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| Alan Ritchie (980220) | Karen Risbridger (980206) |
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Lynne Reid (MPP1034346)

Lynsey Mackay (MPP1033501)

Marcela McMillan (MPP1034738)

Margaret Smedley (MPP930596)

Marlene Lipka (MPP1034152)

Martin Ross (MPP1033522)

Mary Paterson (MPP1034694)

Megan Williamson (MPP1034717)

Meghann Ashpool (MPP1034155)

Michael Cowie (MPP1032425)

Michael Ross (1033524)

Michelle Will (MPP1034160)

Mike Lunan (MPP1034651)

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Rachel Dickson (MPP1034576)

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Reid's of Caithness (MPP1033983)

Robert Falconer (MPP980046)

Ross Dignan (MPP1032656)

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| Elizabeth Lawson (MPP1034442) | Royal Hotel (MPP1034816) |
| Elizabeth Mackay (MPP1034732) | Ryan Cameron (MPP1034708) |
| Ellie Spencer (MPP1034530) | Ryan Wade (MPP1033508) |
| Emily Eadie (MPP1034605) | Samantha Angus (MPP1034517) |
| Euan Munro (MPP1034728) | Samantha Lovett (MPP 1037485) |
| Euan Sinclair (MPP980244) | Sandra Isabelle Harris |
| Fiona Mackie (MPP978748) | (MPP1034546) |
| Fiona McLean (MPP1034721) | Sasha Carroll (MPP1032647) |
| Fraser Steven (MPP1033806) | Sean Miller (MPP1033482) |
| Gary Parker (968625) | Sharon Lennie (MPP1032200) |
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| Herbert Lawson (MPP1034148) | Thurso Bay Trading Co. |
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| Ian Cannop (MPP1032993) | Val Ashpool (MPP1034162) |
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| (MPP1033475) | Yvonne Martin (MPP1033504) |
| James Henderson (MPP1033472) | Zoe Kerr (MPP1034727) |
| Jamie Mackay (MPP980254) | |

3. Relevant Council's Supporting Documents

CD03: CaSPlan Proposed Plan Jan 2016
 CD04: CaSPlan Main Issues Report, Oct 2014
 CD13: Flood Risk and Drainage Impact Assessment Supplementary Guidance, Jan 2013
 CD17: Caithness Local Plan, Sept 2002 (as continued in force, 2012)
 CD18: Highland-wide Local Development Plan, Apr 2012
 CD25: Wick and Thurso Charrette Report, May 2013
 CD35: Tourism Development Framework for Scotland: 'Aspirations and

Ambitions... our development opportunities'

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|--|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| Issue 12 | Thurso Sites TS12 AND TS14 | |
| Development plan reference: | Thurso - TS12 and TS14 | Reporter: |
| Body or person(s) submitting a representation raising the issue (including reference number): | | |
| <p><u>Proposed Plan:</u></p> <div> <div> Alan Loomes (980235) Alan Ritchie (980220) Alastair Chisholm Christie (980596) Amanda Gunn (980290) Amanda Robertson (983266) Amelia Walker (931321) Andrew Bremner (980248) Andrew Fraser (983996) Anthony Ridgley (979975) Caithness Chamber of Commerce (CCC) (983321) Carol Murray (983145) Carol Paterson (979637) Caroline Steven (980245) Cecilia Brands (979454) Colin MacDonald (980226) Colin Paterson (979739) Cynthia Calder (980214) Danny Calder (983991) David Doohan (980228) David Lord (1069719) Dean Craig (980100) Derek Taylor (980213) Don Mackay (979822) Donald Mackay (981995) Eilidh Paterson (980233) Fiona Doohan (980015) Fiona Mackie (978748) Gayle Rennie (980274) George Mitchell (983251) Grant Maxwell (979898) Ian Mackay (978586) Ian Walker (979716) Jacqueline Ridgley (930800) Jamie Henderson (980168) Jane Foster (980307) Jane Telfer (979224) Janetta Christie (975843) </div> <div> John Faulds (983248) Karen Risbridger (980206) Katelin Mackenzie (979954) Kathleen Faulds (983151) Kenneth Nicol (977530) Kirsten Murray (979696) Lee MacDougall (980312) Lee Parnell (979688) Lindsay Kay (983250) Linsey MacDougall (980035) London and Scottish Investments Ltd (979770) Louise Smith-Dasar (981718) Lyndall Leet (983272) Margaret Smedley (930596) Marjory Lord (980210) Michael Bowden (980202) Michelle Fraser (979884) Nick Russel (979216) Park Hotel (980293) Pennyland House B&B (971783) Phyllis Nicol (980599) Rebecca Paterson (979904) Robert Falconer (980046) Ronald Paterson (979807) Sean Miller (980259) SEPA (906306) Sheena Mclachlan (960835) Sinclair Manson (975023) SNH (909933) St Clair Hotel (980003) Station Hotel (980280) Stephen Anderson (983269) Steven Grant (980189) Stuart Andrew (980221) Stuart Liddle (980236) Tanya Sutherland (979994) The Pentland Hotel (979985) </div> </div> | | |

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| Provision of the development plan to which the issue relates: | TS12 and TS14 <i>* Please note that this part of the Plan was subject to notifiable modifications, specifically the removal sites TS12 and TS14 from the Plan and the consequential removal of reference within paragraph 109.</i> | |
| Planning authority's summary of the representation(s): | | |

Representation to the Proposed Plan (January 2016):

William Walker (979718), Ian Walker (979716), David Doohan (980228), Amelia Walker (931321), Michael Bowden (980202), Stuart Liddle (980236), Stephen Anderson (983269), Sheena Mclachlan (960835), Walter Mclachlan (979426)

Objects to the inclusion of TS12 for Community uses for one or more of the following reasons:

- Weather conditions would be a constant issue for the maintenance of any landscaping which would result in a high financial burden.
- The area should be protected from any development.
- Key finding from the Charrette Report page 68 states “Working from the Thurso Bay out to the countryside, the wider masterplan starts with the designated open amenity area at the cliff top that bounds the A9 to the north. It is considered that this land should remain open as part of the setting of the town, aspect and prospect, and as part of the open aspect to Thurso Bay as the town is approached from the west.” This land should remain open aspect.
- The views over Thurso Bay should be protected.
- It will add to the coalescence of Thurso and Burnside.
- The Main Issues Report stated it would “Safeguard land for open amenity”. Respondent questions why this has changed.
- There is no need for a public park in this area. It will not get used by local residents.
- The park area has only been added to enhance the Plan.

Kenneth Nicol (977530), Rebecca Paterson (979904), Don Mackay (979822), Marjory Lord (980210), Thurso Bay Trading Co (980395)

Supports the allocation for Community/Public Park for one or more of the following reasons:

- Will be of benefit to the community.
- Preserve the view out over Thurso Bay.
- Will form part of future development plans for the area.

Pennyland House B&B (MPP971783)

Supports the proposal for a public park as it would make more of one of the town's greatest assets by allowing people to enjoy the area rather than simply drive past it. As a local B&B owner she knows there is demand for greater number of quality bed spaces. There is also the new 'North Coast 500' tourist route which has really taken off and has introduced more tourists to the area and Thurso as a stopover.

Alastair Chisholm Christie (980596)

There is an attractive structure built (near Burnside) by the late George Wylie. It was without using mortar yet manages to stand up to the frequent gales in the area. Unfortunately, it is almost hidden by an overgrowth of weeds. When plans are being drawn up for this area this structure should be given a prominent position for all to see.

SNH (909933), Ian Walker (979716), David Doohan (980228)

Similar to TS04, the text for allocation TS12 also refers to TS01 – 03, which is also confusing. The text would benefit from revision to refer only to TS12/make it clear why

reference to TS01 – 03 is being made.

TS14 – Land West of Caravan Park

Alan Loomes (980235), Lee MacDougall (980312), Jane Foster (980307), Margaret Smedley (930596), Lee Parnell (979688), Sheena Mclachlan (960835), Jane Telfer (979224), Jacqueline Ridgley (930800), Timothy Ridgley (979979), Anthony Ridgley (979975), The Pentland Hotel (979985), Tanya Sutherland (979994), Walter Mclachlan (979426), St Clair Hotel (980003), William Walker (979718), Marjory Lord (980210), Ian Walker (979716), Jason Ridgley (980223), David Doohan (980228), Kenneth Nicol (977530), Amelia Walker (931321), Colin MacDonald (980226), Station Hotel (980280), Cecilia Brands (979454), Kirsten Murray (979696), Michelle Fraser (979884), Fiona Doohan (980015), Mrs Jill Falconer (979729), Mrs Karen Risbridger (980206), Robert Falconer (980046), Stuart Liddle (980236), Alastair Chisholm Christie (980596), Phyllis Nicol (980599), Tom Jackson (981229), Louise Smith-Dasar (981718), Donald Mackay (981995), Carol Murray (983145), Linsey MacDougall (980035), Kathleen Faulds (983151), John Faulds (983248), George Mitchell (983251), Lindsay Kay (983250), Amanda Robertson (983266), Stephen Anderson (983269), Lyndall Leet (983272), Cynthia Calder (980214), Danny Calder (983991), Andrew Fraser (983996), Sinclair Manson (975023), David Lord (1069719)

Objects to the inclusion of TS14 for one or more of the following reasons:

Planning history

- The hotel proposal on the site has been dismissed by Government Reporters previously (1994, 1996, 2001 and 2007) and the circumstances have not changed since. One Reporter, in reasons for rejection stated “*approval of the proposal would represent an unacceptable intrusion into an area of established character and identity*” and goes on to say “*a precedent would also be set for the development of the remaining area between Thurso and Burnside.*” Claims in the PDI Report from Nov 2015 that previous PLIs were not relevant to the decision today are disputed as they were site specific not site comparisons as stated. Decisions made against the proposal should remain no matter how many years pass.
- It will lead to the coalescence of Thurso and Burnside which has been a defining factor in previous PLIs and there is a presumption against it in planning decisions today.
- It was a flawed approach to base the planning strategy on the outcome of a charrette. Most Thurso residents had no idea this was taking place and were unaware of the likely impact on the drawing up of a new local Plan.

Economic issues

- There is no demand for further hotels in the area. There are 8 hotels in Thurso (with 2 closing during the winter months) and several luxury hotels in the wider area. Many of the existing hotels are currently for sale and currently operate on a seasonal basis. One hotel is in the centre of Thurso and is in a poor state of repair. This should be rectified before a new hotel is built.
- Creation of another hotel would result in at least one of the existing hotels going out of business causing another empty building in the town centre. This would then have an adverse impact on the tourism market.

