

Sutherland Futures Consultation Events- Notes of Issues Raised at Public Meetings

Public meetings were held at the following locations:

[Lairg: 23 October 2006](#)

[Lochinver: 26 October 2006](#)

[Scourie: 30 October 2006](#)

[Rogart: 1 November 2006](#)

[Brora: 2 November 2006](#)

[Durness: 6 November 2006](#)

[Bonar Bridge: 7 November 2006](#)

[Kinlochbervie: 9 November 2006](#)

[Strathy/Armadale: 13 November 2006](#)

[Ardgay: 15 November 2006](#)

[Portskerra/Melvich: 16 November 2006](#)

[Bettyhill: 20 November 2006](#)

[Tongue: 21 November 2006](#)

[Golspie: 23 November 2006](#)

[Helmsdale: 27 November 2006](#)

[Edderton: 28 November 2006](#)

[Dornoch/Embo: 30 November 2006](#)

Lairg: 23 October 2006

- The meeting agreed that planners should look further at the potential for development on the other side of the loch, where there are some key facilities.
- The meeting agreed that the suitability of and options for the old transport site at the lochside should be investigated further, including seeking clarity about what level of contamination remains.
- The meeting agreed that there is a need for retention of, and further investment in, road and rail.
- The meeting agreed that a little forestry processing is done locally. Most is taken elsewhere. More local processing should be encouraged.
- Need to do what we can to assist job creation.
- Lairg does benefit from having a good fuel filling station.
- The theme of decentralisation should be extended to bring jobs from the east and west coasts to central Sutherland.
- If the proposal for a new hotel and apartments on the Sutherland Arms Hotel site gets permitted and developed, it could help in encouraging people to stay longer in Lairg.
- Better use could be made of the loch for amenity and activities, including watersports.
- Need attractions for young families and schooling needs to be available locally.
- A housing survey is programmed for Lairg which will help inform the Local Plan about the need for affordable housing.
- Communities need to negotiate benefits from windfarm developments. The developers also need to improve roads to support their development.

[Back](#)

Lochinver: 26 October 2006

- There is sufficient water capacity for 70 residential units.
- The Council's Renewable Energy Strategy refers to community schemes as being up to 5 MW.
- There is general support in principle for community renewable energy schemes.
- There is a lack of assistance for business growth and insufficient promotion and marketing.
- The site option shown at Glen Canisp appears to impinge on other land use interests and does not reflect the location/area most recently proposed. The relevant parties will agree the correct area and send this information to the Council.
- Some potential development sites have been identified by the crofting interests in the townships and this information will be forwarded to the Council for consideration.
- Scottish Water's improvements at Stoer are understood to have addressed quality rather than capacity. The Council will check whether the statements about capacity take account of the 7 units which are reportedly already agreed.
- There may be a demand from individuals to be able to develop their own individual affordable housing plots.
- The format of affordable housing provision within the Glen Canisp proposal is not yet agreed but Assynt Foundation is exploring the options.
- There may be potential for some development at Elphin, which may assist in building a case for re-opening of the school there.
- Assynt Foundation can provide the Council with information on the potential new crofts at Elphin.
- The Local Plan needs to take account of social geography as well as physical geography of the area. There is a need to take into account reliance on facilities outside Sutherland, such as the secondary school at Ullapool.
- The meeting requested that feedback be provided to the community on issues raised and the emerging plan, in advance of publication of the draft Local Plan.

[Back](#)

Scourie: 30 October 2006

- The following is a summary of all views expressed or reported at the meeting. The proprietor Dr Jean Balfour's written comments on the site options were reported to the meeting.
- Site 1: Prime croft land and would not want it to be used for housing. Would have significant landscape implications and block views of the sea.
- Site 2: On individual crofts (four or five- possibly more) close to existing houses, on steep ground and would not seem suitable for development. At the north end development would also block access. The crofters have already been contacted and two have said they do not want the land developed. The Council should contact the others and ask again whether the land would be available (crofters' names provided at meeting).

- Site 3: Prime croft land not favoured for housing.
- Site 4: May be suitable for just one well-designed house. It is understood to be in the hands of a private individual who has been written to, seeking their views.
- Site 5: Identified as quite a large site but it is extremely exposed. It is part of the common grazings. Development would have to be well designed. It is, though, a relatively uncontentious site.
- Site 6: This is the old play-park and is particularly peaty. Though development is possible it may not be considered suitable.
- An alternative to Site 6 may be the small site across the road, at Handa Terrace, which may be in Council ownership and if so then could be prioritised for affordable housing provision.
- Site 7: Part of the common grazings. One house is being built on this site, but there would not be space for more than another two.
- An alternative to Site 7 may be land to the west of that site.
- Site 8: This is the site of the crofters' fank and proposed new shed. The site is unlikely to be suitable for housing development.
- At Scouriebeg there is land with development potential near the memorial (opposite Roseville).
- It may be necessary to consider alternative sites if those already looked at provide insufficient capacity due to unsuitability or lack of availability.
- There will be a need for jobs too if there is to be housing growth, but it is difficult to determine just what jobs there might be or to make them happen.
- The Council cannot control who would own or occupy the houses built by private developers, so at least some could be moving in to the Scourie area from elsewhere.
- The meeting requested that feedback be provided to the community on issues raised and the emerging plan, in advance of publication of the draft Local Plan.

