear appropriate to the place and represent contemporary design. This treatment should extend to all aspects of development, including access roads, car parks, pathways and building materials.

2.3 The generally north facing slope and relatively high elevation of the land requires special consideration of design to reduce the impact of exposure to the elements. Housing layouts should generally try to allow for north-south orientation of dwellings, with most habitable rooms generally facing south to maximise energy efficiency. Clustering of groups of houses on the higher more exposed land should also help to reduce the impact of climatic conditions on the development. The scope for use of renewable energy for heating purposes should be investigated. Grant aid could be available under the Government's renewable energy initiative to reduce the cost of installation of wood burning district heating and solar energy systems.

3. SERVICING

The topography of the area has a strong influence upon the servicing requirements for the land, including road gradients and both surface water and foul drainage by gravity. The main feature in this regard is the general slope of the land down hill from south to north and towards the Wolf Burn. The Council also encourages the use of road engineering techniques that give a high priority to pedestrians and cyclists, with the potential to create *Home Zones* from the outset. Early consultation with the Council's road engineering staff and with the Emergency Services is advised.



Current end of Provost Cormack Drive

Distributor or Main Service Access Roads

3.1 The extent and approximate alignment of the main distributor and access road network is indicated in Figure 4. Developers are required to undertake topographical and soil surveys across all of the development land covered by this Brief to help inform the precise alignment and detailed design of these roads. The principal roads should be capable of use as bus routes and the requirement for developers to provide bus lay-bys will be considered at the Road Construction Consent stage. The design of roads should accord with the Council's *Roads Guidelines for New Developments*. The key requirements for the main roads are set out in paragraphs 3.2 to 3.5 below.

Main link between Provost Cormack Drive and the A836 road

3.2 Whilst the proximity of the existing road network suggests that the initial phases of development should commence via an extension of Provost Cormack Drive north, the commencement of development from the A836 southwards is not precluded. This road should be constructed through the area in phases as indicated in the development Phasing Plan (Figure 5) and in the specific development requirements after paragraph 4.4 below. The northern part of this link will also serve as

the start of the Thurso Western Distributor/Bypass road. Developers are required to construct additional sections of this road and suitable junctions, as indicated, to serve as a service access for business and housing land. (See Local Plan, Chapter 12, paras. 15, 20, 28 & 29 - Appendix I).

3.3 Ultimately all junctions with the Western Distributor/Bypass should be roundabouts, particularly once the land is fully developed. Sufficient land should be reserved for this purpose. However, in certain circumstances the Council would be prepared to accept priority T-junctions as a temporary measure.

3.4 The Council as Planning and Roads Authority expect developers and landowners to make the necessary arrangements, including the entering into Planning or other legal Agreements and lodging of road bonds to secure completion of the distributor road network and associated works as early as possible. Contributions towards the A836 roundabout and the distributor road linking this with Provost Cormack Drive will be derived in relation to the level of development over housing sites H1 to H8 and the Community Uses/Specialist Needs Housing site. While the Council considers that early completion of the A836 roundabout is desirable, the provision of this from the outset in advance of the commencement of development at this end of the land will require special consideration of the Council, in consultation with the land owner/development interests.

- 3.5 Specific design requirements are as follows: -
- The roads should be 7.3 metres (m.) wide, except where remote paths intersect it where road narrowing traffic calming features should be provided.
 - Parallel paths should be 3 m. wide, as shared foot/cycle use is intended.
 - No direct frontage accesses to individual houses or other properties will be permitted.
 - There should be set back/landscape/amenity strips either side of the road a minimum of 20 m. on the Western Distributor/By-pass section and 6 to 10 m. on link road sections.
 - In constructing the Western Distributor/By-pass section an attempt should be made to retain traditional field enclosures, undertake appropriate earth mounding and landscape planting and avoid culverting or diversion of watercourses.
 - Set back /landscape/amenity areas should include foot/cycle paths, and earth mounding and occasional tree/shrub planting, as appropriate.
 - Boundary enclosures facing roads should be of similar height (up to 2 m.) and materials. The preference is for the construction of a wall using a combination of local stone and harled blockwork with stone coping on top. Developers should adhere to an overall agreed design. Alternatively, the provision of post and wire fencing and suitable tree/shrub/hedge planting close to the boundary would be acceptable, particularly along boundaries

adjacent to common landscaped areas. The use of timber screen fencing along these boundaries should be avoided.

- For amenity reasons and to minimise the impact of traffic noise/disturbance on proposed properties, it is necessary to specify building/setback lines from roads. These are indicated in 5.3 below.



Provost Cormack Drive to Henderson Street Link Road

3.6 This should be constructed to approximately 150 m. in length as part of Housing Phase 1A, which it will serve. This section of road will also allow the future provision of access to the rear of Lord Thurso and Meiklejohn Courts as part of the re-design and *Home Zone* proposals for High Ormlie. More specifically this link:

- should be 6 m. wide with 2 m. wide footpaths;
- any buildings should be set back at least 6 metres from the heel of the footpaths;
- the construction of boundary enclosures along the road frontage should generally be avoided;
- developers should provide traffic calming features that will allow use by emergency vehicles and service buses ;
- direct frontage access will be permitted to individual properties but turning areas will be required within their curtilages.

The completion of the remaining 100 m. to Henderson Street would allow full implementation of the *Home Zone* proposals. This will require separate funding or could possibly be linked with the development of future Housing Phases to be served off Henderson Street, which are not part of this Brief.

Service roads/culs-de-sac

- 3.7 In individual Housing Phases vehicular movement should be made convenient and safe by:
- careful design to avoid through traffic movements;
 - constructing roads to the appropriate size, alignment