- Whether it is a high quality hotel or a budget hotel the impact would be the same on the existing businesses. The existing businesses should be supported not destroyed.
- The reported upsurge in demand for hotel accommodation in Caithness is only temporary and linked to current construction projects such as energy related developments.
- A high quality hotel on its own does not attract tourists. It is other attractions such as the attractiveness of the town, scenery and landscapes.
- The proposals for a high quality hotel with spa would result in a decrease in tourism to the town. It would encourage people to stay within the facility and not venture into the town. It would damage the landscape which people come to see.
- The adjacent uses to the site (caravan park, supermarket and disused commercial unit) do not lend themselves to the setting of a luxury hotel.
- The allocation for a hotel contradicts Policy 1 of CaSPlan, Town Centres First. There are existing hotels/sites within the town centre where development and investment should be directed.
- New hotel developments tend to be located close to business parks rather than in very prominent locations such as TS15, e.g. near Thurso Business Park or the former mart site TS05.
- The landowner had planning permission to convert the former steading but it has been left to fall into disrepair.
- The proposal for the hotel, spa and park are not financially viable. The landowner has expressed that to help fund the hotel development a housing development on land west of Pennyland House is needed.

Environmental issues

- The view across Thurso Bay towards the Orkney Islands is one of Thurso's outstanding features and presents an attractive gateway into the town. The landscape will be darkened by the building and the open views to the west and to Dunnet Head, a beautiful feature of Caithness, will be largely blocked. It would be a clear breach of Highland Council declared policy on land providing open views to seascapes.
- The MIR stated it would "Safeguard (the TS14) for open amenity". Questions why this has changed.
- Despite the developer requirement for sensitive siting and design, any development on the site would have a massive adverse impact on the landscape. Concerns expressed over the height proposed when it comes to planning application stage.
- It is too close to the cliff edge with unstable ground conditions and which is constantly being eroded. The rock formation around the site is sensitive and should not be jeopardised by development. The following is a quote from the "Coastal Planning" paper (page 9) from the Scottish Office(Aug 1997) "*Development which does not require a coastal location shall not be permitted on the coast*". TS14 should therefore be permanently protected.
- A key finding from the 'Charrette' page 68 states '*Working from the Thurso Bay out to the countryside, the wider masterplan starts with the designated open amenity area at the cliff top that bounds the A9 to the north*'. It is considered that this land should remain open as part of the setting of the town, aspect and prospect, and as part of the open aspect to Thurso Bay as the town is approached from the west. We should not be building on important greenfield sites if there is no need to.

- Information from a local RSPB representative states that Curlews are nesting in this particular field. The two fields on Pennyland Farm, which are adjacent to the Victoria Walk are important wintering areas for Curlew and as such should not be considered for development. The Curlew has recently been given Red List Status because of its dramatic decline in numbers and some experts consider that it may be heading for extinction unless a concerted effort is made to halt this decline. Loss of habitat is the most serious threat to these birds and even a small site such as this is important in maintaining and stabilising this population.
- There is enough justification for the land at Pennyland to be given Special Landscape Area (SLA) status.
- There is a nearby residential care home and the building of a hotel on TS14 would adversely impact on the elderly residents.
- Drainage issues should be addressed as heavy rain showers result in water running over Victoria Walk and causing large puddles.

SEPA (906306)

The boundary of the site is adjacent to the Coastal Flood Map and there is a small watercourse adjacent to the site. Parts of the site are therefore at risk of flooding. As a result we object unless the following developer requirement text is added: "Flood Risk Assessment (no development in areas shown to be at risk of flooding)." This amendment will help protect people and property from flood risk and ensure (1) compliance with the flood risk avoidance position in paragraphs 255 and 263 of Scottish Planning Policy, (2) that developers are aware that flood risk may be a constraint on development of part of the site which will assist in delivery in line with Scottish Planning Policy paragraph 30, which states that "Development plans should:...set out a spatial strategy which is both sustainable and deliverable, providing confidence to stakeholders that the outcomes can be achievable" and (3) ensure that developer requirements for all sites thought to be at risk of flooding are dealt with consistently throughout the plan. This advice is also in line with the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 which places responsibility on the Scottish Government, SEPA, Scottish Water and local authorities to exercise their flood risk related functions with a view to reducing overall flood risk.

Caithness Chamber of Commerce (CCC) (983321)

CCC object to the allocation of TS14 for a hotel development. They are concerned that this may have a negative impact on existing businesses in the region. CCC feel it is important to get a better understanding of the potential demand for hotel rooms in the area before any additional development is approved. CCC note that Highlands and Islands Enterprise are currently carrying out a study on accommodation needs in Caithness, and would urge the Highland Council to hold off on any decision relating to this matter until the results of this study are available.

Janetta Christie (975843)

Not opposed to the development of a new hotel (if it is really needed) but respondent objects to the positioning of it, i.e. near the cliff edge.

Park Hotel (980293)

The hotelier does not in theory object to the provision of more hotel rooms in Thurso but does have reservations that after the land is designated as having planning permission for a hotel to be erected it will end up in the hands of a large hotel chain. This won't have the

effect of providing any more jobs in the town as it will simply 'replace' other hotels. This in turn may lead to a large vacant building somewhere else in the town. If there were some kind of guarantee of a "quality" hotel then respondent would not have any objection. If a mass produced hotel were to pop up on this site then all it would lead to is further rate depression in Thurso, which in turn would lead to cost cutting by hoteliers. The single biggest cost in hospitality? Staff. Easy to see where the cost cutting would arise.

Amelia Walker (931321)

It is strange that the designations of all the sites in Thurso have more or less remained as they were in the MIR, apart from the areas at Pennyland. To specifically state where a hotel, houses and a filling station are to be located, is tantamount to handing outline planning permission to the developer. The general public could comment on the size, shape etc., of the hotel, but they cannot say there should be NO hotel as the plan determines the area.

London and Scottish Investments Ltd (979770)

The owners of the mart site (TS05) object to the allocation of TS14 for a hotel and argue that TS05 presents a better site for a hotel as it is a brownfield site which is adjacent to the train station. TS14 is a prominent coastal greenfield site which is detached from the town centre.

The Pentland Hotel (979985)

Operator of The Pentland Hotel in Thurso wholeheartedly agrees with one of the Plans main aims in improving the tourism experience however disagreed that a hotel at TS14 would achieve this objective. Respondent agrees that the development of John O'Groats and the success of our North Coast 500 have helped to move the offering for tourists visiting the area forward but it does not equate to the plan of building a 55 bedroom hotel in a town where there is a rich offering of accommodation, where two hotels cannot make profit in the winter months to warrant staying open. The Royal Hotel has a 50% occupancy in 2014 and 57% in 2015, no hotel occupier would be willing to invest in a new hotel at these levels and the challenges extra bedspace in the market would bring. The other hotel that closes is the St Clair and they monitor the business levels closely as they operate the Station Hotel in Thurso and would be well placed to open the St Clair if there was enough sustained demand. Believe the development of a new hotel in Thurso would pose a serious threat to the existence of at least one of our town's hotels if not two. At these occupancy levels it would be unsustainable and a new hotel will not bring more tourists. Hotels alone do not bring extras visitors to an area. The proposal would be anti competitive rather than fostering keen competition. If a brand new hotel comes into a saturated market and cannot achieve its target of attracting luxury guests to enjoy its expensive offering it will reset its target market to a lower spend market and would achieve this target as it would offer better value for the guest's pound so it would then be competing in the lower end of the hotel sector. This would result in more empty properties in the town centre and contradict the aim of the town centre first policy. Respondent claims neither him nor Visit Scotland can identify the reference in paragraph 109 to need for quality hotels in Caithness. Ackergill Tower, which is a luxury 5 star hotel, has dwindling occupancy, cannot make a sufficient profit and is currently also on the market. Respondent seeks clarification on the definition of a 'quality' hotel.

The hotel operator is concerned for the viability of the business which he has recently invested in. As a Caithnessian and a tourist professional he has worked hard to improve

the quality of the experience the visitor gets when coming to this beautiful area of the Highlands but this is not a proposal that does this, it is a proposal that jeopardises livelihoods, Thurso town centre, the quality of living for local residents and a gorgeous greenfield site that has a long history of being an asset to Thurso.

George Mitchell (983251)

Opposed to the allocation but if it gets approved then any building should be located close to the A9 and not by the cliff.

Amanda Gunn (980290), Ian Mackay (978586), Fiona Mackie (978748), Nick Russel (979216), Carol Paterson (979637), Colin Paterson (979739), Don Mackay (979822), Rebecca Paterson (979904), Katelin Mackenzie (979954), Dean Craig (980100), Jamie Henderson (980168), Steven Grant (980189), Pennyland House B&B (971783), Grant Maxwell (979898), Stuart Andrew (980221), Eilidh Paterson (980233), Willie Steven (980239), Sean Miller (980259), Caroline Steven (980245), Andrew Bremner (980248), Gayle Rennie (980274), Ronald Paterson (979807), Derek Taylor (980213), Alan Ritchie (980220)

Supports the inclusion of TS14 for one or more of the following reasons:

- There are not enough bed spaces in the town during the peak tourist season. There is a demand for better quality business/conference space.
- A new hotel would attract more people and encourage people to stay in the town and county. Lodges and a leisure spa would cater for different markets than just the hotel further attracting people to the area.
- As someone working in local hospitality, the respondent states there is a chronic shortage of quality accommodation for visitors in Thurso.
- Tourism is becoming increasingly recognised as a key component of the economy.
- It is an ideal site for a high quality hotel and lodges.
- If the hotel was high quality, sensitively designed, low level and does not obscure the view of Thurso Bay it would be a real asset to the town. A low level design with a grass roof is important to minimise the visual impact of the building. The town needs development such as this to progress and to deliver the vision set out in CaSPlan.
- It should have been allocated in the previous local plan.
- Good infrastructure and amenities attract inward investment and so then create jobs - not the other way around.
- Improvements to Victoria Walk would be beneficial.

Pennyland House B&B (971783)

As a local B&B owner, respondent knows there is demand for greater number of quality bed spaces. There is also the new 'North Coast 500' tourist route which has really taken off and has introduced more tourists to the area and Thurso as a stopover.