[Back](#)

Rogart: 1 November 2006

- There is an area east of the playing field (owned by Mr Thompson) which is a possible site for housing.
- Site 2 is prime agricultural land, is too close to the garage and is on a blind corner which could create access problems.
- There is a potential site up past McDonald Place, which is flat and could take up to 3 houses.
- Housing in the countryside is an issue.
- Railway is important and should be safeguarded.
- Something needs to be done with the mart site, if not housing then a heritage centre.
- Renewable energy should be explored.
- Tourism – links to paths and bike tracks, there is great potential for circular paths. A semi formal track network would be good.
- Railway carriages for holiday lets at the station have been very successful.

[Back](#)

Brora: 2 November 2006

- Potential for A9 bypass to ever occur questioned has been mooted since 1951, placing constraint on development out with settlement.
- Concerns raised regarding water and drainage issues preventing further development.
- How will funding be put in place for improvements to allow development that are currently constrained by waste water constraints?
- If Scottish Water are to fund expansion of the works how will the funding to be paid for by private developers for network issues be delivered?
- Will any development that is delivered have potential for local people, unlike Links Flats?
- Will there be opportunities for low cost plots for locals to build on, and are the houses to be built suitable for local demand i.e. within price range?
- Investment needed at Faskally currently underused, improve recreation has potential for development of small bike park, info boards on heritage beside the centre, environmental garden beside the river.
- Need provision for old folks, sheltered housing, day care and retirement home
- Wish to see improvement of cycle access linking Helmsdale, Brora and Golspie to offer an extension to the Golspie bike trail and reap some spin-off from that attraction.
- Concern raised regarding the identification of crofting in-bye land at Braambury Road, also concerns that the vision schematic in the consultation paper includes the better agricultural land to the north west of the settlement at Clynelish.
- Concerns re lack of maintenance of drainage ditches and waterways as witnessed by recent flooding.
- Potential of development of the harbour area should be identified with removal of The Council's TECS store and made more attractive for visitors.
- Concern regarding the development of the radio station site, subsoil conditions inappropriate for development, also there should be a new access formed to serve the area at Gower Street and not through the use of the car park road.
- There may be conflict with developing the East Brora Muir site and the golf course. The golf course is a long standing asset to the community and its future should not be jeopardised by a small amount of housing development.
- How is business going to be attracted to the area to provide jobs for those who will occupy the new housing, when the current industrial estate is not fully occupied?
- What is the future for the new woollen mill building? It should be put to good reuse.
- Can the croft land to the north of Muirfield Road and East Brora Muir site not be developed for housing? Access restrictions at Golf Road and the A9 would prevent any further development in addition to that already allocated.
- Better access to the beach area should be provided and promoted to attract and retain visitors in the village.

[Back](#)

Durness: 6 November 2006

- Site 1: Constrained in terms of ground conditions and access, as noted.
- Site 2: There are now 20mph flashing signs at the school and development might bring road improvements. Regards needs to be had to the location and operation of the Fire Station.
- Site 3: Seems to be a good site, but there are doubts whether the crofter would want to release it all. The Community Council had envisaged just ones and twos rather than a big development. A solution to the highways constraint would be to have a one-way system, but that would be controversial.
- Site 4: There has been some misunderstanding as to the location of the site suggested here, which should be further back. It would not take much work to upgrade the track to provide access.
- Site 5: There may be perceived health risks associated with the nearby mast.
- Site 6: This is croft land and access is not good.
- Site 7: It is understood that the previous proprietor may have had an agreement with the National Trust not to build between the road and the sea, but perhaps this is no longer a constraint. The big part seems good, with potential to access from the village hall access.
- There could be additional sites. Some are already inside the settlement development area. There could also be land such as that south of Sites 5 and 6 which could be worth looking at.
- There may be potential at Sangobeg. It is the Council's intention to identify boundaries for such townships.
- At the north-west end of Durness, on the south side of the road, land was previously included for infill development. Consideration should be given to whether it should remain in and the Council should establish whether the crofter would be willing to release the land.
- At the north-west end of Durness, on the north side of the road, there may be potential to extend the boundary to encompass additional land at the north-westernmost extremity. However, the Council will need to consider whether this is appropriate in terms of the settlement form and, if it resulted in the general inclusion of backland for development, whether this would be an acceptable change. The land towards the sea is of variable agricultural value.
- Laid- Site 1: It is understood that the site straddles the boundary between estates. Development at Laid is primarily of a dispersed ribbon form and planning advice is that new development should keep to the building line.
- Keodale/ Cape Wrath Hotel: There are potential sites here. The road condition is of concern though. Also this is low-lying and there could be concerns about flood risk, especially when having regard to climate change.
- There needs to be a balance between people/homes and jobs. The Estate would apparently have provided more jobs in the past if there had been homes available at the time.
- A problem of homes being used as holiday homes is that it can create 'ghost towns' for much of the year.
- There is Broadband available- in part at least- and that is seen as important for business opportunities.
- The option sites are apparently not on designated sites such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest and, even if they were, that need not preclude development necessarily.