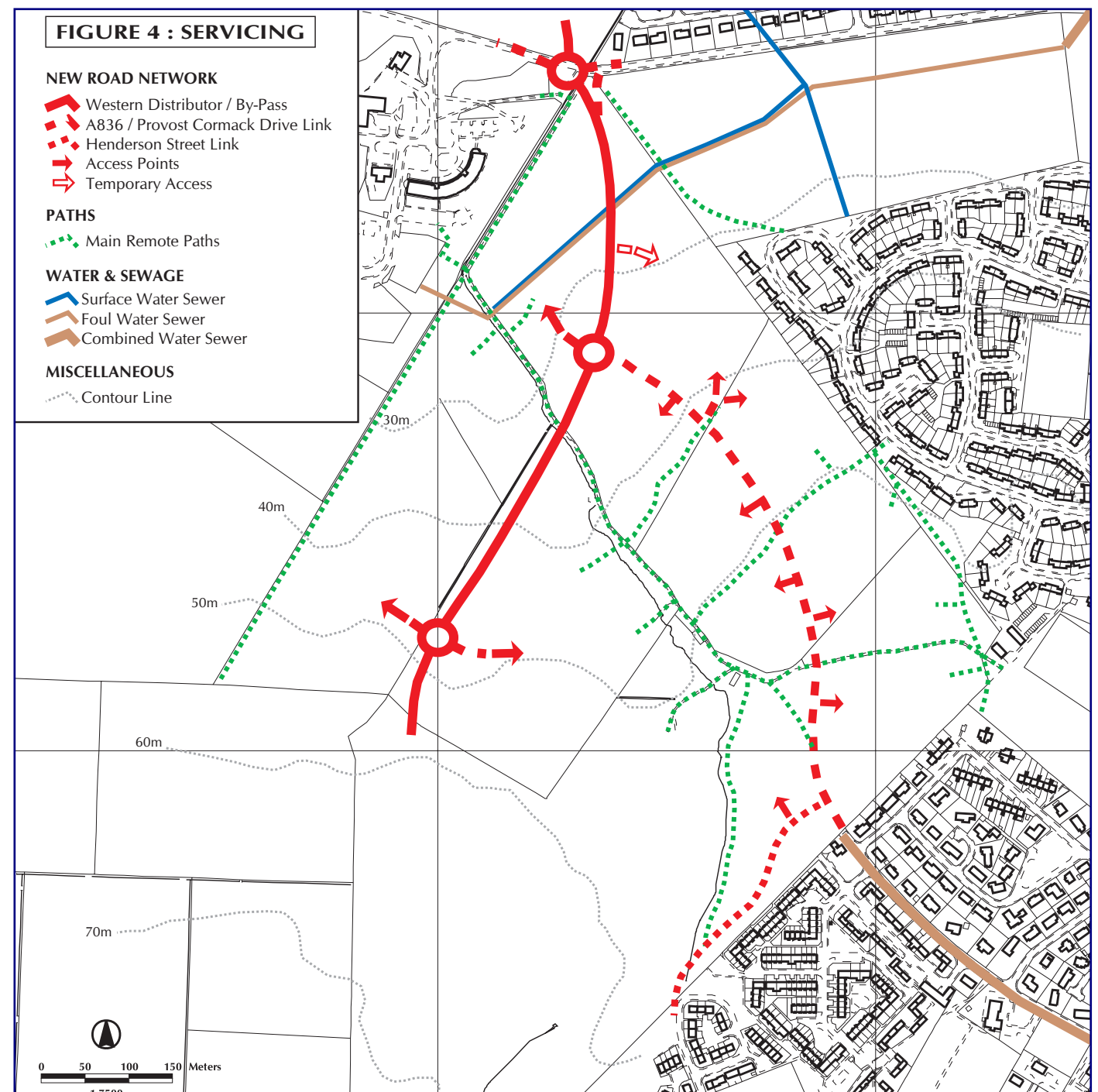
- and standard for the traffic they are intended to carry;
- making widespread use of short shared surface cul-de-sac for access to small groups of houses to allow traffic speeds to be kept to a minimum, i.e. 20 m.p.h. or lower; and
- calming/narrowing the entrances to culs-de-sac.

Path Network

3.8 It is important to relate new development to the landscape features from which the town developed, e.g. the coast, river and moorland. As such, the linking of these distinctive features with a framework of paths and retention of views is an objective for the continuing development of Thurso. This will help integrate the expansion of the town and encourage the use of outdoor

spaces. It could also lead to less reliance upon private cars for short journeys. The provision of a well-designed path network is therefore a key development priority for the Pennyland area based upon:

- the need to link with and improve part of the current informal network across Pennyland South and the Moors;
- community aspirations to link Ormlie and Pennyland with the Business Park and the Victoria Walk, partly to help residents maximise access to employment;
- the development of remote foot/cycle paths to and from the individual housing phases in line with local *Safer Routes to School* initiatives;
- the development of foot/cycle paths in parallel to the main distributor/access road network; and
- the potential development of bridle paths in relation



to the reuse of other parts of Pennyland Farm for tourism/recreation activities.



3.9 Path development works may be eligible for funding from a variety of public and private sector sources, including the Council's Access Project, SNH, Enterprise Company, Lottery, Integrated Land Management, Social Inclusion and community funds of private companies. However, developers of adjoining land are required to contribute towards such provision. Local community groups are encouraged to promote projects. The Thurso Community Council and Ormlie Partnership/Community Association have shown particular interest in the establishment and improvement of paths in the area.

Main remote paths and connections

3.10 The development or improvement of the following key routes are integral to the future use and functioning of the area: -

- John Kennedy Drive/Naver playing fields to Victoria Walk via Pennyland Drive and Rockwell Crescent - community interest/potential under the Highland Access Project with input from Community Council.
- Wolf Burn (Henderson Street to Business Park) - potential for community involvement or use as bridle path.
- Naver playing fields to Wolf Burn - community interest.
- Wolf Burn to Pennyland Drive - main route to primary school, developer contributions.
- Pennyland Farm to the Moors bridle path - developer led with other public funding.

3.11 All paths will require a good wearing surface initially, but part or the whole of paths (a), (c) and (d) may require to be brought up to a standard suitable for adoption and maintenance by the Council. They should be inviting to use and incorporate structure planting and, where appropriate, include the inspired and appropriate use of night lighting. In appropriate cases, developers are expected to contribute to longer term maintenance of

the paths and adjacent open spaces and will be expected to enter into legal or other formal agreements, as appropriate.

Paths adjacent to main roads

3.12 Developers are required to provide paths of 3 m. in width for shared foot/cycle use either adjacent to the road carriageway or separately within the landscape buffer/amenity strips parallel to the road.

Paths within each development phase

3.13 Developers will be responsible for providing paths within individual phases and for the links between them and the main path network. These should be:

- a minimum of 2 m. width within housing phases; and
- the main remote path links should range from 2 to 3 m. depending upon their intended use (i.e. 3 m. if for combined foot and cycle traffic).

Water Supply

3.14 Water supply is available nearby although connection to trunk water mains outwith the boundary of development requires an element of off site works. Contact Scottish Water for details.