Thurso Bay Trading Co (980395)

The landowner states that the points raised in the submission to the MIR are still relevant. Respondent refers to social media and Caithness.org forums to highlight public comment on the proposals. The Council understands the importance of tourism to the future of the town. This site is within easy walking distance of the town centre and will be "open" for all to use, tourist and resident alike. The hotel facilities and public park will make this area the

lungs of the town. A fantastic site for the proposed uses. It's an "amenity" at present only enjoyed by a few walkers, passing traffic and some sheep. Visit Scotland's tourism strategy identifies the need for more quality "hotels" in Caithness.

Representation to the Modified Proposed Plan (September 2016):

Thurso Bay Trading Co. (MPP980395)

The landowner of TS12 and TS14 objects to the removal of the sites from the Plan.

The agent, on behalf of the landowner, states that the Caithness Area Committee subsequently decided at its meeting on 31 August 2016 to remove the two sites, against the recommendation of Highland Council Planning Officers, without referring to any representations or to consultation responses (absent in the Minutes) and without recording any specific reasons for doing so (absent from the Minutes). Many of the discussion points raised by Councillors within these Minutes had already been fully addressed within the Planning Officers' Report (August 2016), within Appendix A.

They now fully support, and highlight as relevant, the Planning Officers' recommendation and analysis set out at pages 93-95 and 131-135 of Appendix A, as well as the Reports relating to tourism referred to therein by Visit Scotland (2013) and Highlands and Islands Enterprise (2011).

The landowner requests that the points raised in previous representations are considered as they are still relevant. These focused on: Thurso Charrette providing a good basis for CaSPlan; community debate on and general support of the sites over recent years; mix of housing, commercial and greenspaces providing a long term strategy for the town; and commercial interest in the proposals. Previous representations have successfully presented the sites as effective and deliverable, with an appropriate level of material submitted to support an allocation in the LDP.

Both sites are considered to be good opportunities (through their allocation in the Plan) to deliver and make positive contributions to the future sustainable economic growth of Thurso, creation of new jobs and supporting tourism in the area, as well as to high quality placemaking in Thurso, and to improving the existing green network by providing a new, significant area of public amenity open space as a park located at the seafront and adjacent to the North Coast 500 Route, on land which is not presently accessible to the public being used privately to graze sheep. This is in accordance with the Sustainability Principal Policy within Scottish Planning Policy (SPP), which states, 'This SPP introduces a presumption in favour of development that contributes to sustainable development... This means that policies and decisions should be guided by the following principles ...Improving health and well being by offering opportunities for social interaction and physical activity, including sport and recreation...Protecting, enhancing and promoting access to natural heritage, including green infrastructure, landscape and the wider environment.' (8th and 11th bullet points of paragraph 29, SPP).

Further, they consider that reallocation of sites TS12 and TS14 will directly support the LDP strategy for Thurso which states that it aims to 'maintain its position as the principal market, service and social centre for west and central Caithness and an area reaching into

north Sutherland, and strengthen the range of services and facilities which it provides.'

They consider that reallocation of site TS14 for Business (Tourism and Leisure) will provide a clear opportunity towards meeting one of the Plan's main aims which is stated as follows specifically within the Thurso section, 'Improving the tourism experience is one of the Plan's main aims. Although there have been many improvements in Caithness over recent years, such as the redevelopment of John O'Groats and the successful promotion of the North Coast 500, there are many opportunities which still exist.'

The North Coast 500 route passes through Thurso along the A9 Smith Terrace road to the adjacent south of the sites. They consider that Site TS12 community park will directly enhance the environmental amenity along the route enabling public access at a prime seafront location.

Provision of the new park will also contribute towards the Plan's 'Placemaking Priorities' for Thurso, specifically it will help, 'Establish a green network stretching from the coastline at Victoria Walk, through Pennyland and the Ormlie moors and out to a new community woodland north of the golf course.'

Landowner considers that TS14 will enhance the visitor experience and potential hotel accommodation offer along this stretch of the North Coast 500 route, which will in turn supports Thurso town centre.

They consider that the reallocation of sites TS12 and TS14 represent a good example of 'locating the right development in the right place,' which is a clear aspiration of SPP (paragraph 15 of SPP).

They emphasise that matters of siting, design, masterplanning, landscape and visual impact and developer requirements etc (some of the concerns discussed by Councillors at the 31 August 2016 Committee) will be fully addressed and controlled through the Development Management process.

George Mitchell (MPP983251), Steven MacDonald (MPP1032713), Margaret Smedley (MPP930596), William Arif (MPP1033711), Catherine Murray (MPP1033682), Kathleen Faulds (MPP983151), Alison MacAdie (MPP1034158), William James Stewart (MPP1034252), Catherine Stewart (MPP1034231), Angus Mackay (MPP1034300), Georgina Mackenzie (MPP1034374), Ian Walker (MPP979716), William Walker (MPP979718), Elizabeth Lawson (MPP1034442), Hannah Johnston (MPP1034463), Lynne Lynne Glover (MPP1034603), John Faulds (MPP983248), St Clair Hotel (MPP980003), Diana Johnston (MPP1034710), Robert Falconer (MPP980046), Elizabeth Mackay (MPP1034732), Donald Mackay (MPP981995), Amelia Walker (MPP931321) Royal Hotel (MPP1034816), Tanya Sutherland (MPP979994) The Pentland Hotel (MPP979985), Lyndall Leet (MPP983272), Alastair Chisholm Christie (MPP980596), Janetta Christie (MPP975843), Phyllis Nicol (MPP980599), Amelia Walker (MPP931321), Herbert Lawson (MPP1034148), Royal Hotel (MPP1034816)

Respondents support the non-inclusion of sites TS12 and TS14 and the removal of the reference to it in paragraph 109 for the following reasons:

Economy

- The high hotel occupancy rates experienced in Caithness during 2016 were only due to major infrastructure works and is therefore not sustainable. There are already two high-end hotels in the area (Gills and Forse) and there is not a proven need for more.
- There is no demand for another hotel in Thurso. It would only act to draw staff and customers away from the existing hotels. The creation of a new hotel, whether it be budget or high-end, would likely lead to the closure of at least one existing hotel business in Thurso which would have an adverse impact on the vibrancy of the town centre. Already some hotels close for the winter months and others have been for sale for a long time.
- A hotelier argues that as a Thurso hotel operator who operate on less than 60% occupancy over the year the consent for a new hotel would have seriously jeopardized the business and not benefit the business community in Thurso.
- Top-end hotels are located in secluded areas, not next to business parks and housing schemes.
- A hotel itself does not attract tourists. Thurso needs a different type of attraction.
- There is no expansion space for the well kept business park.

Environment

- The ground near Victoria Walk is not free draining. Sites TS12 & TS14 are very wet near the main road being at the bottom of a steep slope especially at the business park end, where a lake can form in a wet winter.
- These are the last undeveloped areas of the coast between Burnside and Thurso and provide an attractive entrance to the town. These are unparalleled panoramic views and are an important part of the character of the town. Development would destroy the beautiful western approaches.
- Victorian Walk is an important asset of Thurso which is used regularly and should be safeguarded.
- A key finding from the 'Charrette' was that the "wider masterplan starts with designated open amenity area at the cliff top that bounds the A9 to the north. It is considered that this land should remain open as part of the setting of the town, aspect and prospect, and as part of the open aspect to Thurso Bay as the town is approached from the west."
- It will result in ribbon development along the main route to the west would not enhance the entrance into the town from the west.
- There are no details about who is going to maintain the proposed public park.

Planning Issues

- Stating what should go where is tantamount to bypassing the Outline planning application stage
- There have been 3 public inquiries in respect to this land. In all the reports different reporters state in similar words that the character and amenity of this part of Thurso and of the general wester approaches to the tow will be diminished by any development.

- The Councillors and local community are against development of the sites.

Fiona Mackie (MPP978748), Colin Paterson (MPP979739), Bruce McConnell (MPP1031719), Paula Fisher (MPP1031813), Samantha Lovett (MPP1031902), Mr Angus Cowap (MPPMPP970363), Jeremy Evans (MPPMPP1031927), Ian Westmorland (MPP1031981), Helen Robbie (MPP1032179), Sharon Lennie (MPP1032200), Mr Don Mackay (MPP1032343), Graeme Reid (MPP1032386), Eilidh Paterson (MPP980233), Michael Cowie (MPP1032425), Jack Floydd (MPP1032423), Iain Black (MPP1032452), Iain Elder (MPP1032459), Valerie Moseley (MPP1031843), Amelia Mackay (MPP1032516), Jamie Mackay (MPP980254), Rebecca Paterson (MPP979904), Abbie Wilson (MPP1032650), Steven Grant (MPP980189), Euan Sinclair (MPP980244), Liam Dykes (MPP1032658), Ross Dignan (MPP1032656), Isaac Johnson (MPP1032661), Carol Paterson (MPP979637), Aaron Taylor (MPP1032694), Eilidh Sinclair Wright (MPP1032760), Ian Ross (MPP1032817), Lucinda Sutherland (MPP1032850), Ian Cannop (MPP1032993), Hamilton (MPP1032492), Steven Reid (MPP1032948), Alison Henderson (MPP1033471), James Henderson (MPP1033472), Allan Sutherland (MPP1032228), Alan Ritchie (MPP980220), Lynsey Mackay (MPP1033501), Yvonne Martin (MPP1033504), Monika Carson (MPP1033507), Ryan Wade (MPP1033508), Sasha Carroll (MPP1032647), Jack Dunnett (MPP1032498), William Miskelly (MPP1033534), Yasemin Turanli (MPP1033545), Andrew Adamson (MPP1033812), Pam Bain (MPP1033586), Sean Miller (MPP1033482), Abbey Sutherland (MPP1033845), Kerry Oag (MPP1033483), Martin Ross (MPP1033522), Amanda Gunn (MPP1033818), Clive Meikle (MPP980256), Reid's of Caithness (MPP1033983), Andrew Hare (MPP1033535), Meghann Ashpool (MPP1034155), Val Ashpool (MPP1034162), Stephanie Whelan (MPP1034173), Jade Baikie (MPP1033831), Gregor Clunie (MPP1034175), Alan Lobban (MPP1034166), Claire Cairns (MPP1034178), Carol Lobban (MPP1034177), Kieran McKenzie (MPP1034174), Nicola Arthur (MPP1034246), William Urquhart (MPP1034181), Chelsey Trueman (MPP1034446), Ian Mackay (MPP1034447), Kim McColm (MPP1034441), Samantha Angus (MPP1034517), Veronica Mackay (MPP1033807), James Henderson (jnr) (MPP1033475), Ben Gordon (MPP1034569), Charles Henderson (MPP1033480), Rachel Dickson (MPP1034576), Cartwright (MPP979956), Laura Davidson (MPP1032852), John Hart (MPP1031794), Adam Cairns Paterson (MPP1034614), Fraser Steven (MPP1033806), Claire Mclean (MPP1034634), Michelle Will (MPP1034160), Mike Lunan (MPP1034651), Nicky Cowie (MPP1034161), Karen Henderson (MPP1034643), Mary Paterson (MPP1034694), Thomas Watters (MPP1034436), Sandra Isabelle Harris (MPP1034546), Derek Taylor (MPP980213), Anna Wilson (MPP1034499), Ian Mackay (MPP978586), Stuart Andrew (MPP980221), William Lipka (MPP1034146), Marlene Lipka (MPP1034152), Colette Kidd (MPP1034715), Ryan Cameron (MPP1034708), Megan Williamson (MPP1034717), Karon MacGregor (MPP1034719), Gordon McConnell (MPP1034718), Tony Carroll (MPP1034724), Zoe Kerr (MPP1034727), Alexander Wilson (MPP1034726), Alan Dykes (MPP1034712), Elizabeth Balfour (MPP1034729), Connie Doyle (MPP1034730), Sharon Smith (MPP1034572), Fiona McLean (MPP1034721), Pennyland House B&B (MPP971783), George Robertson (MPP1034736), Euan Munro (MPP1034728), Andrew Martin (MPP1034735), Marcela McMillan (MPP1034738), Colin McLean (MPP1034744), Carol Paterson (MPP979637), Ellie Spencer (MPP1034530), Jack Drummond (MPP1034747), John McGeachie (MPP1034749), William Steven (MPP1033802), Lauren Robb (MPP1034783), Emily Eadie (MPP1034605), Lynne Reid (MPP1034346), Kerrie Martin (MPP1034602), P McDonald (MPP1034620), Gillian McGill (MPP1034660), Reece Smith (MPP1032849), Michael Ross (1033524), Jan Mackay (MPP1032499)

