

SEA SCREENING REPORT (COVER NOTE)

PART 1

To: SEA.gateway@scotland.gsi.gov.uk
or
SEA Gateway
Scottish Executive
Area 1 H (Bridge)
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh EH6 6QQ

PART 2

An SEA Screening Report is attached for the plan, programme or strategy (PPS) entitled:

Housing in the Countryside and Siting and Design: Interim Supplementary Guidance

The Responsible Authority is:

The Highland Council

COMPLETE PART 3 or 4 or 5

PART 3

Screening is required by the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. Our view is that:

- an SEA is required** because the PPS falls under the scope of Section 5(3) of the Act and is likely to have significant environmental effects ***or***
- an SEA is required** because the PPS falls under the scope of Section 5(4) of the Act and is likely to have significant environmental effects ***or***
- an SEA is not required** because the PPS is unlikely to have significant environmental effects

PART 4

The PPS does not require an SEA under the Act. However, we wish to carry out an SEA on a voluntary basis. We accept that, because this SEA is voluntary, the statutory 28 day timescale for views from the Consultation Authorities cannot be guaranteed.

PART 5

None of the above apply. We have prepared this screening report because:
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PART 6

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PART 7

Signature (electronic signature is acceptable)	Brian MacKenzie
Date	24 th June 2011

SEA SCREENING REPORT - KEY FACTS

Responsible Authority	The Highland Council		
Title of PPS	Housing in the Countryside and Siting and Design: Interim Supplementary Guidance (2011)		
Purpose of PPS	Review of the existing Supplementary Guidance to provide guidance and interpretation of the issues raised by Policy 36 – Housing in the Countryside and Policy 37 – Wider Countryside of the Highland wide Local Development Plan.		
What prompted the PPS (e.g. a legislative, regulatory or administrative provision)	The Policy in the Highland wide Local Development Plan makes reference to the existing supplementary guidance, however this is requiring a review to ensure that further guidance is provided on siting and design. The policy context set by the Highland wide Local Development Plan		
Subject (e.g. transport)	Town planning		
Period covered by PPS	2011 onwards		
Frequency of updates	The guidance will be reviewed as and when necessary and as a minimum every 5 years.		
Area covered by PPS (e.g. geographical area – it is good practice to attach a map)	The entire Highland Council area except that covered by the Cairngorms National Park.		
Summary of nature/content of PPS	<p>Policy guidance setting out interpretation and considerations in relation to the exceptions contained within Policy 36 of the HwLDP</p> <p>Guidance on appropriate siting and design of development in the hinterland and wider countryside.</p> <p>Guidance on what issues will be considered when assessing a planning application for change of use to a HMO</p>		
Are there any proposed PPS objectives?	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>		NO
Copy of objectives attached	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>		NO
Date	24 th June 2011		

SEA SCREENING REPORT

Our determinations regarding the likely significance of effects on the environment of Housing in the Countryside: Interim Supplementary Guidance is set out in Table 1.

TABLE 1 – LIKELY SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

TITLE OF PPS <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 5px 0;">Housing in the Countryside and Siting and Design: Interim Supplementary Guidance (2011)</div> RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 5px 0;">The Highland Council</div>		
Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects on the environment (1(a), 1(b) etc. refer to paragraphs in Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005)	Likely to have significant environmental effects? YES/NO	Summary of significant environmental effects (negative and positive)
1(a) the degree to which the PPS sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources	No	The SG provides guidance on the policy context of the Highland wide Local Development Plan. It does not set a framework for projects or other activities but provides guidance on when housing development may be acceptable in the area in line with existing policy contained within the Development Plan.
1(b) the degree to which the PPS influences other PPS including those in a hierarchy	No	The SG gives guidance on the Housing in the Countryside and Wider Countryside policies of the Highland wide Local Development Plan. It is not anticipated this SG will influence the any PPS.
1(c) the relevance of the PPS for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	No	The guidance directs development in the countryside to fit with the landscape and the existing settlement pattern, encouraging the use of existing infrastructure and services where possible. However by its nature sustainable development in the countryside is difficult to achieve given the distance from services.