Foul Drainage

3.15 All foul drainage should be directed to public sewers. The ability to connect into the existing network by gravity in the Provost Cormack Drive area may be limited to Housing Phases 1A and 1B. This requires to be investigated in detail by prospective developers. Otherwise the general method of foul drainage would be to construct a main sewer along the length of the proposed distributor road network and to connect to the existing foul sewer at the north end, indicated on the Servicing map (Figure 4).

Surface Water Drainage

3.16 Provision should be made consistent with Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) in agreement with SEPA for the disposal of surface water within the land. This will include any necessary means of attenuation, mainly on the lower reaches of land and at locations that relate to the natural pattern of drainage. Such measures should be designed in accordance with the CIRIA Manual #.

3.17 In accordance with Planning Advice Note 61, development proposals will require a comprehensive hydrological survey and a drainage strategy for the land

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems Design Manual for Scotland & Northern Ireland



as a whole. This should indicate the types of measures to be agreed and how these will be integrated into the land and its surroundings together with evidence of soil conditions, run off calculations and good ecological practice. Prospective developers should be aware that a combination of a heavy clay pan and rock below the topsoil in this part of Thurso may cause localised percolation problems

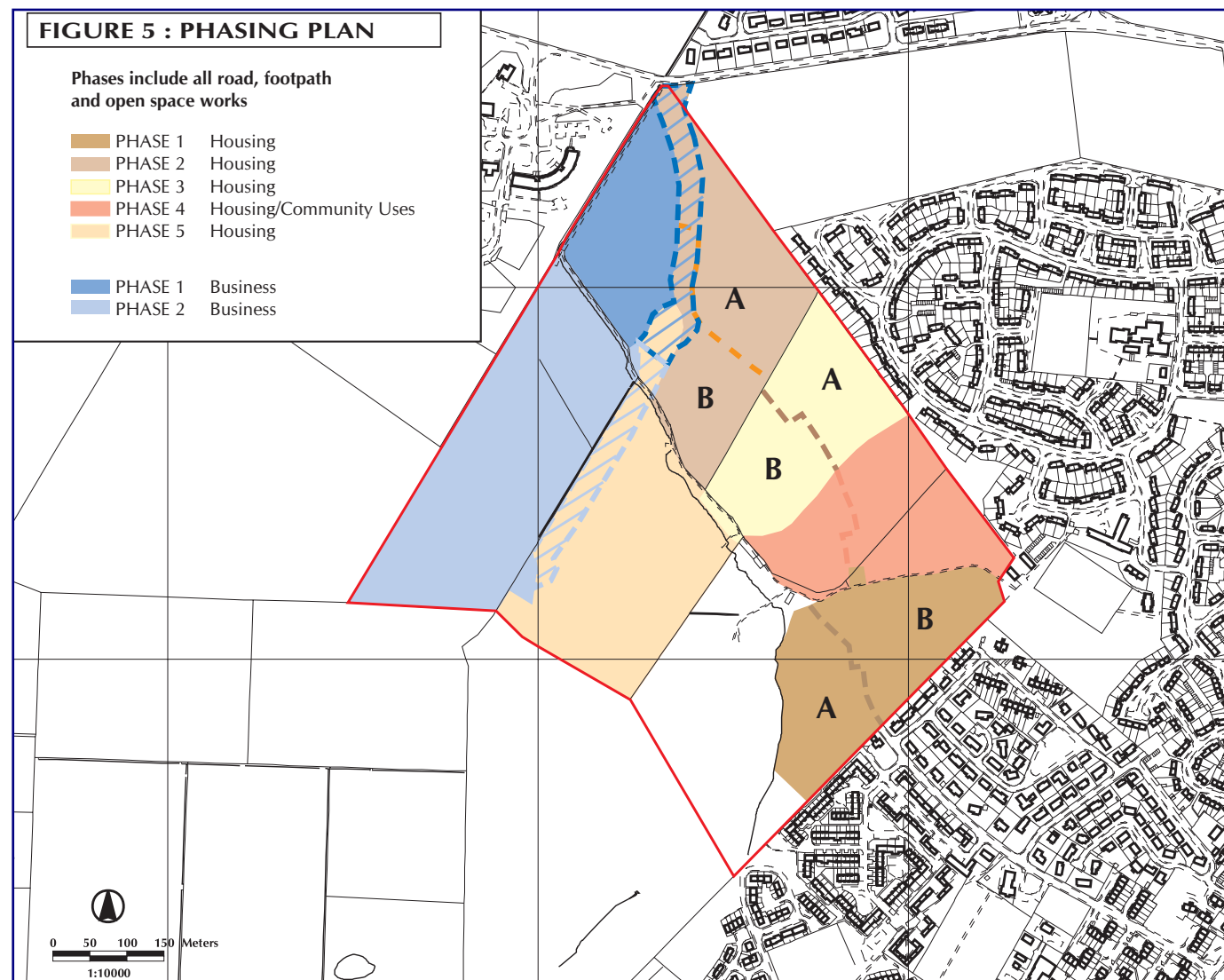
3.18 All the elements of the integrated scheme, which can reasonably be put in place in the early phases of development should be carried out to facilitate later phases. Detailed discussions with the Thurso office of SEPA will be necessary. The creation of water features on the lower farm land may offer local recreational, amenity and natural heritage value and/or could become a feature of the future business park extension.

Utility Services

Telecommunications (BT)

3.19 Thurso has a fully digital exchange, which can support all digital services, with the exception of ADSL at this present time. Preliminary advice suggests the Pennyland area is within limits from the exchange for ADSL, but the necessary equipment for this has not yet been installed. There are no plans in the near future for Thurso to be upgraded for ADSL.

3.20 ISDN2 is available from Thurso and the land should be within limits for this service. A detailed survey would confirm this. A fibre node is situated fairly close to the site with a few spare fibres existing. BT would cover the cost of providing additional fibre cable to meet



any customer demand for digital products as the cost is included in the product price.

3.21 Should any prospective customer require resilience, as is normally the case when the client wishes to provide a call centre, then additional network build to a second exchange may be required. A detailed survey would be carried out to determine costs payable by the customer. The on site copper network requirements would be dealt with by the BT Newsites Department.

Electricity (Scottish & Southern Electric)

3.22 There are no overhead power lines or underground cables passing through the area. Development can be serviced from existing electricity infrastructure in the surrounding area. However, some electrical reinforcement may be required at the Ormlie primary sub-station should business uses requiring a major power supply be proposed.