[Back](#)

Bonar Bridge: 7 November 2006

- Population is static rather than falling.
- Need to ensure that health centre/schools are able to cope with extra housing.
- Rosehall Primary School only has one classroom therefore any development in Rosehall could mean a possible extension to the school.
- Concerns over water supply. Vital that this problem is solved.
- South Bonar Industrial Estate is flood prone, need to put in flood protection measures. The decontamination is complete. There is considerable interest in the Estate and The Council is going to put the section it owns, up to the open market. The site should be extended towards Ardgay as it is on the main road.
- Will probably need more business sites on addition to the Industrial Estate.
- The NHS are still looking at Bonar Bridge as a potential site for relocation of the Migdale Hospital.
- There should be housing for the elderly in Bonar Bridge.
- Site 7 should be developed for housing not business.
- Site 6 access is difficult.
- Do not want large developments in Rosehall. Would prefer smaller developments with a mix of housing.
- Rosehall Mansion – it was reported that the owner may wish to put 10 – 12 houses on this site.
- Individual housing in the countryside is also important.
- Rural businesses should be supported.
- In some small places e.g. Migdale and Altass, the character of the area is changing; therefore need to be careful where the boundaries are drawn.
- Need to protect croft land.
- Some crofts are becoming a “lifestyle block”.
- In Altass 3 or 4 new houses have been built/redeveloped recently. During the construction periods the road traffic increased and this had a huge impact on the roads.
- Road network around Rosehall is difficult and a lot of them are built on peat.
- Real need for youth facilities, especially somewhere for a youth club. Old public toilets had been looked at but they are now up for demolition. Need a site for community use in the Local Plan. Require a new building, portacabin or renovation of existing building. Lack of a site is holding things back.
- Rosehall needs a mix of housing.

[Back](#)

Kinlochbervie: 9 November 2006

- Site 1 (North): The land may be too valuable for its existing use to be worth losing. Access could be problematic; highways are already constrained, given on-street parking and school access. Possibly compensatory parking could be provided for residents, but people may not use it. A big development would be needed to justify/ fund the alternative of a new access road to the rear of existing properties.

- Site 1 (South): May not be cheap to develop, given constraints. The part to the west is apparently on a 50-year lease and the Community Council has identified land here for additional parking related to the hall.
- Site 2: Could be problematic given existing on-street parking and junction constraints. A link from Site 4 seems unlikely as there is a tight gap and no direct connection. Alternatively maybe an access could be taken to the east of the play area, but there could be flood risk issues. The Council Planners will need to explore further the issue of access in consultation with the Council's TECS.
- Site 3: It is understood that there are a number interests involved. Part of the site (in the middle) may be available but the triangular part is not. Development of part could be problematic due to dumped rubble.
- Site 4: Could be contaminated (previous garage use).
- Site 5: The Community Council suggests land to the east of Site 5, which may be suitable. There may also be suitable land to the west, behind the shop. It is understood that the Estate has already advertised the sites. The Council should investigate the possibility of these two sites.
- Site 6: There are several businesses present and there may not be a lot of land actually available. There may be scope to reorganise and tidy up the site though.
- In the Townships outwith Kinlochbervie, servicing could be a particular constraint. However, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency's guidelines for settlements of under 2000 population are that septic tanks are acceptable.
- Other sites suggested are land to the west of Site 3 and a strip of land near Loch Clash. Once the Council has received all suggestions, and is investigating them, it may be worth meeting with Albyn Housing Society Ltd to determine whether they would be interested in developing any of them.
- The Council operates an Affordable Housing Policy seeking at least 25% of homes on a development as affordable housing, for developments of 10 or more (although a lower threshold could be considered). But many developments are for smaller sites. Also, where affordable homes are provided, there need to be special provisions in place to ensure that they remain affordable for second and subsequent occupiers too.
- Housing Associations do not necessarily fill their houses with local people or people who have employment. There is a scheme run by the Highland Small Communities Housing Trust providing self-build opportunities for locals, but it may need more promotion.
- Young people are leaving and the school roll is falling.
- If there are to be homes and people, there need also to be jobs, facilities and activities. There needs to be something to bring young people back.
- The scale of housing requirement needs to take account of the downturn in harbour business.
- We need to look at ways of extending the tourist season.
- There may be scope for another outdoor activity centre/ summer school facility, promoted for year-round use. However, existing experience suggests that it is difficult to attract organisers/users, whilst weather and travel costs are particular constraints.
- High fuel costs are constraining on business development.
- Perhaps more could be done to promote and assist the relocation of jobs to north and west communities. The Council's powers are quite limited though and for its own part the Council is already employing quite a lot of people within its limited resources.

- As mussel farming is growing perhaps the processing (adding value to the product) could be done locally rather than elsewhere. Another idea is that there might be scope for fish-farming cod. However, an entrepreneur is needed, who in turn may need assistance, for example from Highlands and Islands Enterprise.
- There were previously plans for a marina. A tourism advisory consultant suggested Kinlochbervie would be unsuitable. However, the estimated cost at the time was said to be comparatively low at £164K. Kinlochbervie may not be at the front of the queue for such developments, but if it did happen then it could provide some year-round employment.

