



## Scottish Natural Heritage Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba

All of nature for all of Scotland  
Nàdar air fad airson Alba air fad

Simon Hindson  
Planner  
The Highland Council  
Planning and Development Service  
Glenurquhart Road  
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05 October 2012  
Our ref: 00626-SEA

Dear Mr Hindson

### **Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 00626 Screening – The Highland Council – Housing in the Countryside and Siting and Design Interim Supplementary Guidance**

I refer to our previous letter dated 14 July 2011 when we advised that we could not agree that the above 'Plan' would not be likely to have significant environmental effects. I refer also to a meeting held with ourselves on 27 September 2012 when you explained that the other Consultation Authorities had agreed with the Council regarding the absence of likely significant environmental effects.

Our concerns at the time of the Screening Report (June 2011) largely related to potential landscape effects. We noted the potential for significant negative effects in relation to crofting areas and areas where the present quality of the landscape is strongly related to a balanced mix of land cover/uses (e.g. Caithness and Nairnshire). Our response was based on the contents of the Consultation Drafts for Housing in the Countryside and for the Siting and Design Guidance (both September 2010) and on the Highland wide LDP Proposed Plan (also September 2010), bearing in mind our representations made to these plans in December 2010.

Since that time the Council has proceeded to produce revised Interim Supplementary Guidance: Housing in the Countryside and Siting and Design (August 2011), while the Highland wide LDP has moved through Examination to Adoption (April 2012). In respect of the former, we are pleased to note inclusion of material relevant to crofting areas (both in relation to Housing in the Countryside and in relation to Siting and Design). We also note that much of Nairnshire is now included within the more restrictive Hinterland Around Towns area rather than the Wider Countryside area. In respect of the latter, we note that Policy 36 Development in the Wider Countryside now includes a criterion relevant for example to Caithness that development proposals will be assessed for the extent to which they –

- avoid incremental expansion of one particular development type within a landscape whose distinct character relies on an intrinsic mix/distribution of a range of characteristics

This amended policy in HwLDP underpins the Housing in the Countryside and Siting and Design Supplementary Guidance.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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Therefore these amendments to the Highland wide LDP and to the Supplementary Guidance have helped to address our concerns at the time of SEA screening in relation to potential significant landscape effects. Accordingly we are content now to advise that the later (August 2011) interim version of the Supplementary Guidance is not likely to have significant environmental effects.

Please note that this letter provides a view solely on the potential for the plan or programme to have significant environmental effects. We cannot comment on whether or not the plan or programme meets other criteria determining the need for SEA as set out in the Act.

We trust this will be of assistance to you. If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact Andrew Brown, Planning Adviser ([andrew.brown@snh.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.brown@snh.gov.uk)) in the first instance.

Yours sincerely



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