Gas

3.23 This development is towards the extremity of the existing (Transco) gas mains network in Thurso. The network would therefore require extension and reinforcement. In addition, the capacity of the local gas storage plant would need to be reviewed and improved. Once detailed plans are prepared a full supply proposal can be prepared with budget costing for economic assessment.

Renewable Energy

3.24 The Caithness Area Development Manager has advised that the area may be suitable for a district heating scheme using renewable energy and, as such, eligible for grant aid. In this respect, an independent consultant will be engaged to report on the possibility of burning local low-grade timber as the basis a district heating system for the area. Its use in other parts of Thurso will also be considered.

Construction Waste

3.25 Contractors should be aware of legislative requirements and SEPA guidance regarding the correct disposal of waste arising from a construction site and are required to contact that Agency for clarification on any matter prior to the commencement of work.

Education Facilities

3.26 Capacity exists at both Pennyland Primary School and Thurso High School to accommodate potential pupils from the suggested level of housing development. Developers should have high regard to the need to provide features that encourage safe walking and cycling to these schools.



View across Housing Phase 1 to Business Park

4. DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL and REQUIREMENTS BY PHASE

4.1 Reference should be made to the Phasing Plan (Figure 5) and Overall Layout (Figure 6). Individual development areas and specific requirements for each are described after paragraph 4.4 below.

4.2 In terms of road access, the commencement of Phases 1A and 1B would provide the shortest extension of the Provost Cormack Drive-A836 link road from south to north. Thereafter, Housing Phases H2, 3 and 5 and Business land B1 and B2 require the construction of the Western Distributor/By-pass and the commencement of the Provost Cormack Drive link road from the A836 south. The remaining land (Phase 4/ Areas H7 & C) can be served by subsequent extension of the link road in either direction. The precise phasing should be confirmed once a full topographical/level and layout survey of the land by developers determines how much of the area adjacent to Provost Cormack Drive can be drained by gravity to the existing networks in that vicinity.

4.3 Site capacities are based upon an average of 15 dwellings per hectare across the land, assuming that most properties are detached houses. However, where a higher proportion of semi-detached and other smaller properties are proposed, particularly where intended for affordable/low cost home ownership or rent, a density of up to 25 dwellings per hectare may be permitted.

4.4 The Council will encourage proposals from volume house builders or proposals where the detailed layout and house designs are put forward as part of a single planning application for each phase of development. In addition to providing consistency of design across the land, this approach will help to reduce the time taken to deal with a potentially large number of individual applications on a plot by plot basis.

Housing

H1: Phase 1A - 1.5 ha. for 25 to 30 houses

- Construct sections of link roads to A836 (100 metres) and Henderson Street (150 m.), including paths, etc.
- a significant proportion of the site should be developed for affordable housing, half of which should be for low cost home ownership, possibly private plots for sale (see table, right), through formal legal Agreements with the Council
- in northern part of site a cluster of houses would be appropriate
- set back west boundary 20 m. from Wolf Burn
- no buildings within 10 metres of south east boundary
- retain stone wall along south east boundary
- contributions to provision of play area to the north
- limited additional works to intervening open land, except improvement of existing and formation of new linking footpaths and occasional tree planting
- plant trees along south east boundary
- development should commence within the time period to be specified in the sale conditions.

H2: Phase 1B - 2.1 ha. for 30 to 35 houses

- Construct approx. 120 m. of link road with associated paths
- a significant proportion of the site should be developed for affordable housing, half of which should be for low cost home ownership, possibly private plots for sale (see table, right) through formal legal Agreements with the Council
- the height of buildings towards the south east boundary should not exceed one storey and one and a half storeys across the remainder of the site
- no buildings within 10 m. of south east boundary
- set back north boundary 5 m. minimum from existing track (to be upgraded for walking and cycling to a width of at least 3 m. possibly as part of a separate community led project)
- construct a pinch point/narrowing of link road where the path intersects it
- contributions to provision of play area to the north of Phase 1A (H1), as well as necessary path works and open space treatment on approaches to it
- plant trees along south east boundary
- development should commence within the time period to be specified in the sale conditions.

H3: Phase 2A - 2.6 ha. for 40 houses

- Construct new access from the A836, safeguard land for full roundabout at this point and construct the first 200 m. of Western Distributor/Bypass part of the road to a temporary access (costs could be spread if Phase 1 of the Business Park expansion is serviced at the same time)
- safeguard land for proper access from link road along southern boundary
- provide remote path link to the north to connect with the path described in 3.10(a) above

- retain trees along north east boundary
- plant trees along south eastern boundary.

H4: Phase 2B -1.3 ha for 20 houses

- Construct approx. 230 m. of distributor roads with associated paths from point of temporary access to Phase 2B - consider spreading costs between Housing Phases 3A & B (H5 & 6)
- form permanent access to Phase 2A (H3)
- roundabout construction necessary if Business Park extension Phase I commences at the same time

Map Ref.	PHASE	Area (ha.)	No. of dwellings	No. of affordable houses (25% overall)
H1	1A	1.5	25 - 30	} 28 - 33
H2	1B	2.1	30 - 35	
H3	2A	1.5	20 - 25	3 - 4
H4	2B	2.6	40	8
H5	3A	1.3	20	4
H6	3B	1.85	30	6
H7	4	2.6	40	8
H8	5	4.8	70	14
Totals		18.25	275 - 290	70 - 75#

The figures indicated are for guidance purposes as final number of affordable houses will depend upon the outcome of the detailed site layout feasibility and subsequently the level of development approved.

- construct paths of up to 3 m. width to the south west and north west within open land corridors
- leave areas of at least 5 m. either side of paths as amenity open space, except along south west boundary
- safeguard land for play area/kick pitch and contribute to its development
- retain stone wall as south west boundary
- plant trees along south west and south east boundaries.

H5: Phase 3A - 1.84 ha. for 30 houses

- Construct approx. 70 m. of link road with associated paths
- retain trees along north east boundary
- plant trees along south eastern boundaries, within individual house curtilages
- path link towards Pennyland Drive and to play area between Phases 2B & 3B (H4 & H6)
- contribute to play area to north of Phase 4 (H7).

H6: Phase 3B - 1.5 ha. for 20 to 25 houses

- Construct approx. 90 m. of link road with associated paths
- safeguard land and contribute to development of play/small kick-pitch area adjoining Phase 2B (H4)
- retain stone wall along south west boundary

- construct path link towards Wolf Burn (and approx. 80 m. of the path parallel to the Burn to the south west)
- plant trees along south west and south east boundaries.