[Back](#)

Strathy/Armadale: 13 November 2006

- Young people find it difficult to secure a plot of land locally to build a house and continue living in the area.
- Where it is anticipated that a proposal will be brought forward for an individual dwelling, irrespective of location, it is suggested that these be indicated now as part of the Local Plan consultation. The Council can then consider whether or not that development can be provided for in some way within the policies and proposals of the Plan. It may be difficult though to pre-empt local need.
- The Council recently advertised for sale a house at Tongue. This may appear strange given the need for affordable housing. However, the Council's hands were tied- the house was being bought under right to buy but came back to the Council and in those circumstances the Council is obliged to sell it again rather than retain and let.
- There is a need for Council officers to examine whether planning policy could be more permissive of new dwellings in a wide area around settlements, providing opportunities for local families or in relation to crofts, whilst not relating to agricultural need. This could be discussed further with Community Councils.
- There is a need for some new homes to be single storey with disabled access, to cater for the elderly, rather than slavishly seeking new homes which are of the "1.5 storey style".
- Renewable energy could be provided on a domestic scale as part of build (such as solar panels) and this could make a real contribution to addressing carbon emissions, but substantial grant assistance should be provided.
- If using arable land for development, the worse land should be used first.
- The indicative housing requirement for the 10-year period of 23 is for the whole Strathy and Armadale area, so includes the two settlements, townships, infill, etc.
- There can be 'hidden' housing need, for example people who do not bother putting themselves forward for the housing waiting list, perhaps because they feel they will not be offered a house where they want to live. The Highland Small Communities Housing Trust can work with communities to identify need.
- Site 4: The lower part is unlikely to be suitable due to flood risk. It flooded very recently.
- Site 5: Could perhaps accommodate 10 dwellings, but they maybe would not all come forward at once for development.
- Roads are very important and need improvement and maintenance. Culverts need clearing better as blockages are causing flooding problems.

- There is a need to extend the tourist season. There should be more interpretation of historic assets and doing more could help develop tourist and visitor potential.
- Young people should be involved in the Plan process. The Council officers intend to engage them and are investigating opportunities with schools. This needs to involve awareness-raising amongst the schoolchildren as well as opportunity for them to give feedback.
- There needs to be feedback to local communities on the issues raised through Local Plan consultation.

[Back](#)

Ardgay: 15 November 2006

- Area of land between Lower Gledfield and Ardgay should possibly be developed. The separation of the two is probably false now as there is a footpath and street lights connecting the two of them.
- Sites 3, 4 and 5 in Lower Gledfield absorb a lot of flood water and tend to have water sitting in them most of the year. To develop all three sites could cause problems.
- The Old School in Lower Gledfield is a listed building. Sites 3 and 5 would mean the land surrounding the listed building would be affected. Any development should be sensitive, sympathetic and low density.
- Site 4 – the area to the right was flooded recently.
- The land around Manse Road should be investigated as a potential site for housing.
- Has a final route for the pylons been taken into consideration?
- Site 2 is next to pylons and the health effects of living beside pylons is currently unknown.
- Small infill sites in the village should be developed.
- Issue of water supply constraints is a major problem for the area. People who want to develop can not because they can not get connected to the water supply. There have been mixed messages about the Scottish Water situation but Councillor Magee and The Council are continuing to pursue and seek clarity from Scottish Water .
- Need to attract and keep people in Ardgay to keep local services in place.
- Got a commuter link with the railway and this is very important for Ardgay.
- Housing land should be close to the core of Ardgay.
- Site 8 should be for housing and all business land should be kept on the eastern side of the road.
- Perhaps Site 1 should be removed as it has been zoned for housing for years and nothing has ever been built on it.
- A review of previous sites should be carried out as some landowners would appear to be holding onto land speculatively.
- Land at South Bonar Industrial Estate is now fully decontaminated and the area owned by The Council is now going to be advertised on the open market.
- Some people would prefer a number of small developments rather than fewer larger developments.
- There is a small redevelopment opportunity behind the Lady Ross.

- It was clarified that in the consultation paper, the site boundary for the site south of Oakwood Place showed the amended boundary, taking on board the Community Woodland. The settlement boundary showed the existing boundary, which does not take account of the Community Woodland.

[Back](#)

Portskerra/Melvich: 16 November 2006

- The importance of the Highland Council's sustainable design guidance was reflected on.
- Problems encountered gaining planning permission for single storey housing which is a preference for when you become elderly, was raised. This led to a request for design guidance to enable the planning service to better communicate what standards we require.
- There was discussion regarding the potential for crofters to build houses and how for any proposals outwith the Settlement Development Areas they will need to be assessed on an individual basis in relation to any constraints.
- The lack of capacity in the Waste Water Treatment system was mentioned touching on the fact that plans to increase capacity are not included in Scottish Water's programme for improvements 2006 - 2010. However it is important that the Local Plan programmes appropriately for growth over the plan period and continues to liaise with Scottish Water. Also Di Alexander from the Highland Small Communities Housing Trust (HSCHT) stressed that a live project would put pressure on Scottish Water - particularly where it was to provide affordable housing.
- The land available for business use in Melvich was mentioned and it was considered that sympathetic business uses could also potentially be accommodated within the proposed Settlement Development Area.
- There was discussion regarding the merits of identifying specific sites in addition to defining the SDA boundary.
- Planners explained the mechanisms for achieving affordable housing: through allocating sites specifically with the cooperation of the landowner; and by seeking to secure it through private sector housing proposals.
- It was mentioned that it was likely that the owner of Site 3 (north of Mackay Terrace) would only want to build one house on this land.
- The merit of site 4 (Bayview Terrace) was questioned on the basis that it would create a continuous street which was considered inappropriate. The idea of accommodating a site on the lower ground east of the existing site option will be considered.
- The Council is also asked to investigate the possibilities for allocating land around the central area of the two villages and specifically to consider the land south of the shop in Portskerra.