Representors object to the removal of sites TS12 and TS14 from the Proposed Plan for one or more of the following reasons:

Economy

- Tourism has been identified as a key growth sector for the regeneration of the area and there are many attractions for visitors which need to be exploited, including the aurora borealis, whisky distillery, LEJOG route, fishing, surfing, cultural heritage and archaeology and natural heritage. Most visitors currently pass through the County on their way to Orkney (reference is made to Rough Guide which advises travellers that Thurso is a jumping off point for the Orkneys).
- Thurso needs to diversify its economy and attract new job opportunities to retain young people and families. Dounreay and Vulcan Naval Reactor Test Establishment (NRTE) are closing in the near future and new job opportunities are needed to prevent an exodus of people from the area. The situation in Annan since Chapel Cross must be avoided.
- There is increasing demand for a new modern hotel, lodge and leisure facility in Thurso and in Caithness. The proposed hotel and park will entice people to stay for an extended period of time in Thurso rather than passing through as they do at present. This would be beneficial to all the other shops and businesses in the area and encourage events and other businesses to Thurso.
- During periods of 2016 there were no spare bedspaces in Thurso and visitors were forced to look for accommodation elsewhere in Caithness or split parties up between hotels across the county. During the peak season booking need to be made months in advance.
- There is a type of visitor that Thurso just does not cater for at present. The quality of visitor accommodation has risen across Scotland over recent years but in Thurso it is still at a relatively low standard.
- Holiday lodges or glamps are becoming an increasingly popular holiday experience.
- The North Coast 500 initiative is a phenomenal success with international press coverage and is resulting in huge numbers of tourists visiting the area with the route passing through the town. The existing visitor accommodation does not meet modern expectations, including in appearance, location, type of accommodation and parking facilities. The existing campsite and static homes on land adjoining TS12/14 is drab, uninviting and an eyesore. Without suitable accommodation the NC500 will lose its appeal to visitors.
- The hotel proposal would attract more people to the town which would benefit local shops and other hotels/guest houses and encourage business start-ups. It will also help to attract business locate/invest in the area. Less reliance of having to travel to Wick for goods/services.
- A new hotel could host weddings and provide a hub for business
- The proposal offers the prospect of new long term jobs being created including apprenticeships within the hospitality industry which would also ties in with the management/hospitality courses at UHI North Highland College in Thurso.
- Another hotel would help to increase competition amongst hotel business and result in higher standards. The current hotel inventory is old fashioned and could put off potential visitors from staying in Thurso.
- Councillors suggested that a suitable site for a hotel would be near the business

- park. However this would only attract a budget level rather than a high quality hotel.
- The site is in close proximity to the town centre and visitors can use Victoria walk which is an asset to both the proposed hotel and businesses in the town.

Community

- There is widespread community support for the proposal and there has been for many years. Councillors made the wrong decision to remove the sites.
- There is currently a lack of amenities available to people visiting the area.
- The proposal would allow Thurso to re-market itself, breathe new life back into the town, improve the town's image; make the local community proud of Thurso again; represent a step in the right direction of achieving a bigger goal for the area. The opportunity to build a new hotel and public park facilities should not be missed.
- The park would be a great area for multi uses. Creation of a public park would be a great addition to the community and much needed for community events, e.g. Thurso Gala. Its location would also make a great setting for a public park where visitors can stop to enjoy the view. The car park with picnic benches will attract visitors to stop and enjoy the vista and park.
- The main objectors to the proposals are neighbours who do not want any development in Thurso West.
- The Report to Committee was 235 pages in total with many pages of planning argument on the benefits of the hotel and park project for the town and community including a series of Developer Requirements to be met before permission could be granted.
- Concerns that full consideration was not made by the Councillors of the consequences of the decision for the Plan area in terms of the loss of jobs etc. Need for deeper consideration. The minutes of the Committee on the 31st August show that there were not strong reasons for removal of the sites with the point raised being already addressed within the Officer's Recommendations.

Environment

- Thurso's seafront is underused and underutilised. Other sea-side towns in the UK exploit their natural setting with promenades, seafront tourist accommodation, cycle facilities, shops and tourist attractions. Disagreement with the need to protect the 'view' and considers it should be used to generate income for the town like many other countries across the world. The best public place to stop and enjoy the view out over Thurso Bay is a Lidl supermarket carpark.
- This is the perfect location for such a hotel and park. The hotel proposed is well designed, low lying and would not compromise the landscape. It could be an iconic project for the town and raise its profile.
- The area between Scrabster and Castletown has uninterrupted views. There are never any groups of tourists stopped on Olrig Road to admire the view.
- The proposal would not have a significant impact on the view. There will be little if any adverse impact on the view out over Thurso Bay as the site slopes downwards and will allow people to see right over the top of the hotel, especially if it has a flat grass roof.
- Landowner could choose to do anything with his land but is choosing to promote it for visitors.
- The site is in walking distance of the main attractions, including the town centre and beach.

- There is no amenity value at present as the fields are only used for sheep grazing.
- The visual impact from onshore and offshore windfarms (which the respondent supports) will have a significantly greater impact on the coastline than the proposed hotel.

Gary Parker (968625)

Does not object in principle if the height of the building could be restricted, it is well designed and does not affect neighbouring properties during construction.

Modifications sought by those submitting representations:

Modifications sought at Proposed Plan stage:

TS12 – East of Burnside

SNH (909933), Ian Walker (979716), David Doohan (980228)

Amend the Developer Requirements text for the TS12 allocation with regards to reference to sites TS01 – TS03.

Sheena Mclachlan (960835), Walter Mclachlan (979426), William Walker (979718), Ian Walker (979716), David Doohan (980228), Amelia Walker (931321), Michael Bowden (980202), Stuart Liddle (980236), Stephen Anderson (983269)

Removal of allocation TS12 from the Plan.

TS14 – Land West of Caravan Park for Business

Alan Loomes (980235), Lee MacDougall (980312), Jane Foster (980307), Margaret Smedley (930596), Lee Parnell (979688), Sheena Mclachlan (960835), Jane Telfer (979224), Jacqueline Ridgley (930800), Timothy Ridgley (979979), Anthony Ridgley (979975), The Pentland Hotel (979985), Tanya Sutherland (979994), Walter Mclachlan (979426), St Clair Hotel (980003), William Walker (979718), Marjory Lord (980210), Ian Walker (979716), Jason Ridgley (980223), David Doohan (980228), Kenneth Nicol (977530), Amelia Walker (931321), Colin MacDonald (980226), Station Hotel (980280), Cecilia Brands (979454), Kirsten Murray (979696), Michelle Fraser (979884), Fiona Doohan (980015), Jill Falconer (979729), Karen Risbridger (980206), Robert Falconer (980046), Stuart Liddle (980236), Alastair Chisholm Christie (980596), Phyllis Nicol (980599), Tom Jackson (981229), Louise Smith-Dasar (981718), Donald Mackay (981995), Carol Murray (983145), Linsey MacDougall (980035), Kathleen Faulds (983151), John Faulds (983248), George Mitchell (983251), Lindsay Kay (983250), Amanda Robertson (983266), Stephen Anderson (983269), Lyndall Leet (983272), Cynthia Calder (980214), Danny Calder (983991), Andrew Fraser (983996), Caithness Chamber of Commerce (CCC) (983321), London and Scottish Investments Ltd (979770), David Lord (1069719)

Removal of allocation TS14 from the Plan. Some respondents requested that the area should be safeguarded as Greenspace.

Janetta Christie (975843), George Mitchell (983251)

Requests that if allocated then the hotel be positioned close to the road and not by the cliff

edge.

SEPA (906306)

Add the following as a Developer Requirement “Flood Risk Assessment (no development in areas shown to be at risk of flooding).”