H7: Phase 4 - 2.6 ha. for 40 houses

- Construct approx. 50 m. of link road with associated paths (see also C: Community Uses etc. , below)
- contribute to construction path of 3 m. width to the north, within open land/corridor, mainly for use as a route to and from Pennyland Primary School
- the paths to the south and east could be constructed as a community led project
- leave areas of at least 5 m. either side of paths as amenity open space
- contribute to development of play area to north, essentially as a replacement for existing facilities adjacent to Pennyland Drive
- plant trees along southern and eastern boundaries
- on Council land the affordable housing element requires a formal legal Agreement.

H8: Phase 5 - 4.8 ha. for 70 houses

- Construct a further 350 m. of distributor road, possibly jointly with Business Park expansion Phase 2, with associated parallel path (roundabout essential if jointly serviced)
- provide play area
- provide connecting remote paths to main path network
- plant thick belt of trees (up to 20 m. wide) between the north east boundary and the Wolf Burn.

Community Uses/ Specialist Housing

C - 0.8 ha. with scope to create a focus for community uses (church, hall, medical/dental practice) and/or specialist housing (sheltered/ amenity/care home/other supported accommodation). Alternatively, the potential for a family pub/restaurant would be considered should the community uses/ specialist housing accommodation fail to be developed within (specify time period)

(N.B. It is not essential that this area is developed in advance of Housing Phases 2 to 4, but the associated road link should be completed no later than or in conjunction with Housing Phase 4.)

- Construct approx. 90 m. of link road with associated paths to just beyond the intersection or pinch point of the major path between the Moors and Pennyland. The opportunity exists to combine this section of road with the section serving Housing Phase 4 (H7) - i.e. 140m. spread over 2 areas)
- provide links to the amenity area to the west which should be developed separately as a place of interest at the intersection of main paths with preservation and interpretation of archaeological features and

suitable landscaping (see 5.1 below)

- contribute to provision of paths to the north and south at 3 m. wide and a minimum of 5 m. of open space either side
- path to the west to be constructed by others possibly as part of community led project.

Business Park Extension

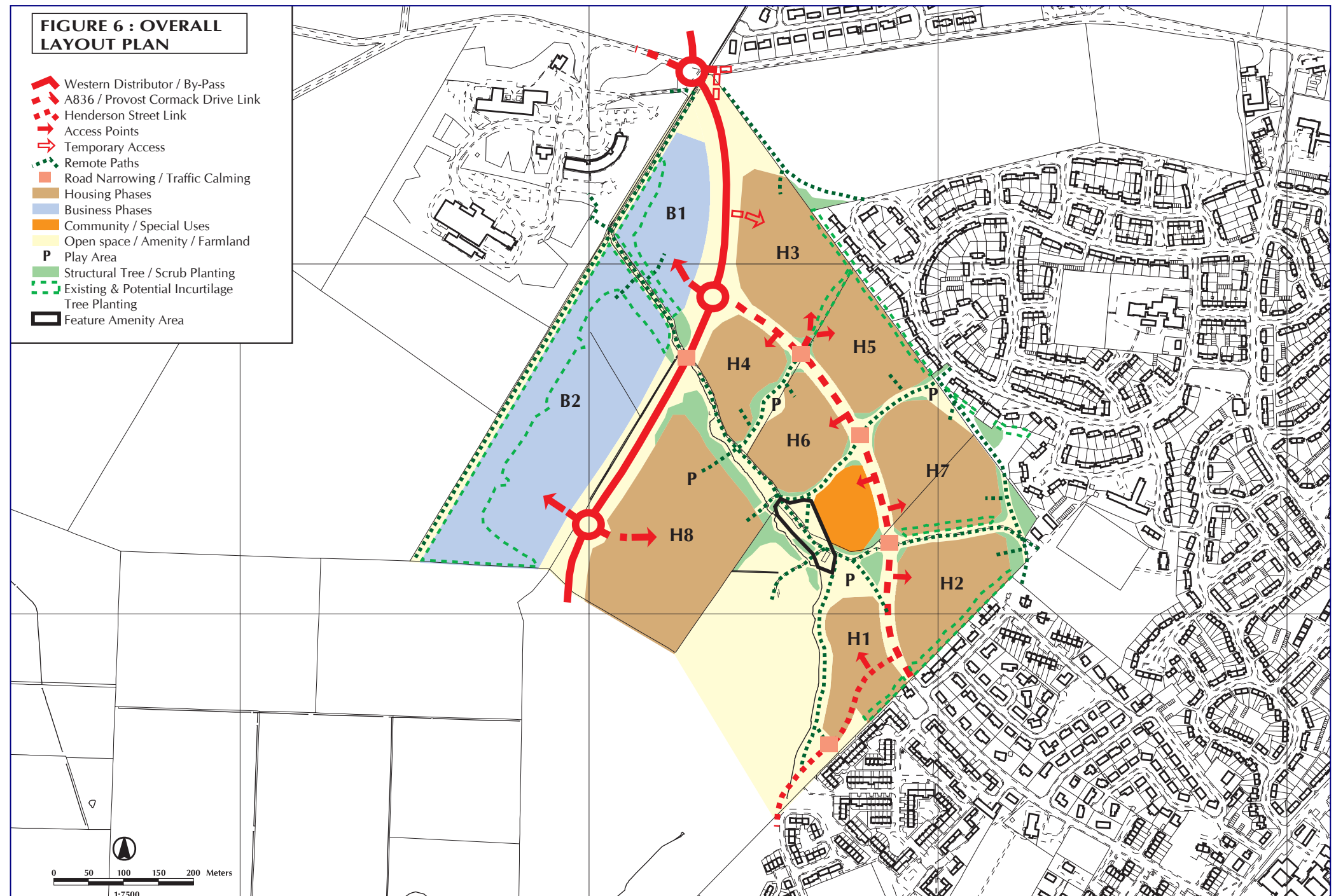
B1: Phase 1 - 2.1 ha. for business and light industrial uses (see 5.16) and a business/ conference/ training centre, possibly with supporting residential accommodation (lodge hotel)

- Construct distributor road network of at least 350 m. long (possibly jointly with Housing Phases 2A to 3B) plus roundabout junction with link road

- a statement of traffic impact should also consider whether there is a need to improve the existing Business Park access, possibly through the provision of a road link with expansion area
- consider setting aside an area at the north end of the site for surface water attenuation as a possible landscaping feature
- retain stone wall along south west boundary
- plant trees in belt of at least 10 m. wide adjacent to south west and north west boundaries
- scope exists for a bridle path to be constructed on the line of the existing track and extend along the north west edge of the Business Park Phase 2 (B2)
- create a path up to 3 m. wide for foot/cycle use as an extension of the Wolf Burn path, plus a bridge link across the burn into existing business park.