[Back](#)

Bettyhill: 20 November 2006

- The Council should look at the Newlands area as an option for future development. The junction with the main road is constrained but the Council

should look at whether it could be improved. There are services and some facilities located in this area.

- Site 2: There are parking problems down the roadside. The combination of residents' cars, cars related to the school and swimming pool causes problems, especially for lorries servicing or delivering to the homes. There is a car park planned for school use which could help relieve, but it is not known when it will be provided. There could be safety concerns for schoolchildren in the interim. Development would result in the loss of an open 'green' area. It was suggested that the playpark behind the hall could possibly be earmarked for parking, but there would be a number of issues to look at including ownership and whether services cross the site.
- There is a need for sites for employment development (jobs). It was noted that Site 1 may provide some opportunity, as indicated in the consultation paper.
- The meeting agreed that there is a need for more flexibility on development outside the core Settlement Development Area.
- Need to look at a wider, 'outer Bettyhill' area for potential individual plot development. Avoid over-constraining with settlement boundaries. Housing is needed, so don't be over-restrictive. Perhaps there could be a secondary development area where there would be a presumption in favour of single dwellings, looking at the merits of the individual case.
- If there are specific sites and areas which people feel are suited to development then these can be suggested to the Council.
- The Clarkehill area and up to the end of Farr Road are additional areas for consideration.
- Designated habitat sites are well protected and so that issue takes care of itself.
- Perhaps the best of the arable land should be preserved.
- The Council needs to speak to owners of candidate allocations to ensure that those allocated are reasonably certain to happen.
- There is a desire to see roads improved, such as twin-tracking of the road to Lairg although that is not currently in the capital programme so there are no current plans or immediate prospect of it happening.
- Some people are concerned about the imminent changes to the arrangements for planning, such as increased delegation and the ending of Development Control Committees. However, it was explained that changes are part of the new Planning Act which the Council has to implement. The changes do emphasise the importance of having a good, new, up-to-date Local Plan.

[Back](#)

Tongue: 21 November 2006

General Comments

- It was mentioned that the Youth Hostel, view points, and existing businesses are important to the area.
- The value of improving access and transport links was stressed with roads requiring greater investments.
- There was general debate over the reasons why the Kyle Day centre was not taken up as a business unit when it was available (reasons stated included the high rent, long lease and the restrictions imposed on its use).

- There is a problem in trying to attract teachers to the area and available housing was cited as an underlying issue in relation to this.
- Tourism is perceived as vital for the area's future particularly since the tourist season is getting longer.
- The importance of Tongue's setting and attractiveness was referred to in this context.
- The importance of having wet weather facilities was raised.
- Some people voiced concern over: the perceived lack of flexibility for housing in the countryside; the problem of getting planning permission for sites which do not follow the building line of existing housing; and the requirement for use of traditional materials.
- Concern regarding the lack of capacity in the water supply at Melness which constrains development.
- Braetongue should be recognised. The Council intends to prepare maps for Braetongue and other townships, and invites suggestions about which areas and sites have potential for small-scale development.
- There is Broadband but its speed is variable. Better and more reliable Broadband could assist business development.
- There are many designations on landscapes and habitats in the area and these constrain. It was suggested that the agencies need to be more flexible in their approach to protection.
- The Community Council hopes that the ideas previously gathered in the community and submitted to the Council will be reflected in the Local Plan.
- It was requested, and agreed, that the Council provide feedback to the community on this Local Plan consultation.

Site specific comments

Tongue

- Need for a new village hall which needs to be a multi-purpose facility with small and large rooms and storage.
- There was also concern expressed over the possible allocation of Site 1, West of Varrich Place. This was based on several factors: its proximity to the waste water treatment reed beds; the ground conditions; and its potential impact on the setting of the village.

Melness

- Need to identify a site for the Caladh Sona which is likely to be closed in the future (and £310,000 is allocated for this in the Forward Plan post 2010).
- The desire for the Local Plan to reflect the land identified for a sports facility.

[Back](#)

<h3>Golspie: 23 November 2006</h3>

- Housing development for Golspie in line with completions is only a starting point. The strategy is likely to require more. Some key sites are now, at last, coming forward. Scottish Water has apparently released capacity. Affordable Housing projects already programmed are not at risk from the recent Housing Stock Transfer 'No Vote'.