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects on the environment (1(d) etc. refer to paras in Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005)	Likely to have significant environmental effects? YES/NO	Summary of significant environmental effects (negative and positive)
1(d) environmental problems relevant to the PPS	No	The SG will serve to facilitate suitable development in the countryside where appropriate and in other areas restrict it. The SG will raise awareness of the environmental problems related to development of housing in the countryside which include, potential for development on previously developed land (derelict agricultural uses eg sheep dips, outbuildings) where a net environmental benefit can be achieved, consideration of the water environment (cumulative impact of private drainage systems), and the need for increased travel to access services. It is not anticipated that any of these would be significant individually but cumulatively there may be a slight impact however this is dependant on the level of housing in the countryside.
1(e) the relevance of the PPS for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, PPS linked to waste management or water protection)	No	It is not anticipated that the SG will be relevant in this respect.
2 (a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	No	The SG will in places facilitate and in other places restrict planning permission for housing in the countryside. Once development is approved it may or may not go ahead therefore fore it is difficult to determine the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects. The document is intended to provide a greater degree of guidance to ensure all policy aspects are correctly interpreted. The guidance will be closely monitored to look at the cumulative impact of housing in the countryside. Once a house is built that use is established for some time on the site. This is not however deemed to have a significant environmental effect.
2 (b) the cumulative nature of the effects	Yes	Several houses in the countryside in a single area can have an adverse impact upon the landscape character and possibly the drainage of an area. The SG will ensure positive control of such circumstances.
2 (c) transboundary nature of the effects (i.e. environmental effects on	No	N/A

other EU Member States)		
2 (d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents)	No	This supplementary guidance will be part of the development plan and therefore must be read alongside the other relevant supplementary guidance and the parent policies of the development plan. With this in mind the plan is likely to pose significant risks to human health or the environment.

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects on the environment (2(e), 2(f) etc refer to paras in Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005)	Likely to have significant environmental effects? YES/NO	Summary of significant environmental effects (negative and positive)
2 (e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	No	The guidance will be applied Highland wide. Policy dictates a more restrictive approach and the guidance reflects this. Housing in the hinterland and the wider countryside is driven by supply and demand therefore it is likely that the guidance will have more of an impact in managing development in areas where there is a greater demand for housing in the countryside.
2 (f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to- (i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or (iii) intensive land-use.	No	The SG will prevent erosion of the character of an area and provides guidance on the matter. As it both restricts (hinterland) and facilitates (wider countryside) development in the countryside, it is presumed the built form of an area would be affected. The SG seeks to limit this affect through providing guidance on appropriate siting and design. The additional issues related to development on croft land are covered by the document and the related policies of the Highland wide Local Development Plan.
2 (g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status	No	The SG will be monitored to prevent any erosion of the landscape character and traditional settlement pattern of the hinterland and wider countryside.

SEA SCREENING REPORT

A summary of our considerations of the significant environmental effects of Housing in the Countryside and Siting and Design: Interim Supplementary Guidance (2011) is given below.

TABLE 2 – SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The Housing in the Countryside: Interim Supplementary Guidance will form part of the Highland wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP) which has been subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment and in doing so the principles of this guidance have effectively also been assessed.

The Highland Council do not believe that this guidance will have a significant environmental impact as it purely gives guidance and interpretation of Policy 36: Housing in the Countryside and Policy 37: Wider Countryside of the Highland wide Local Development Plan, in terms of the policy exceptions and what would be considered appropriate siting and design. The reason that this is to be included in Supplementary Guidance rather than the plan itself is to ensure the development of a succinct local development plan and to ensure that the most relevant and up to date guidance on Housing in the Countryside can be included as a statutory part of the HwLDP, rather than being reviewed with the HwLDP on a 5 year cycle.

It is considered that the restrictive elements of the guidance will have a neutral impact on the natural and built environment and the more facilitating elements of the guidance in relation to the wider countryside will have mixed affects on the natural and built environment but given the guidance will seek to address these issues then a limited affect either positive or negative should be anticipated. It will aim to mitigate potentially negative impacts of housing in the countryside through appropriate siting and design and the consideration of appropriate issues at a planning application stage. In particular, the SG will aim to protect the most pressured areas for housing in the hinterland from potentially adverse impacts. Additional protection will be afforded to general population and the wider environment through measures applied through other policies of the development plan.

In terms of impacts upon the environment in general, it is predicted that the SG will have little or no impact and whilst it may not contribute towards sustainable development, there is little to suggest that an SG providing guidance to restrict the development of housing in the most pressured areas of the countryside will have an adverse impact upon sustainable development and its associated aims and objectives.