Modifications sought at Modified Proposed Plan stage:

TS12 - East of Burnside for Community and TS14 - Land West of Caravan Park for Business

Fiona Mackie (MPP978748), Colin Paterson (MPP979739), Bruce McConnell (MPP1031719), Paula Fisher (MPP1031813), Samantha Lovett (MPP1031902), Angus Cowap (MPP970363), Jeremy Evans (MPP1031927), Ian Westmorland (MPP1031981), Helen Robbie (MPP1032179), Sharon Lennie (MPP1032200), Don Mackay (MPP1032343), Graeme Reid (MPP1032386), Eilidh Paterson (MPP980233), Michael Cowie (MPP1032425), Jack Floydd (MPP1032423), Iain Black (MPP1032452), Iain Elder (MPP1032459), Valerie Moseley (MPP1031843), Amelia Mackay (MPP1032516), Jamie Mackay (MPP980254), Rebecca Paterson (MPP979904), Abbie Wilson (MPP1032650), Steven Grant (MPP980189), Euan Sinclair (MPP980244), Liam Dykes (MPP1032658), Ross Dignan (MPP1032656), Isaac Johnson (MPP1032661), Carol Paterson (MPP979637), Aaron Taylor (MPP1032694), Eilidh Sinclair Wright (MPP1032760), Ian Ross (MPP1032817), Lucinda Sutherland (MPP1032850), Ian Cannop (MPP1032993), Hamilton (MPP1032492), Steven Reid (MPP1032948), Alison Henderson (MPP1033471), James Henderson (MPP1033472), Allan Sutherland (MPP1032228), Alan Ritchie (MPP980220), Lynsey Mackay (MPP1033501), Yvonne Martin (MPP1033504), Monika Carson (MPP1033507), Ryan Wade (MPP1033508), Sasha Carroll (MPP1032647), Jack Dunnett (MPP1032498), William Miskelly (MPP1033534), Yasemin Turanli (MPP1033545), Andrew Adamson (MPP1033812), Pam Bain (MPP1033586), Sean Miller (MPP1033482), Abbey Sutherland (MPP1033845), Kerry Oag (MPP1033483), Martin Ross (MPP1033522), Amanda Gunn (MPP1033818), Clive Meikle (MPP980256), Reid's of Caithness (MPP1033983), Andrew Hare (MPP1033535), Meghann Ashpool (MPP1034155), Val Ashpool (MPP1034162), Stephanie Whelan (MPP1034173), Jade Baikie (MPP1033831), Gregor Clunie (MPP1034175), Alan Lobban (MPP1034166), Claire Cairns (MPP1034178), Carol Lobban (MPP1034177), Kieran McKenzie (MPP1034174), Nicola Arthur (MPP1034246), William Urquhart (MPP1034181), Chelsey Trueman (MPP1034446), Ian Mackay (MPP1034447), Kim McColm (MPP1034441), Samantha Angus (MPP1034517), Veronica Mackay (MPP1033807), James Henderson (jnr) (MPP1033475), Ben Gordon (MPP1034569), Charles Henderson (MPP1033480), Rachel Dickson (MPP1034576), Cartwright (MPP979956), Laura Davidson (MPP1032852), John Hart (MPP1031794), Adam Cairns Paterson (MPP1034614), Fraser Steven (MPP1033806), Claire Mclean (MPP1034634), Michelle Will (MPP1034160), Mike Lunan (MPP1034651), Nicky Cowie (MPP1034161), Karen Henderson (MPP1034643), Mary Paterson (MPP1034694), Thomas Watters (MPP1034436), Sandra Isabelle Harris (MPP1034546), Derek Taylor (MPP980213), Anna Wilson (MPP1034499), Ian Mackay (MPP978586), Stuart Andrew (MPP980221), William Lipka (MPP1034146), Marlene Lipka (MPP1034152), Colette Kidd (MPP1034715), Ryan Cameron (MPP1034708), Megan Williamson (MPP1034717), Karon MacGregor (MPP1034719), Gordon McConnell (MPP1034718), Tony Carroll (MPP1034724), Zoe Kerr (MPP1034727), Alexander Wilson (MPP1034726), Alan Dykes

(MPP1034712), Elizabeth Balfour (MPP1034729), Connie Doyle (MPP1034730), Miss Sharon Smith (MPP1034572), Fiona McLean (MPP1034721), Pennyland House B&B (MPP971783), George Robertson (MPP1034736), Euan Munro (MPP1034728), Andrew Martin (MPP1034735), Marcela McMillan (MPP1034738), Colin McLean (MPP1034744), Carol Paterson (MPP979637), Ellie Spencer (MPP1034530), Jack Drummond (MPP1034747), John McGeachie (MPP1034749), William Steven (MPP1033802), Lauren Robb (MPP1034783), Emily Eadie (MPP1034605), Lynne Reid (MPP1034346), Miss Kerrie Martin (MPP1034602), P McDonald (MPP1034620), Gillian McGill (MPP1034660), Samantha Lovett (MPP1037485), Jan Mackay (MPP1032499)

Re-allocate sites TS12 East of Burnside for Community (public park) and TS14 Land West of Caravan Park for Business (Tourism and Leisure).

Summary of responses (including reasons) by planning authority:

Planning Authority's consideration of the representations on the Proposed Plan in August 2016:

TS12 - East of Burnside for Community and TS14 - Land West of Caravan Park for Business

Comments in support of the allocation TS12 East of Burnside were noted, including: the benefits a public park could bring to the community and provide for a rise in tourists, ensuring that part of the vista over Thurso Bay is preserved and that it forms part of a wider vision for Thurso.

Comments in support of the allocation TS14 Land West of Caravan Park were noted including: the continuing growth in the tourism industry; demand for additional higher quality tourist accommodation and business/conference space; an appropriately designed building could fit well on the site and be an asset to the town; the hotel creating employment opportunities; and it close to the town centre.

In respect of issues raised relating to the planning history of sites at Pennyland and the coalescence between Thurso and Burnside see the response to site allocation TS04 within Issue 11 Thurso West.

In respect to issues raised in regard to the role of the tourism industry, the hotel market in Caithness and the implications of allocating land for a new hotel in Thurso see Issue 10 Thurso.

Role of the Charrette

The Council disputes that not enough was done to publicise the Charrette and its role in the preparation of the Plan. The Charrette was intended to provide an additional means of gaining community involvement in the early stages of the preparation of the local development plan. It provided a chance for local people to shape the future of their community and aimed at reaching consensus over preferred and alternative land use strategies to feed into the CaSPlan Main Issues Report (MIR). The Council and the consultant team adopted a range of methods to publicise the charrettes. Event invitations were distributed to various people and provided supplies of leaflets at key locations. The

events were advertised in local newspapers and banners, posters and leaflets were displayed at key locations within the town. Meetings were also held with local community groups and other key stakeholders in the lead up to the event. Local schools, the North Highland College (UHI) and members of the Highland Youth Voice and Scottish Youth Parliament were also targeted. As a result the Council continues to believe that the outcomes of the Charrette are appropriate to form a strong basis for the strategy in the Plan.

Concerns regarding the apparent change in position from that shown in the Charrette Report (CD25) were noted. The Charrette played a key role in supporting and informing the MIR (CD04) (which is the key discussion stage in the plan making process), however, a wide range of issues were discussed at the Charrette. The Post-It Workshops “Thurso Today” & “Thurso Tomorrow” highlighted issues such as the lack of good quality hotels, an untapped tourism potential and with coalescence between Scrabster and Thurso. The views along the coast and the greenspaces were also raised during the charrette. The Hands-On Planning workshop ‘Thurso Western Expansion’ discussed site options for a new hotel. This focused on land south of the A9 at Pennyland House and land north of the A9 which was also marked as being cliff-top open amenity land.

Through further analysis of the sites at Pennyland Officers considered that the land north of the A9 was suitable for a hotel if the majority of the land was safeguarded for a public park. The hotel was proposed to be allocated on the east of the site to minimise the visual impact and protect vistas out over Thurso Bay, including out towards Dunnet Head from the western approach and Scrabster/Holborn Head from the east. Officers considered that this would ensure that TS12 would be safeguarded from development and with provision of a public park that a greater level of public access and amenity value would be achieved. Opening up TS12 as a public park with car parking would encourage more people to stop and enjoy the space and the spectacular vistas.

Impact on existing businesses

The general response to the hotel market is outlined within Issue 10 Thurso. This refers to the expected growth of the tourism sector, continued demand from business visitors and the need to continue to improve the tourism product and accommodation on offer in Caithness. Whilst the concerns for the hotel proposal on TS14 were noted Officers did not believe the proposal would lead to undue competition with existing town centre businesses. Although the site is outwith the Town Centre Boundary the proposal for a high quality hotel, spa and restaurant on TS14 was considered as being mainly location dependant. It was expected that a specific selling point of a hotel, spa and restaurant would be its cliff top location, looking over Thurso Bay. Together with the Developer Requirements for high quality, low level siting and design the proposal would likely have appealed more to the higher end of the market which is not being properly provided for at present. There are also footpaths along the A9 and Victoria Walk which lead directly (less than 350 metres) to the town centre. As a result Officers’ recommendations did not propose any modifications to the Proposed Plan. However, Officers’ recommendations were to suggest that if the Reporter was so minded he/she could amend the range of uses from “Tourism, Leisure” to “Hotel and ancillary leisure facilities” to be more specific about what would be supported on the site. The inclusion of lodges/chalets as part of the allocation was referenced by the landowner and members of the public. Although the allocation as shown in the Proposed Plan (CD03) was for ‘Business (Tourism, Leisure)’ uses the Developer Requirement text and paragraph 109 had referred specifically to a

hotel development. Officers did not believe a strong case had been made to support the inclusion of chalet development and if brought forward on its own the scale of development may not be sufficient to deliver the public park elements of the proposal. In addition, given its prominent location the site was considered by Officers to be more suited to a well designed hotel development. As a result Officers did not recommend any modification of the Plan to specify reference to support for lodges/chalets development.

In addition, to help provide greater protection to existing businesses Officers recommended suggesting that the Reporter could add “Town centre impact assessment” to the list of Developer Requirements as this could be used to ensure that the development would not have undue competition on the existing businesses.

Concerns over the ability to ensure a high quality hotel is delivered are noted. Although the Council has the ability to influence the quality of the siting and design of any building on the site it is recognised that there is no control over specific hotel operators. The range of Developer Requirements, particularly those relating to the siting and design, landscaping and other environmental improvements, were considered by Officers to discourage more budget level and chain brands and appeal more to a higher quality/boutique type hotel which requires an attractive setting and greater investment in the surrounding area.

