

Flooding



Chapter No:

17

67 - Scottish Environment Protection Agency [Written Submissions]

BACKGROUND

1. As in many of the earlier chapters, the structure plan policy referred to in relation to this objection is Policy G2: Design for Sustainability, which identifies a number of criteria upon which proposed developments would be assessed; that relevant to this objection is:

“Proposed developments will be assessed on the extent to which they:

- ...
- are affected by significant risk from natural hazards, including flooding, coastal erosion, land instability and radon gas, unless adequate protective measures are incorporated, or the development is of a temporary nature;

Developments which are judged to be significantly detrimental in terms of the above criteria shall not accord with the structure plan.”

2. Previous consultation with the objector had led the council to respond that,

“Sites close to the coast at low level (Poolewe, Ullapool and Aultbea) are no lower than the rest of these villages.”,

and accordingly, the objector had assumed that new housing allocations might be situated in locations which were at risk of tidal flooding; and that tidal flood risk had not been assessed adequately either in the case of the three identified settlements, or for any of the other coastal Settlement Development Areas.

SUMMARY OF THE OBJECTION

3. Accordingly, the objector pointed out that, as local plan Policy 1 excluded the risk of flooding from the three highlighted criteria of structure plan Policy G2 to which the policy specifically referred (see Appendix 1 for original policy and Appendix 2 for the amended version, as recommended), it was contrary to paragraph 43 of Scottish Planning Policy 7: Planning and Flooding which set out the requirements of a local plan in this regard (see Appendix 3 to this report). The objector therefore considered that the plan should address the tidal flood risk, including, as appropriate, the relocation of allocations to sites judged to be outwith the medium to high risk area, as defined by the Risk Framework set out in Scottish Planning Policy 7.

4. As to the actual process of assessing tidal flood risk, the objector recognised that indicative maps of tidal flooding were not yet available. However, in the absence of this information, the 5m above ordnance datum contour line could be used as an indicator of possible flood risk*. Using 1:10,000 scale Ordnance Survey plans, it would be possible for the council to identify the approximate levels of the proposed allocations, for whatever purpose they may be allocated. Those identified as being at a level of less than 5m above ordnance datum could be relocated to a higher level, or alternative flood management strategies considered (if relocation were found to be impractical at any given site).

SUMMARY OF THE COUNCIL’S RESPONSE

5. The council accepted that the risk of tidal flooding was not highlighted sufficiently in the deposit draft Wester Ross Local Plan either as a possible issue requiring further consultation with the objector, or as one which would require developers to prepare a flood risk assessment prior to approval. The 5m above ordnance datum line had been mapped and a limited number of allocated sites potentially susceptible to flooding had been identified. Where appropriate, (sites R1 at Lochcarron; BI 2 at Gairloch; BI 1 at Aultbea; and BI 3 at Ullapool) it was proposed to add a requirement to the allocation table in each case that,

“Any development proposal may be subject to a tidal flood risk assessment.”

6. In addition, the council proposed to amend the reference to Flood Consultation Areas in Box 4 of the plan in order to highlight the fact that this referred both to water course and tidal flood areas. It also proposed to show the 5m above ordnance datum information on the Flood Consultation Area Background Map (if practical to do so). In order to set the context for the flood risk information, it was also proposed to provide the policy context and action required within a new table in the Background Maps document (which would include reference to the 0.5% or 1:200 year risk, and the 5m above ordnance datum contour data).

7. As to the objector’s criticism of the three highlighted criteria from structure plan Policy G2, they were intended to highlight the features most relevant to the most common development proposals within settlements, but not to reduce the significance or importance of the structure plan policy. By contrast, the importance of structure plan policies was emphasised in several places in the plan. However, in relation to an earlier similar objection, the council had already accepted that there was value in ensuring that the whole of the policy should be considered and had agreed to amend Policy 1 by deleting the three highlighted criteria (see chapter 10 above).

8. Provided these amendments were made to the plan prior to its adoption, the objector withdrew from the objection process.

CONCLUSIONS

9. My conclusions regarding the council’s proposed deletion of the three highlighted

* - this figure had been reached by the 2002 document entitled “Environment Group Research Programme: Research Findings No 19. Climate Change” issued by the Scottish Executive Central research Unit. This document evidently stated that, “by 2050, sea levels are predicted to rise by an additional 80-300mm which, when combined with future storm surges, could make most of Scotland’s coasts below the 5m contour more vulnerable to flood risk.”

criteria from structure plan Policy G2 are already set out in paragraph 10 of chapter 10 above and I therefore adopt them as conclusions in this objection as well.

10. The advice from the objector that the 5m above ordnance datum be used in the absence of indicative maps of tidal flooding has been adopted by the council and a mapping exercise has identified a number of sites which may be susceptible to tidal flooding. From its report on the original representations, the council evidently had meetings with the objector to identify the screening process within the Scottish Planning Policy 7 flood risk framework in respect of the proposed allocations made in the plan, and as a result, the objector was satisfied with the council's assessment in relation to fluvial flooding.

11. It therefore appears that only those sites identified by the council in paragraph 5 above are at risk, and, as its proposed action to add a requirement to the allocation table in each case has satisfied the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, this is the appropriate course to adopt. Similarly, the council proposes to provide the policy context and action required within a new table in the Background Maps document (which would include reference to the 0.5% or 1:200 year risk, and the 5m above ordnance datum contour data) and this would also be of assistance to the plan.

12. However, the council's action in regard to amending the reference to Flood Consultation Areas in Box 4 of the plan in order to highlight the fact that this refers both to fluvial and tidal flood areas appears unnecessary to me. As the reference stands, there is no suggestion that it might refer only to a certain type of flooding, and therefore it follows that all flood consultation areas are covered.

13. Next, the council undertakes to show the 5m above ordnance datum information on the Flood Consultation Area Background Map, and adds in parenthesis "(if practical to do so)". This appears to confirm that the scale of the Background Maps may be as unsuitable for this purpose as it is for those already referred to in previous chapters. I consider that, whether or not it can be added to the Background Maps, it should be added to the inset maps showing the Settlement Development Areas potentially susceptible to flooding as detailed in paragraph 6 above.

RECOMMENDATION

14. Accordingly, I recommend that,
- (i) Policy 1, now known as Policy 1A, should read as shown in paragraph 11 of chapter 10, and in Appendix 2 of this report;
 - (ii) the modification proposed by the council, that the additional text shown in paragraph 5 above be added to the allocation tables where they refer to the sites identified, should be adopted;
 - (iii) the policy context and action required should be provided within a new table in the Background Maps document as proposed (the table to include reference to the 0.5% or 1:200 year risk, and the 5m above ordnance datum contour data); and
 - (iv) areas below the 5m above ordnance datum contour and therefore susceptible to flooding should be shown where appropriate on the Proposals Map Inset Maps. It should also be added to the Background Maps, if practicable to do so.