- There are concerns about the standard and structure of the A9 road running through Golspie and of how this could be worsened with additional traffic generated by additional development. A potential route for a bypass is shown in the current Local Plan but there is no programmed scheme. Current advice from the Scottish Executive is that if the improvement is not programmed we do not need to safeguard a route in the Local Plan.
- There is a need for jobs and population in order to sustain Golspie.
- The economic benefits of a supermarket to the local area are affected by the profits generally going out of the area. There would be concerns about having a supermarket if there was adverse effect on the High Street shopping. Supermarkets sell a very wide range of products. The applicant would have to undertake a retail impact assessment which the Council would then interrogate. There needs to be opportunity for existing businesses to expand. But if there was a supermarket it could help to retain expenditure in Golspie and the retailer would be likely to tailor the size of store to suit the catchment. It could bring petrol pumps, which could be of benefit and help attract businesses. At this stage though the Council has merely flagged it as an option, Site 9, for discussion. A site nearer to the centre of Golspie would be preferable, if a suitable one could be found, but site selection is constrained by lack of opportunities. It was confirmed that Sutherland Futures has not identified a potential site at Brora for discussion at this stage.
- Site 9: The Council suggests could include a supermarket. The site provides a gateway to the settlement and as such would need to be developed sensitively. It is likely that at least some land in this vicinity will be retained as green space. The site is also flagged as having potential for community purposes. However, the community needs a new hall (a complex which could also include library, tourist information, etc.) and that should have a site in the centre of Golspie.
- There needs to be attention paid to the centre of Golspie, to attract and keep young people.
- Golspie may well have the capacity to sell the products and services which those using the recently launched mountain bike trails will be looking for. There may be opportunity for small shops in and around the High Street to cater for these needs. Planning policy can help by seeking to protect town centre and retail areas and limit change of use to other uses such as residential and we will be monitoring the range of uses present and vacant units and seeing how this changes over time.
- At the moment, visitors to the bike trails will find a lack of a suitable caravan and camping park and few eating places in Golspie. There is an existing residential caravan site at the end of the golf course, which might have capacity, but it is understood that there are flood risk concerns there. Site 6 is flagged in the consultation paper as potential for caravan and camping use; it could become the main point of entry to the trails, provide related parking and, with access from the centre of Golspie, could benefit local businesses. If, however, Site 6 were not available then Site 9 may hold possibilities and associated mountain bike businesses could go at the business park (Site 8). That may, though, bring less benefit to local businesses. Drummie might have been able to provide limited camping and/or a bunkhouse, but that site (Site 7) is not directly linked to the bike trails and is pretty much tied up for housing development. It is understood that at least some of the farm buildings on the site will be demolished.

- Thought needs to be given to the needs of and provision for pedestrians. There is a need to avoid conflict with cyclists. Generally the bike trails are separate from footpaths. The Mountain Bike Club is said to have a responsible approach and the Access Code seems to cover this well.
- Affordable housing can be delivered in a variety of ways and can be pitched to be affordable bearing in mind local income levels. There are provisions and mechanisms in place to relate the housing provided to local needs, and to seek to retain as affordable to second and subsequent occupiers. Providers have allocations policies. Councillor Ian Ross indicated that he could ask a Council officer to attend a Community Council meeting to explain and discuss in more detail the operation of affordable housing. The fact that some key sites, including Drummie, are now coming forward will unlock significant levels of affordable housing provision. Better land supply should help affordability. The affordable housing policy- seeking 25% of the development as affordable- applies to developments of 10 or more dwellings, but it may be possible to look at developments of just 4 or more where there is sufficient evidence of need and/or where a significant proportion of developments likely to come forward would be for fewer than 10. There is the potential of unnecessarily low density developments and/or site fragmentation where it would lead to affordable provision not being required, but the Council is closing these loopholes. 25% may not be a big enough proportion, but the policy does already say “at least 25%” and there is potential to seek a greater proportion where there is sufficient need evidenced and otherwise constrained scope for meeting it.
- There is a need for general market housing as well. Not enough has come forward in recent years.
- Some of the land identified as options is not readily available because of agricultural tenancy. There is a need for a choice of sites and the Council will then keep a check on progress and known constraints, through monitoring including its Housing Land Audit.
- There are concerns about drainage and flood risk. Developers have to liaise with the Scottish Environment Protection Agency regarding surface water drainage via SUDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes), and with Scottish Water regarding sewerage systems. The impact of climate change will need to be looked at as we go forward.
- Regarding commercial development and jobs, the Council through the Local Plan has a part to play by seeking to identify suitable sites and doing what it can to ensure that services can be provided where and when necessary. Caithness and Sutherland Enterprise has a role to play, for example in promotion. Golspie does benefit from already having a business park to promote. There may need to be a more flexible approach, though, on what uses are acceptable on it.
- The beach and seafront are hidden tourism assets and more needs to be made of them.
- If some of the existing Council buildings in Golspie are vacated as a consequence of the new office development at Drummie, then those vacated buildings may provide opportunities for other uses in the centre of Golspie.

[Back](#)

Helmsdale: 27 November 2006

- Need to build on tourism related development, need for a caravan park.