Impact on landscape and views of Thurso Bay

The views out over Thurso Bay to Scrabster, Dunnet Head and Orkney were recognised by Officers as being important features and valuable assets of Thurso. However, Officers considered that a higher quality hotel development which minimises the impact on the landscape could be achieved if the developer was required to produce a masterplan for the site which would address issues, including the siting and design of the hotel, provision of a public park area, landscaping, access from the A9, enhanced active travel connections and coastal walk improvements. High quality, low level design was considered essential and the inclusion of features such as stone dykes could have helped to integrate the development within its surroundings. Officers considered that the visual impact would be minimised by the hotel allocation having been located on the eastern side of TS14, adjoining the existing caravan park. The hotel allocation was also restricted to 3ha which included an area identified for Expansion of the Green Network along the coastal edge. This would have allowed for the protection of 6.5ha of land at TS12 for the provision of a public park which would have preserved open views to Dunnet Head and Scrabster Harbour. Officers considered that the public park and hotel development could have helped to provide a more attractive entrance into the town centre and remove the focus of the buildings on the seaward side of the A9 being mainly centred on the existing caravan park. Overall Officers believed that the allocation and the Developer Requirements were sufficient to ensure that a hotel development in line with the Proposed Plan would have had an acceptable impact on the landscape. As a result no modification to the Plan was proposed.

Officers recommended that to provide greater clarity over the expectation that a high quality of siting and design is required on the site, it could be suggested that if the Reporter was so minded, he/she could add in the following text to paragraph 109: “Visit Scotland’s Tourism Strategy (CD35) identifies a need for more quality hotels in Caithness and to help meet this land is allocated at Pennyland. *Given its prominent and sensitive location it is essential that a hotel in this location is delivered to the highest of standards. A low level building with features such as a green roof would help reduce the visual impact.* The

development....”

In response to concerns over the resilience of any planting on TS12 or TS14, Officers recommended that the developer of the hotel would be required to submit a Landscaping Management Plan which will set out in detail features such as planting and maintenance of any vegetation/shrubs/trees for the site. This would ensure that any landscaping would be suitable to the weather conditions and would be well maintained. To provide greater clarity of what would be expected of a developer, Officers also recommended suggesting that if the Reporter was so minded, the existing Developer Requirement “Landscaping” could be replaced with “High quality landscaping set out within a Landscaping Management Plan”.

Officers recognised the George Wylie sculpture as being an important feature of the local area but did not consider it appropriate to require the adjoining developer to maintain/enhance access to it. Despite this, landscaping and improvements to the coastal walk are noted as part of the Developer Requirements for TS12. Therefore, there may have been opportunity to consider potential enhancement of the George Wylie sculpture at planning application stage. Officers did not recommend any modification to the Plan.

Officers believed that SEPA’s request for an additional Developer Requirement was based on sound evidence. It was therefore recommended to suggest that, if the Reporter is so minded, the following developer requirement could have been added: “Flood Risk Assessment (no development in areas shown at risk of flooding)”. This would have addressed any issues relating to surface water drainage and flood risk which are set out in the Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP) (CD18) at Policy 64 Flood Risk and Policy 66 Surface Water Drainage and the associated Flood Risk and Drainage Impact Assessment Supplementary Guidance (CD13).

Concluding remarks on TS12 and TS14

Officers considered that the development of a high quality hotel, spa, restaurant and safeguarding land for a public park could have helped to deliver the Plan’s aim of supporting the growth of the tourism industry. As shown above the impacts on the landscape could have been mitigated through siting and design and landscaping. There also appeared to be sufficient demand in the hotel market for higher quality accommodation with associated facilities and that competition with existing town centre businesses was not as severe as suggested when taking account of appropriate mitigation. Consequently Officers recommended that the Council maintained the allocations TS12 and TS14 as set out within the Proposed Plan without modification.

Other Hotel site suggestions

Suggestions of other possible sites for a new hotel had been submitted to the Council for consideration. The Landowner of Pennyland Farm suggested that, as well as the hotel allocation on TS14, land should be allocated for another hotel closer to the Business Park. It was suggested that this would be targeted more towards national chain hotels. However, Officers considered that this type of proposal would be more suitable within the town centre. The allocation of land at TS14 was mainly due to its attractive cliff top location and that Developer Requirements could have been added which ensure that a high quality development was delivered. A development next to the Business Park, however, would not be location dependant and would likely attract a budget hotel. This would then compete more directly with the existing town centre businesses. Therefore the suggested hotel allocation near the Business Park was not recommended and no

modification was proposed to the Plan.

Several other sites were suggested to the Council including TS07 and TS08. The respondents who suggested these sites appear- to do so as alternatives to development of TS14. However, these sites were arguably less attractive for a quality hotel given the adjoining uses or limited views. Of the sites suggested to the Council, TS14 was considered by Officers as the most suitable to allocate for a hotel as it would have appealed more towards the higher end of the hotel market which in turn would not present significant direct competition with town centre budget hotels.

For the response to the suggestion of a hotel allocation on TS05 Former Mart Site see Issue 10 Thurso.

Other Issues Raised

Implications of an Allocation in the LDP

It is not the case that should a site be allocated in the Local Development Plan a developer would be automatically granted planning in principle. Although allocation in the Plan does show that the Council would support in principle the allocated land uses, a developer would still be required to submit an application, either a planning in principle or a full planning application. Interested parties, including the general public, would then have the opportunity to make comments on the application. The proposal for hotel development was specifically identified in the site allocation table of the Proposed Plan in order to clearly set out the type of development which it was proposed would be supported and thereby discourage any other proposals coming forward on the site.

Incorrect Site Referencing

The site references, as shown in the Proposed Plan (CD03), included within the Developer Requirements for TS04, TS12 and TS14 were recognised as being wrong shortly after the consultation started. The errata for the Proposed Plan noted this error and included the correct site referencing (referring to TS04, TS12 and TS14 rather than TS01, TS02 and TS03). The error was corrected as a non-notifiable modification at Modified Proposed Plan stage (which also included the removal of proposed site allocations TS12 and TS14 from the Plan). No further comments were made on the site references during the consultation on the Modified Proposed Plan.

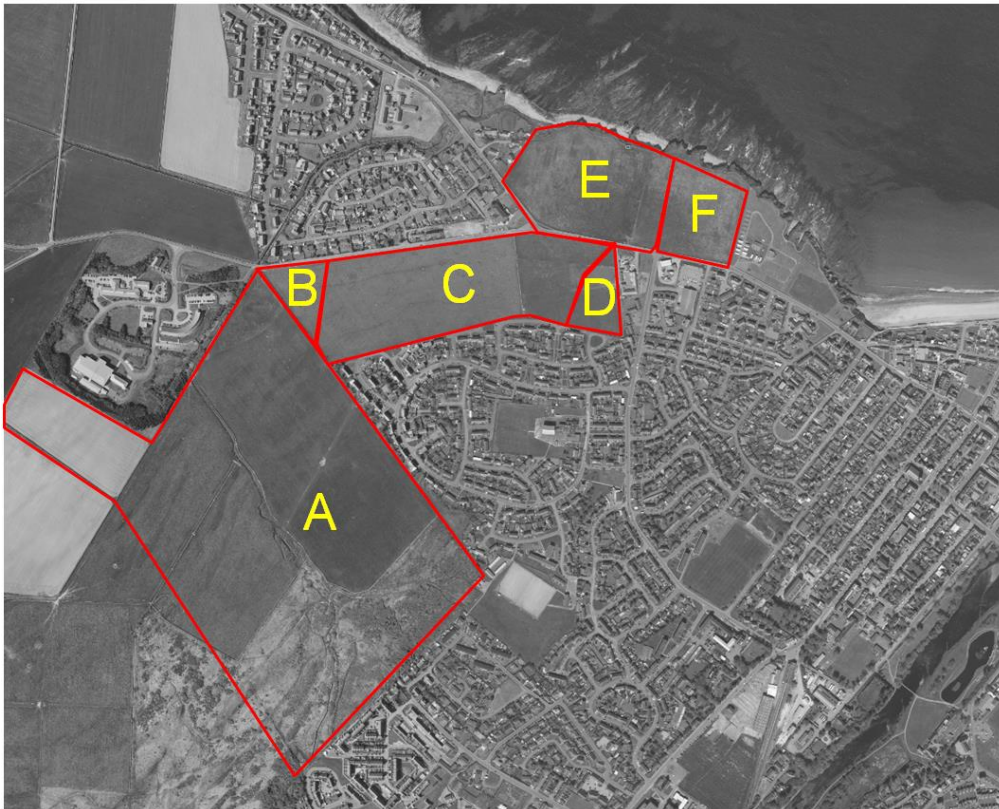
DECISIONS THAT WERE SOUGHT FROM (31st August 2016) COMMITTEE

This section sets out two key decisions that were sought from Committee relating to the site allocations in the Thurso West area following consultation on the Proposed Plan. The options presented by Officers to Committee for consideration responded to a wide range of issues raised during the Proposed Plan consultation. It was highlighted that clear decisions should be made by Committee on the Council's proposed strategy and development allocations in the area. It was noted that, depending upon which options were chosen, it could lead to significant, notifiable modifications to the Plan.

To assist the discussion and decisions for this area the map below showed the relevant areas:

- Area A – Mixed use allocation in the Proposed Plan (CD03), predominately reflecting the existing Caithness Local Plan (2002) (CD17) allocations

- Area B – Allocated in the Proposed Plan for a filling station and small business units
- Area C – Identified in the Proposed Plan as Long Term Housing and Amenity land
- Area D – Allocated in the Proposed Plan for up to 20 houses
- Area E – Community allocation (public park) in the Proposed Plan
- Area F – Allocated in the Proposed Plan for Business (Tourism, Leisure), with specific reference to an opportunity for a hotel