B2: Phase 2 - 6.9 ha. for business and light industrial uses

- Construct a further 350 m. of distributor road (possibly jointly with Housing Phase 5 - H8), with associated paths - roundabout essential
- plant trees in belt of at least 10 m. wide adjacent to north west and north east boundaries, thicker belt to south west and avenue planting and mounding to south east
- retain stone wall along the south east boundary
- provide remote path links.





Above: existing open space and play area at Pennyland Drive that will provide a key path access into the expansion area.

Below: view towards business land adjacent to existing Business Park.



Typical vegetation on the Moors area

5. OTHER REQUIREMENTS, DETAILED STANDARDS & DESIGN GUIDANCE

All Uses

Archaeology

5.1 There are five recorded archaeological sites within the area, as indicated in Figure 3 (details also available from THC Archaeology Unit). It is also possible that there will be further yet unrecorded sites, particularly on ground that has been grazed in recent years. As such, there will be a requirement to undertake archaeological evaluations prior to development to define the presence/absence, nature, depth, extent and importance of any archaeological remains.

- Developers must consult the Highland Council Archaeology Unit and the Area Planning and Building Control Manager prior to any planning application being lodged.
- Developers should provide an assessment of the archaeological importance of the site by as part of any application.
- In an area adjacent to the Wolf Burn important archaeological features offer scope for a feature focal point with interpretation, together with directional sign-posting, seating, path and footbridge at the intersection of key paths. This has scope to be implemented as a separate project that could qualify for financial assistance from a range of public sources.

Building Lines

5.2 Any permanent buildings should generally be set back at least:

- **30 m.** from the Western Distributor/Bypass road edge;
- **16 to 20 m.** from the Provost Cormack Drive/A836 Link road edge (i.e. 10 m. from boundary enclosure facing that road frontage);
- **6 m.** from the rear of footpaths adjacent to access roads or from the front or road side boundary of plots; and
- **10 m.** from the rear of houses to rear boundaries (see also NOTE under 5.7 below).

Boundary Treatment

5.3 The conservation and reconstruction of traditional local boundary materials and their use is preferred. Boundary treatment should be co-ordinated, particularly along main road frontages and remote path corridors and where facing public open spaces (see 3.5 above).

- Front boundary enclosures should generally not exceed 1 metre.

- Rear boundary enclosures should generally not exceed 2 metres.
- Where shared road and footpath surfaces are employed in the residential phases, there should be no front boundary enclosures (i.e. open plan). A strip of 1 m. in width back from the edge of the shared surface should also be safeguarded for the accommodation of utility services.

Landscaping/Planting

5.4 Key landscaping and areas for tree planting should be considered and designed as a whole. Developers are expected to produce a landscape framework based on the following:-

- Structural tree and shrub planting in common areas around the edge of most development phases to help integrate the development into the landscape.
- Apart from along the Wolf Burn and around the Business Park expansion areas, most structural planting should be carried out across the face of the slope to give a more horizontal emphasis.
- Preferred areas for planting are indicated in Figure 6.
- Planting in the Wolf Burn and main footpath corridors should provide a less formal or more natural environment that encourages wildlife habitats and bio-diversity. Such planting should also have regard for archaeological features.
- In appropriate locations within amenity areas adjacent to main distributor roads and associated footpaths, additional occasional tree/shrub planting is encouraged.
- All proposals for planting in common areas requires to be discussed further with the Council's Area TEC Services staff in respect of road safety and arrangements for future maintenance.
- Owners of existing trees on the Pennyland Drive edge of the land should be encouraged to retain them and measures agreed for their maintenance and longer term management.
- Retention of existing natural vegetation and additional tree/shrub planting within new house curtilages is encouraged, notably along the south eastern boundaries of Housing Phases 1A and 1B.
- An appropriate range of native species will be specified for all tree planting across the area. A high degree of management would be required initially to allow them to become established. Use of leylandi or similar species with potential to grow to a significant height in a short space of time will not be favoured.

Landscaping works should be to a high quality to withstand the testing climatic conditions and so that they do not develop an image of neglect due to excessive weathering.

Housing Layout & Design

5.5 Developers should have regard to the aspirations of the Scottish Executive for improving housing layout and building design, as set out in Planning Advice Note 67. This was published in February 2003. Copies can be obtained from the Scottish Executive by telephoning 0131 224 7543 or via their planning website at www.scotland.gov.uk/planning.

Secure By Design

5.6 Developers should follow the principles of Planning Advice Note (PAN) 46: Planning For Crime Prevention and the *Secure By Design* initiative in designing the housing layout. This includes suitable design and integration with open spaces, remote paths and adjoining built up areas.

Plot Ratio & Sizes

5.7 Plot ratio is expressed as the total ground floor building floorspace area (or building footprint) as a percentage of the total house plot area. As a guideline, the Council will normally expect a maximum plot ratio of 30%.

5.8 The minimum plot dimensions should generally be as follows:-

- Detached houses: depth 30 m., width 15 m.
- Semi-detached houses: depth 25 m., width 10 m.

Private Open Space

5.9 Within the curtilage of new houses developers should consider the provision of private garden space on the basis of the following:-

- Detached and Semi-Detached - 2.5 x ground floor area of house (minimum 100m²)*
- Terraced - 2.5 x ground floor area of house (minimum 70m²)*
- Flats - 25m² per 1 bedroom unit 40m² per 2 bedroom unit

NOTE: For house types marked * there should be a minimum of 10m from the back of the house to the rear boundary.

Privacy

5.10 The minimum acceptable distance between windows of habitable rooms that are directly facing each other is 18m. This distance may be reduced if the windows are at an angle or effective and appropriate screening is provided.

Daylighting

5.11 New development should not result in significant loss of daylight or overshadowing of any habitable or useable room within a neighbouring building.

Building Form & Scale

5.12 Houses with a broadly rectangular plan are encouraged, as they reflect traditional building forms. However, other forms of development are not excluded. In addition:

- underbuilding should be kept to a minimum;
- storm porches/extensions should have similar proportions/finishes to the houses; and
- building heights should generally not exceed 2 storeys.

Gable Design

5.13 The overall width of a gable should not be more than 2.5 times the height of wall from ground to eaves level and not less than the height of wall from ground to eaves level.