- Need to ensure that housing provided can be reached by local people and not end up in hands of 2nd homeowners where they lie unoccupied for up to 10 months of the year.
- Question whether there is capacity in the septic tanks for further development.
- Support given for the relocation of garage business from Shore Road would wish to see it moved to business/industrial park and site redeveloped with housing and business/tourism facility, with holiday accommodation to help prevent the need for people to purchase 2nd homes. The current use is seen as a blight.
- The Council should have retained the Tourist Information Centre. Area in need of facility offering advice and guidance to tourists.
- Suggested that if supermarket site was to be identified in South and East Sutherland it should be in Brora equidistant between Golspie and Helmsdale.
- Acceptable house design should be more flexible, older people wish single storey accommodation and generally planning seek housing to be "1.5 storey".
- Would wish to see a caravan park site identified for tourists, who currently have to find either B&B or will stay elsewhere.
- If affordable housing is provided what is built should reflect the local needs. The Highland Small Communities Housing Trust (HSCHT) are currently investigating feasibility of developing a site and would refer to needs survey to identify type and size of housing needed.
- Potential for the old police station to provide some new housing when it is redeveloped. It currently is in private ownership and plans for this to happen are not yet known.
- Concerns that any housing developed for local people would be sold on and end up in hands of 2nd home owners. Indicated that the HSCHT and housing associations can retain affordable housing in perpetuity through all the methods of delivery.
- Land identified as possible future extension to Site 1, land north of Rockview Place, is crofting land. Would not wish to see this lost when emphasis is on encouraging new crofts. Several, however, indicated that this land was not particularly well utilised and felt that this land had the ability to be developed in the shorter term and there was sufficient croft land outwith this.
- Question relating to the potential for infill development within the village was raised, it was indicated that there was scope for this but that any proposals would have to reflect the existing style of building surrounding.
- Concerns were voiced that rights of way should be maintained in all cases and that these rights to access should not be lost or constrained as at the north shore.
- Wish to see provision for the elderly in form of an eventide home, there is an issue with the numbers of residents required to make such a proposal viable. Other homes have struggled to maintain these numbers with many opting to remain in their own homes.
- There is a definite need for more housing in the area to meet unmet local demand, but feel that the overall requirement figure shown, of 81 houses, is ambitious given the low level of house building over the past ten years of only 18 houses. Development has been constrained by a lack of opportunities within the village and by making more land available development rates are likely to increase.
- If the land at Simpson Crescent is to be developed it should be restricted to single storey housing and set back from the embankment in case of slippage.

- In terms of actions the public toilets are not of a high quality and something should be done to improve them.
- Further investment is to take place at the harbour in the shape of another pontoon, some £600k. Issues with corrosion on existing were being resolved.
- More should be made of the golf course as an attraction to the area.
- The railway still provides local employment opportunities, around 12 jobs. Better service to both north and south would benefit Helmsdale.

[Back](#)

Edderton: 28 November 2006

- Surprise was expressed that the Council is proceeding with preparing Local Plans on existing boundaries when there are changes in the offing with regards boundaries that the Council uses and with regards the planning system. The Council considers, though, that it is worthwhile continuing work in drafting up a new Plan which would be up-to-date. In particular there is a need for an effective land supply to be identified. Some further rationalisation of plans may be required in the future.
- The Local Plan needs to take account of restrictions, such as water, sewerage and roads, including looking at the effects further afield and the cumulative effect with development elsewhere. Need the assurance that Scottish Water is signed up to making the necessary improvements. Scottish Water will need, though, realistic forecasts of actual building, on which to base their investment.
- As far as roads are concerned, the main road through Edderton is the old A9 and is likely to be regarded as having capacity and there would be potential for the 40mph restriction to be reduced to 30mph if there was significant additional development. However, many of those who would move into new development in the village would be likely to be commuting to work elsewhere, including using the minor road from the village to the Struie Road, which may not be suitable.
- Some development of the village can be supported, hopefully bringing young families who will stay and grow up. But development needs phasing and the rate controlling, so that the village community can adjust to the growth. Possibly affordable housing element would be wanted sooner rather than later though.
- The Council will monitor the effectiveness of housing sites- including through the Housing Land Audit- and if necessary this will trigger the identification of alternative sites. Other services and organisations will be able to see the forecast of growth.
- It will be important to try not to lose existing residents. There is a lack of sites for employment uses, and only one area of Edderton has 3-Phase Electricity which is important for business and industry. The Plan needs to make provision for suitable sites.
- There may be scope to extend the existing business and industrial area onto the glebe/amenity land, or possibly to provide land for such uses on land south-west of the main road which is mentioned as possible for longer term development.
- The Council is generally supportive of the railway and encouraging development of the commuter service. However, it is suggested that the Plan should make more of the potential, including the idea of providing a 'request stop' at Edderton. There is a need for the pilot commuter service to be a success first- limited

infrastructure in place at present may frustrate that by discouraging potential users.