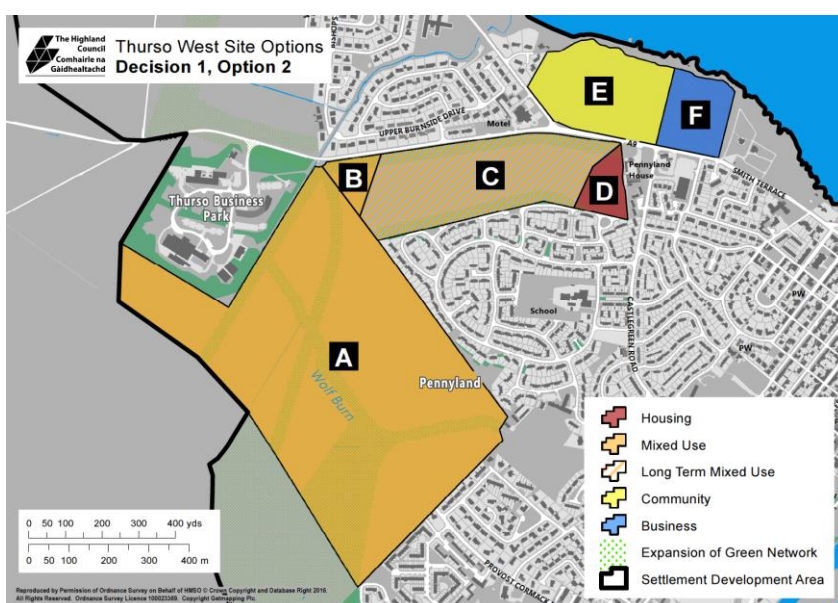
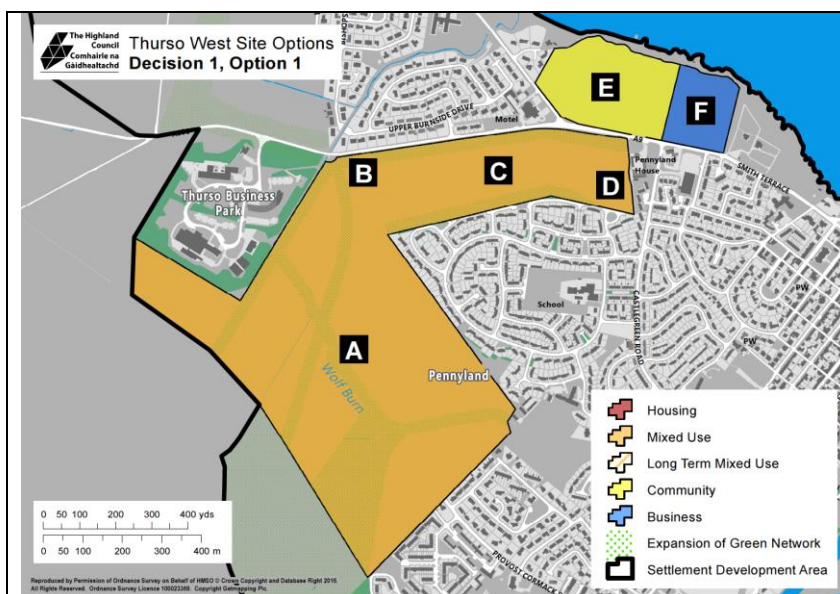
DECISION 1 – Presentation of TS04 (Areas A, B, C and D)

The first decision relates to how site TS04 is presented in the Plan.

The large single site boundary of allocation TS04 (covering A, B, C and D) was identified to reflect the extent of the proposed review of the Thurso Western Expansion Area Development Brief and/or developer-led masterplan. Although this remained the recommended position Members were presented with an option to break down TS04 into the components shown in the map below, identifying these as such in the Plan itself.

Committee was asked to choose between two options:

- Option 1 – retain TS04 as a single large allocation as shown in the Proposed Plan (CD03); or
- Option 2 - separate TS04 into its key components as shown in the map below.



It was recommended that Committee (31st August 2016) choose Option 1 to retain TS04 as a single allocation as it would better reflect the extent covered by the forthcoming review of the Thurso West Development Brief. Future plan reviews would then confirm the mix of development across the site.

It was noted that if Committee decided on Option 2 then we would ask the Reporter to accept this as essentially a presentational change rather than a significant modification to the Plan's proposals.

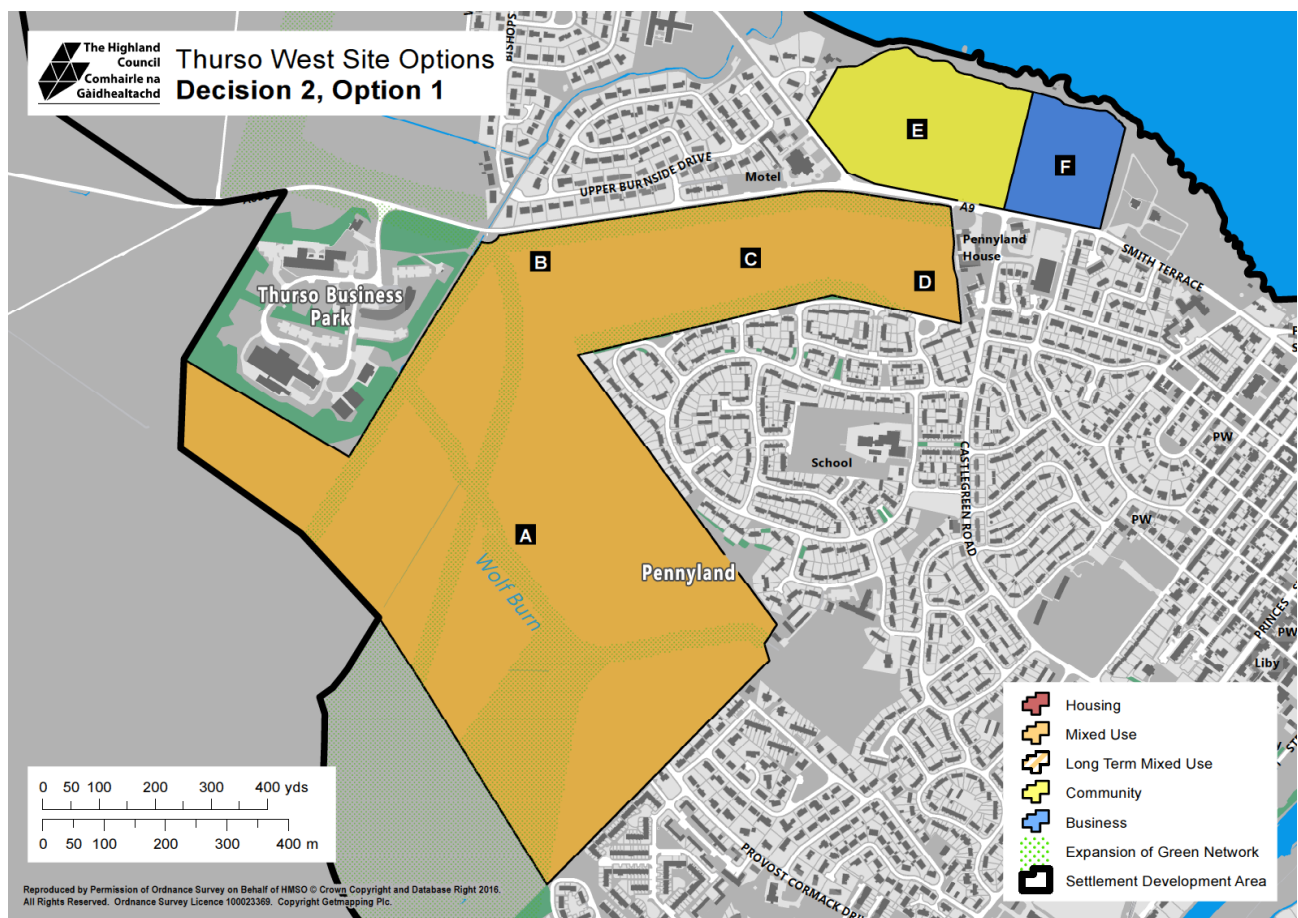
DECISION 2 – Fields north of the A9 at Pennyland (Areas E and F)

Decision 2 presented the following three options for how land at Pennyland (areas E and F) was shown in the Plan.

Option 1 – Position presented in the Proposed Plan (E and F)

This option represented the strategy and site allocations identified in the Proposed Plan

(CD03) and agreed at Committee in November 2015 as the settled view of the Council. It was recommended that, on balance, this option was considered to be the most suitable option for the future of the area.



As part of the recommended position it was noted that the arguments both for and against this option have been fully considered. It was recognised that the proposals would result in a change to the landscape and reduce views from particular positions out towards Thurso Bay. Additionally it was noted that there are concerns from existing hotel operators about potential impacts on the hotel market in Thurso and local residents about a change in standpoint from previous planning decisions. However, as set out in the recommended response above the proposal was considered to provide a range of potential benefits. The allocation formed part of a long term vision for Thurso as set out in the Proposed Plan (CD03) and the hotel allocation may have provided a mechanism for helping to deliver and safeguard land for a public park. It was also noted that the tourism market is continuing to grow (particularly within initiatives such as NC500) and a high quality hotel with leisure facilities and restaurant could help address shortcomings in the current hotel inventory and extend the duration of visits.

It was **recommended (31st August 2016) that Committee agreed with Option 1** (as shown in the map above) and retain the proposals as set out in the Proposed Plan (CD03). This was because the proposals were considered to have the potential to deliver wider benefits to the area and the impacts of development could be suitably mitigated.

It was noted that choosing this option would not have involved significant modifications to

the Plan. This would mean moving straight to preparing for the submission to Scottish Ministers for Examination following the August Committee rather than face delay in the process. The Reporter(s) would then consider and decide on the outstanding issues.