Roof Design and Related Features

5.14 The design of roofs should account for the following: -

- The pitch should be in the range 35° - 55° and ideally be between 40° and 45°.
- Large overhanging eaves should be avoided. As such the roof will be more effective against wind and rain and should require less maintenance, as well as provide additional usable space.
- Slate is preferred but artificial slate or small tiles of smooth blue/grey or black finish are acceptable.
- Box dormers are not acceptable.
- Where chimney stacks are proposed their location on gable walls central to the roof ridge line is preferred.

Walls

5.15 The design and construction of walls should account for the following: -

- Facing materials should be chosen for their durability and weather resistant qualities.
- The use of natural stone and/or harling is encouraged, but innovative designs incorporating glass and timber are also acceptable.
- Use of garish colours to be avoided.
- Feature panels of artificial stone or other ornamental materials are not acceptable.
- Windows and door openings should have a vertical emphasis.

Ancillary Buildings and Facilities

5.16 Conservatories should have base walls in materials to match the house and preferably be at ground floor level only.

5.17 Garages should:

- be a minimum of 6m back from the edge of the public roadway;
- be designed to reflect the materials of the property; and
- not extend in front of the established building line.

5.18 Outbuildings, sheds, bin storage, bunkers and drying greens should be provided to the rear and screened as appropriate from adjacent development.

Public Open Space and Recreation Facilities

5.19 Developers should minimise the creation of open spaces with no specific use or purpose. They should be recognisable as definite places or focal points rather than arbitrary left over space. Developers are required to provide appropriate open space and play equipment as an integral part of their proposals. They should be highly visible from surrounding houses and be adequately lit. The key areas in this respect are:

- amenity / landscaped open space required in the vicinity of main roads and remote paths;
- 3 local equipped areas for play, 2 of which should be for toddlers play and 1 for children of primary school age, each with 5 pieces of play equipment and safety surfacing within an area of at least 400 m²;
- 1 large equipped multi -activity area for all age groups in a highly visible and accessible location; and
- open moorland and informal areas adjacent to the Wolf Burn.

5.20 Where possible existing habitats and natural features should be maintained. Any habitat creation, enhancement or restoration should be in keeping with the character of the surrounding landscape and with habitats and species. Local community involvement in creation and maintenance of wildlife sites on the open space/amenity land, would be in keeping with the objectives of the Caithness Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Developers are also required to make provision to contribute to the longer term maintenance of these areas whether they are managed by the Council or through a private factoring arrangement. Where land is to be managed by the Council developers will be expected to make a one off capital payment based on 18 times the annual maintenance cost for such land.



Above: Typical boundary enclosures close to area for community uses and archaeological interest.

Below: Potential site of play area to be relocated from Pennyland Drive



Design of All Non-Residential Buildings

5.21 In order to maximise the flexibility of use there is no hard and fast requirement for a particular style of building. However, developers may wish to consider designs that reflect traditional local building styles and materials. The following guidelines apply: -

- No building shall exceed 12 metres or the equivalent of three storeys in height.
- The overall bulk of large buildings should be broken down to avoid long horizontal frontages.
- Facing materials shall be chosen for their good weathering characteristics and can include quality finishes in wet or dry dash, stone, brick, glass, slate or tile, as required.
- Large expanses of profiled metal cladding should be avoided and preferably confined to less prominent elevations.
- Colour can be used to break up the visual bulk of a building although a wide variation in the range and use of garish colours should be avoided.
- Roof pitches should be no less than 30°.

Business & Light Industrial Uses

5.22 Proposed uses shall generally be compatible with residential amenity. As such, they should not generate noise or air pollution, or external storage. Uses should fall under Class 4 Business, Class 5 General Industrial or Class 11 Storage and Distribution, as defined within the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Scotland) Order 1997, and any amendments thereof, other than with the separate express approval of the Planning Authority.

Appendix I: FULL TEXT OF RELEVANT LOCAL PLAN POLICIES

The Caithness Local Plan, adopted in September 2002, establishes the statutory detailed planning framework.

The following General Policies apply: -

H: Housing to the specific areas allocated for early residential development: where:

"The Council will seek to maintain and enhance the established character of residential areas and will encourage appropriate development."

E: Settlement Expansion to the other areas preferred for development where:

"The Council will encourage development in accordance with a comprehensive master plan and will presume against piecemeal proposals."

A: Amenity Areas to other land not identified for development *"The Council will safeguard these areas from development not associated with their purpose or function."*

In the Thurso Town Statement the following policies apply (See Inset Map extract - Figure 7 opposite): -

13. *The sites in tables 13.1 & 13.2 are allocated for housing. While it is possible for development to commence on all sites within the Plan period, it is anticipated that the market will dictate the later completion of some of them. Servicing requirements dictate comprehensive implementation by contractors and housing associations, possibly including serviced feus for self-build purposes with GRO grant or similar assistance.*

Site	Area (ha.)	Capacity	Comments
(b) Pennyland South	3.0	40-45	private plots/HA development; access via extension of Provost Cormack Drive; link to Henderson Street; upgrade Moors/Wolf Burn footpath; interpret archaeology; provide equipped play area

15. *At Pennyland Farm and north west of the Dunbar Hospital land is safeguarded for longer term development of approximately 240 to 260 houses. Development should not commence until after substantial take up of land in Tables 13.1 and 13.2 or in advance of water supply improvements (see also para. 37).*

17. *At Ormlie the Council will lead in partnership with the local Community Association and other organisations to progress social, economic and physical regeneration of the area. The area is eligible for funding under the Government's Social Inclusion Partnership initiative. In addition to social*

measures, a major objective that the Council supports in principle is to physically redesign High Ormlie to:

- *improve access to and from the area via the surrounding road and footpath networks;*
- *reduce traffic speeds and give priority to pedestrians through calming measures (pilot Home Zone);*
- *redefine front and back entrances to houses;*
- *increase garden ground; and*
- *enhance provision of play areas.*

The Council will also seek to promote;

- *development of the allotment gardens area for housing and possibly a community centre (see 13i);*
- *improved pedestrian access to and environmental enhancement of the Ormlie industrial estate (see 25); and*
- *improved paths across the Moors area, including north towards the business park and north west to Pennyland Primary School (see 35c and Framework Plan).*

