

Fragile Areas



Chapter No:

7

65 - Scottish Natural Heritage [Written Submissions]

BACKGROUND

1. The **objector** complained that further clarification was needed in setting out development criteria in areas of ‘Medium Sensitivity’, as described in Policy 2: Countryside (see Appendix 1 to this report). It was considered that, in order to avoid ambiguity, the points made in the policy with respect to fragile areas should be reiterated in the supporting paragraph 7.12.

2. The **council** accepted that paragraph 7.12 did not adequately reflect the distinction between how fragile areas were considered through criteria 1 and 2 of Policy 2 and proposed the following amendment to paragraph 7.12 (amended text shown underlined):

“Fragile Areas

7.12 The strategy recognises the different social and economic circumstances between communities within Wester Ross and highlights the need to meet the development needs of rural areas for homes, jobs and services. An important part of the strategy is identifying areas that are fragile due to a range of social and economic factors (you can get the paper which explains how we identify these areas from our Planning and Development Service). These are generally in the south of the area around Applecross and Torridon (see the Proposals Map), but will change over time as circumstances change. This affects the balance between development and conservation. In fragile areas, particularly within countryside areas of local and regional importance, we will support development proposals outwith the settlement development areas which show that they would support communities which are experiencing difficulties in maintaining population and services. In areas of national importance, we will support development proposals outwith settlement development areas which show they would support communities which are having difficulties in maintaining population and services, as long as they can be shown not to harm that heritage. In those parts of Wester Ross which are not fragile, we have taken account of the need to increase the boundaries of Settlement Development Areas to accommodate development.”

CONCLUSION

3. I agree that these amendments to paragraph 7.12 substantiate and clarify the council’s policy on fragile areas. As the objector subsequently withdrew the objection on this basis, the alterations to the paragraph appear to meet the requirements. However, I consider that the passage would be even clearer if the word “sustain” were to be substituted for a number of the instances where the word “support” has been used; and “obtain” used instead of “get”. The paragraph would then read (with my further amendments shown double underlined):

“Fragile Areas

7.12 The strategy recognises the different social and economic circumstances between communities within Wester Ross and highlights the need to meet the development needs of rural areas for homes, jobs and services. An important part of the strategy is identifying areas that are fragile due to a range of social and economic factors (you can obtain the paper which explains how we identify these areas from our Planning and Development Service). These are generally in the south of the area around Applecross and Torridon (see the Proposals Map), but will change over time as circumstances change. This affects the balance between development and conservation. In fragile areas, particularly within countryside areas of local and regional importance, we will support development proposals outwith the settlement development areas which show that they would sustain communities which are experiencing difficulties in maintaining population and services. In areas of national importance, we will support development proposals outwith settlement development areas which show they would sustain communities which are having difficulties in maintaining population and services, as long as they can be shown not to harm that heritage. In those parts of Wester Ross which are not fragile, we have taken account of the need to increase the boundaries of Settlement Development Areas to accommodate development.”

RECOMMENDATION

4. Accordingly, I recommend that the text of paragraph 7.12 of the deposit draft of the Wester Ross Local Plan as shown in paragraph 3 above be substituted for the council’s proposed modification to the same paragraph, as set out in paragraph 2 above.