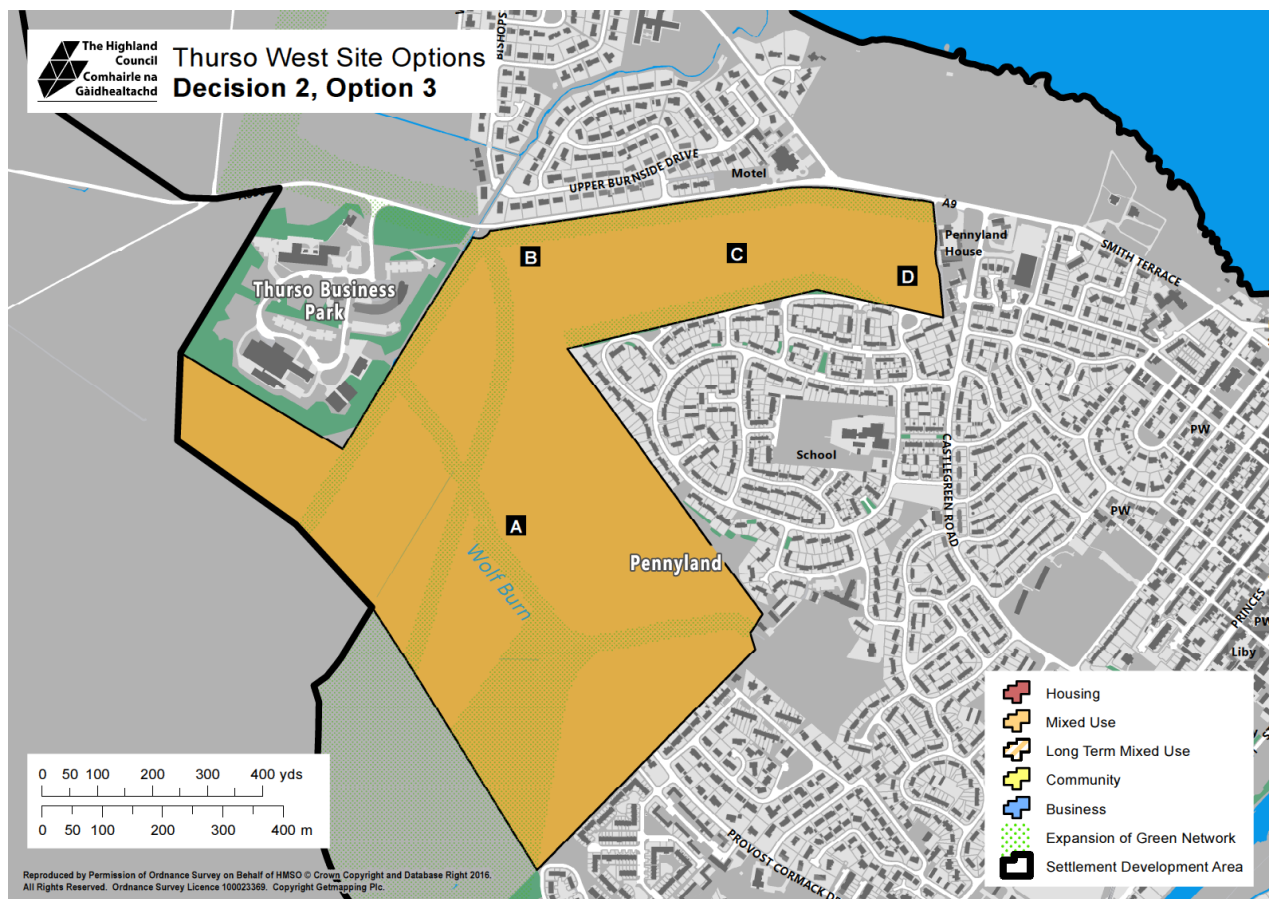
Option 2 – Retain areas E and F but amend uses

The Committee were presented with an option to maintain the allocation of Areas E and F but to change the specific uses in respect of Area F, e.g. from a hotel to 'visitor accommodation' or 'chalets/lodges'. **Officers did not recommend (31st August 2016) that Committee selects this option** because a well designed hotel was considered to be more suitable for this location.

If Committee decided on Option 2 then Officers would have asked the Reporter to accept the change rather than make a significant modification to the Plan's proposals.

Option 3 – Removal of allocations for public park (E) and hotel opportunity (F)

Many objections were raised during the consultation to the allocation of land for a hotel and associated leisure facilities at Pennyland. If the hotel proposal (Area F) was removed there would be no clear way of delivering the public park on site TS12 through the Plan. As a result officers advised that if Area F were to be removed, Area E should also be removed.



It was acknowledged that there were some advantages and disadvantages of this option. Option 2 may better reflect the masterplan which was shown in the final Charrette Report (CD25). It would also reduce landscape change and avoid any potential impact on existing hotel businesses. On the other hand, as Option 1 pointed out, the proposals formed part of a

long term vision for Thurso West and the allocations provided a mechanism for helping to deliver and safeguard land for a public park. The tourism market is continuing to grow (particularly with initiatives such as NC500) and a high quality hotel with leisure facilities and restaurant could help address shortcomings in the current hotel inventory and extend the duration of visits.

Officers noted that, on balance, **Option 2**, as shown in the map above, **was not recommended to Committee (31st August 2016)** as a well designed hotel could deliver wider benefits for the town and the impacts can be suitably mitigated.

The recommendation stated that this would be a significant modification of the Plan, necessitating consultation on a Modified Plan with consequential delay to progression and adoption of the Plan and additional costs.

OUTCOME OF CAITHNESS COMMITTEE ON 31st August 2016

Officers presented two key decisions for Committee to consider. The first related to the way in which site TS04 Thurso West would be presented within the Plan. Two options were put forward for consideration: 1) retain TS04 as a single large allocation as shown in the Proposed Plan (CD03); and 2) separate TS04 into its key components. The Committee agreed with the recommendation to retain TS04 as a single allocation (as per the Proposed Plan).

The second decision for the Committee to consider related to sites TS12 and TS14. Three main options were presented which included: 1) retaining the allocations as set out in the Proposed Plan (Officer recommendation); 2) retaining the sites but amending the specified uses; or, 3) removing the allocations from the Proposed Plan. Pros and cons of each option were acknowledged by Officers in their report considered by Committee. Following discussion Committee agreed to remove sites TS12 and TS14 from the Proposed Plan. This consideration is documented in the report to Caithness Committee on 31st August 2016, the minutes of Committee and within this Schedule 4. The removal of allocations TS12 and TS14 from the Proposed Plan was a notifiable modification that led to the preparation of and consultation on a Modified Proposed Plan.

Planning Authority's consideration of the representations on the Modified Proposed Plan in February 2017:

TS12 - East of Burnside for Community and TS14 - Land West of Caravan Park for Business

As highlighted above, following consideration by the Caithness Committee on 31st August 2016 it was agreed to remove site allocations TS12 and TS14 from the Plan. The removal of the allocations was a notifiable modification that led to the preparation of and consultation on a Modified Proposed Plan. This Schedule 4 takes account of all the comments raised since the publication of the Proposed Plan (CD03) including issues raised at Committee.

Comments made in support of the Modified Proposed Plan position, which is to exclude TS12 and TS14, are noted. The key issues raised in support include: the lack of demand for another hotel; the construction of another hotel would ultimately result in existing town

centre hotels being forced out of business; the fields provide an attractive entrance into the town and give uninterrupted views out over Thurso Bay, consequently the sites should be protected from development; and, safeguarding the sites from development is in line with the previous public local inquiry decisions and the Charrette Report (CD25).

It is apparent that many of the issues raised in objection to the removal of the sites TS12 and TS14 are the same arguments which were put forward in support of the sites at Proposed Plan stage. As noted these were outlined and acknowledged in the report presented to Committee in August 2016. On the whole, the reasons put forward are in line with the rationale behind the original proposition for the sites as shown in the Proposed Plan. Please see the section above for the Officer Recommendations in response to the Proposed Plan.

The only new issue raised in response to the Modified Proposed Plan in relation to sites TS12 and TS14 is the suggestion of possible links being made between the hotel and the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) North Highland College in Thurso. It is recognised that there are potential benefits of having connections between new development such as this and vocational courses at the local college. This is reflective of wider aims for the area and could help to support the tourism and hospitality sectors. However, the potential benefits of such links do not warrant the Council to reinstate the sites. In addition, the point has been raised speculatively by several members of the public and was not a formal submission by either the prospective hotel developer or the UHI. As a result, no change is proposed to the Plan.

Below is a summary of the position now recommended to Committee, taking account of the issues raised in relation to the Modified Proposed Plan and the consideration by Caithness Committee in August 2016:

Protection of the vista

The vistas out over TS12 and TS14 were recognised within the Officer Recommendation in response to comments on the Proposed Plan as being an important feature and that development of the sites would inevitably result in a change to the landscape. The Committee decision in August 2016 reflects the opinion of many of representees objecting to development, that the impact from development would be too great on the vista towards Dunnet Head and Orkney. The Committee also felt that mitigation, such as Developer Requirements, could not guarantee that the vista is protected and preserved for the enjoyment of residents and visitors, which is becoming increasingly important given the growing number of tourists visiting the area due to initiatives such as the North Coast 500. As no evidence has been put forward which adequately challenges this position, or demonstrates otherwise, no change is proposed to the Modified Proposed Plan.

Previous planning decisions

The previous planning history was acknowledged within the response to issues raised in relation to the Proposed Plan. The sites were subject to previous public local inquiries which determined against development due mainly to there being alternative sites available for development and the potential impact on the landscape. The Council considers that the Development Plan should be more in line with the Scottish Government's previous determinations on the sites. As no evidence has been put forward which adequately challenges this position, or demonstrates otherwise, no change is proposed to the Modified Proposed Plan.

Suitable alternative sites

The Council considered that suitable alternative sites already exist within Thurso. In terms of the proposals for a hotel there are already allocations being supported, e.g. alongside the river (TS06, TS07 and TS08) and the former mart site, which have potential to accommodate a hotel. Committee members also put forward that there is no immediate need for a public park as there is already a range of publically accessible areas in the locality, including a play area, football park and a coastal walk along the cliff. As opportunities for these uses are included elsewhere in Thurso it is not recommended that any further modifications are made to the Plan.

Concern over ability to enforce Developer Requirements

Concern was expressed in regard to the extent to which Developer Requirements/ Development Brief can be enforceable. A particular area of concern focused on the extent to which the Council at the planning application stage could enforce suitable siting and design requirements and that development could be approved which is considered to be detrimental to the landscape. The concerns about the Council's inability to guarantee a top-end hotel user were acknowledged as this type of control cannot be achieved through the planning system. As noted in the Officer's response to representation on the Proposed Plan, whilst the Plan provided opportunity for a quality hotel development it did not attempt to limit or stipulate the 'quality' of hotel operator. What it did do was aim to ensure that, whoever the operator, the development would be sympathetic to the surrounding area, be of high quality architectural siting and design and minimise impact on the landscape. References within the supporting text for each settlement and the Developer Requirements relating to each site allocation form part of the Development Plan. As set out in legislation, unless material considerations indicate otherwise, an application is to be determined in accordance with the development plan.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Although diversification of the economy, job creation and the growth of tourism in Caithness is encouraged by the Council, the suitability of specific sites for allocation in CaSPlan needs to be considered. In relation to the particular tourism proposal for sites TS12 and TS14 the Council believes that, on balance, it is not suitable for allocation within the local development plan. Consequently, the Council seeks to defend the position as set out in the Modified Proposed Plan: retaining TS04 and excluding TS12 and TS14. The sites at Thurso West have continued to be the most controversial aspect of the Plan with a large number of representations made at each stage of the Plan, including the Modified Proposed Plan. Although there were numerous comments on the Modified Proposed Plan, no new issues or substantive evidence were raised which warrant the Council making further amendments to the Plan. Furthermore, we are not minded to propose any additional suggestions or amendments to the Plan for the Reporter to consider. In taking this position it should be noted that the Reporter would carefully consider the arguments both for and against components of development at Thurso West before reaching a final decision.

Reporter's conclusions:

Reporter's recommendations:

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