28. *Developers are required to construct consecutive phases of the Provost Cormack Drive to A836 link road in association with development of housing and business uses over land to the west of Pennyland (see 15, 20 & 37). This should accord with a detailed framework or master plan and developers are required to construct the road up to the boundary of each phase of development. No buildings shall be sited within 10 metres of this road. The Council will consider the scope for traffic calming measures on the existing and future sections of Provost Cormack Drive as part of a 'Safer Routes to School' initiative.*

29. *A route for a western distributor road has been identified linking the A836 in the north and the B874 in the south. The distributor road will serve the western expansion area as shown in the Framework Plan. However, the road will be designed to be capable of extension, and upgrading if necessary, in order to allow for the provision of a Thurso by-pass. Preliminary investigations suggest a by-pass route starting from the southern approach of the A9 and heading west across the river from opposite the entrance to Stainland Farm towards the south side of the Dunbar Hospital. Here it would meet the western distributor road and pass over the Moors on the town side of the golf course to the east side of the business park. Finally the by-pass will extend northwards from the A836 road to Scrabster. An attempt should be made to retain traditional field enclosures and undertake appropriate earth mounding and planting to help integrate the distributor road, ultimately to become the by-pass, into the landscape. The Council will require developers to construct early phases of the distributor road from the A836 south as service access for business and housing over Pennyland.*

35. *The Council will protect and enhance major open spaces and amenity land in and around the town and, where appropriate, will encourage people to use and enjoy them. More specifically the Council will explore the availability of funding, including contributions from developers/owners of associated land, to:*

- improve the riverside park in the vicinity of the boating pond, as well as tree management;*
- develop open land to the north and south of the A836 at Pennyland Farm as a public park in the longer term, incorporating playing fields and a pitch*

and putt course (see 34a) where possible, the siting of all ancillary buildings will be rigorously controlled to ensure that the panoramic view across this area is maintained in its entirety;

- extend a remote footpath network around the west side of the town, including the provision of sections in association with development and linkages across areas such as the Moors adjacent to Ormlie; and*
- restore the Lady Janet's Walk east long the coast towards Castletown, including tackling erosion and allowing public access past and beyond Thurso Castle.*

37. *Land is reserved for longer term housing and business development on the west side of the town. More specific reference is made under paragraphs 15 and 20. Proposals should comply with the Framework Plan. A Development Brief or Master Plan will be prepared for this area to include phasing and basic requirements. A major requirement is the construction of a link road from the A836 south through the area to Provost Cormack Drive in association with development phases. The Council will encourage substantial early structural tree planting around the fringes and between phases to help integrate the development into the landscape. A hydrological assessment will be required to determine the adequacy of any surface water drainage system.*

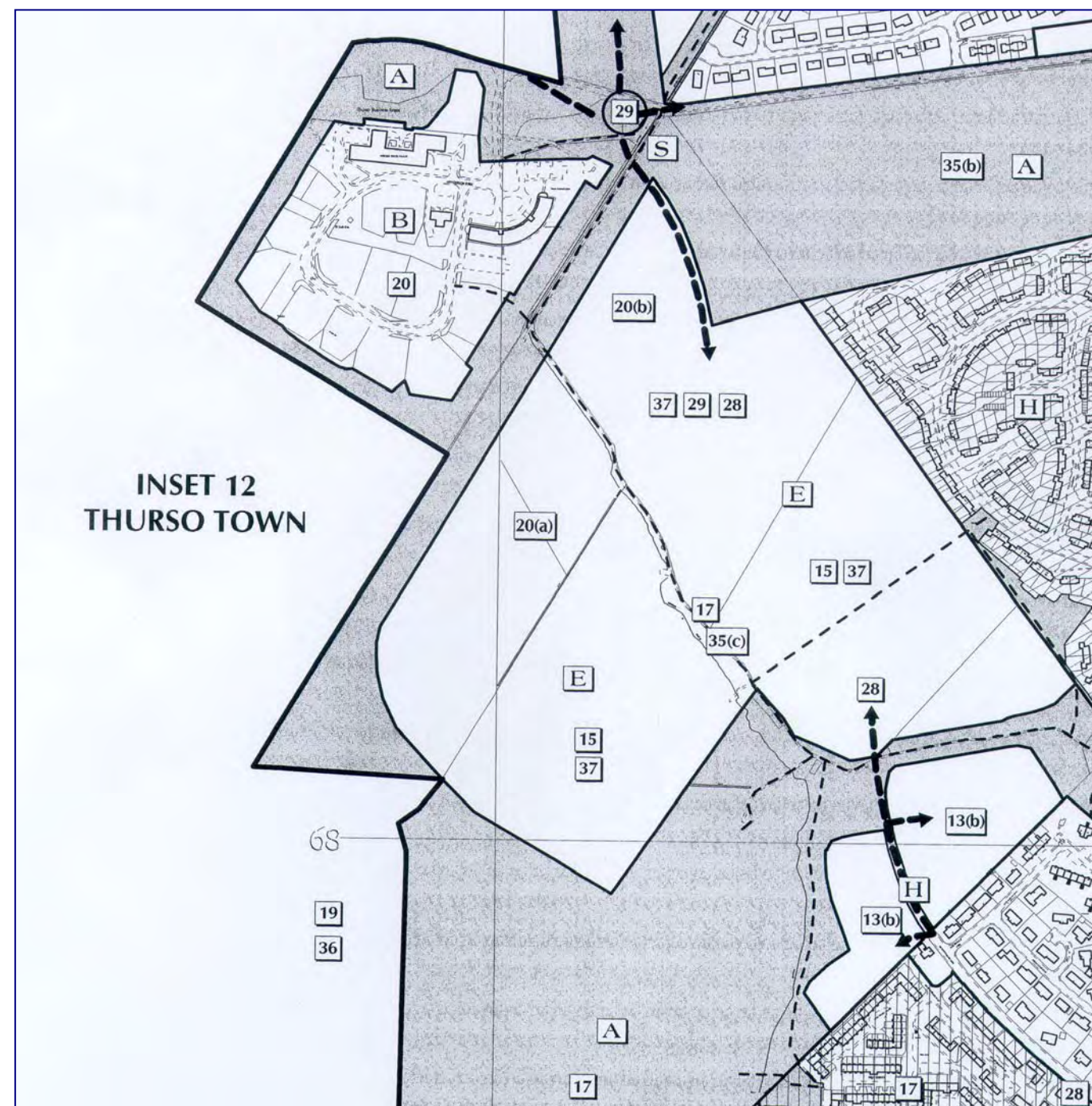


Figure 7: Extract from Thurso Inset Map of the Caithness Local Plan

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