- There may be potential to mix uses- housing with industry- subject to impact. For example there is land already within the Settlement Development Area (SDA) which may lend itself to this. Certainly there may be scope for home-working as one example, and there is a general presumption in favour of development within the SDA. The Council needs to work with Caithness and Sutherland Enterprise with a view to including some of these ideas in the Plan.
- Design of development needs to be sympathetic to Edderton. Design and layout must not be ruled by highway requirements.
- Cul-de-sacs can be problematic for service vehicles.
- The Council's Archaeology Team will be involved at the time of planning application on the development site option identified, and will no doubt seek appropriate conditions which may, for example, require a watching brief bearing in mind potential for archaeological interest in that location.
- Old steadings may have potential for conversion to 'courtyard developments', as an exception to the general restriction on development in the countryside.
- There are sites and properties which are eyesores. There are some powers which could be used in certain circumstances to achieve tidy-up. The Council's Development Control planners and Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) may be able to advise further.
- With regard to flood risk, the Council will have regard to SEPA's flood maps when preparing the Local Plan. Some flooding is caused, though, by blocked ditches, culverts and drains which is not addressed by SEPA's maps. Council's TECS can only do so much in terms of maintenance, within resources available, and there are a number of controls in place which restrict what can be done and how.

[Back](#)

Dornoch/Embo: 30 November 2006

- The Council suggests, as a guideline, that 315 new homes may need to be planned for the next 10 years for Dornoch. This is arrived at looking at completions and at aspirations for growth. The intention is to influence demography, seeking in-migration including the young working age. There is demand locally and sites are coming forward now. Infrastructure constraints are being overcome.
- Potentially 25% would be affordable housing. There is a range of ways in which affordable housing can be provided. Housing Associations would use their normal allocations policies. Experience shows that although there is a statutory duty to meet all needs, such that some homes will be occupied by people from outside the area, the majority end up being occupied by persons with a local connection. In the case of Homestake, which is a shared equity arrangement allowing 60-80% to be owned by the occupant, the Housing Association can pick and chose and local needs are likely to be considered first. The affordable housing policy- seeking 25% of the development as affordable- applies to developments of 10 or more dwellings, but it may be possible to look at developments of just 4 or more where there is sufficient evidence of need and/or where a significant proportion of developments likely to come forward would be

- for fewer than 10. There is also a need to maintain an effective land supply for housing generally. There is concern that the development proposed in the Square at Dornoch may not include the provision of affordable homes on site; however, the Council explained that a commuted sum was likely to be made to help in the provision of affordable homes on other sites in the area. Such funds can assist the Council in bringing forward its own land bank for such development or in achieving building projects with housing associations. The 'commuted sum' route is the last step and developers will normally be expected to build affordable homes directly, preferably on site or otherwise on another site.
- There is concern that if a lot of those coming in are retirees then this may perpetuate the ageing of the population. However, the Council suggests it is necessary to provide sufficient opportunities to ensure an adequate supply of housing, to enable a balance to the inevitable retirees and second homes. The Council needs to work with partners, such as Highlands and Islands Enterprise, in seeking to achieve this.
 - Embo's population is around 300 and there is low unemployment and many active tradesmen. However, additionally there are visitors at Grannie's Heilan' Hame (seasonal, although for much of the year) which near doubles the population and further stresses services. The Council is working with Scottish Water to plan for water, including seasonal demand. With regard to the issue of the road between Embo and Dornoch, improvements have previously been programmed and then de-programmed. Concerns expressed through the consultation will be raised with the Council's TECS. The Local Plan will need, in effect, a seal of approval from TECS before it is finalised.
 - There is a feeling that land should be allocated which would enable individuals to buy and develop single plots to their own design. However, it is essentially in the hands of the landowner of an allocated site to decide how they wish to bring forward a site, and how they do may be influenced by development margins. Good design and quality of development is a key issue.
 - Growth of Dornoch may have some support but there is a need for adequate recreational, community and educational facilities. The Council works with partners on this, for example the Education Service and the NHS who are involved in the process. There will be consideration of the likely needs, based on the impact on existing facilities that would arise from new development. The Council will look at phasing where appropriate- identifying what is needed and when. It is confirmed that in respect of Site 1, the Council will expect the developer to pay for the road linking around the north. There is concern though about where traffic would go from there and what impact it would have on the wider road network, which needs to be considered early on. Local knowledge and views on this can be provided to the Council as part of this consultation.
 - It is understood that a recreational facility will be included in plans for the expansion of Dornoch.
 - Embo has a shop but lacks community facilities, although the community is trying to address this. The bus service is being withdrawn and replaced by a dial-a-ride service. The sustainability of new development in Embo might be questioned, although the Council could examine how development could contribute towards the services needed.
 - There is a need to identify sufficient land for commercial uses and there is concern if the need for parking provision in Dornoch were to be met through the loss of part of the business park to such use. The Council is, as stated in the

consultation paper, looking for Site 1 at Dornoch to include some provision for commercial uses and there is scope, depending upon the particular type of use, for this to be integrated with residential areas. There may be opportunity for provision on a smaller scale at Embo. The Council will work with CASE and others on these issues.

- With regard to the future development of outlying townships, the Council is seeking views on which townships have potential. The emphasis of any development in those locations would be on individual houses which are well designed.
- There is concern that if there were significant, unforeseen changes in the economy they could result in a lack of stability in the implementation of large developments. However, the Council will try through phasing to ensure that large sites can be developed in a step-by-step approach to minimise the risks of uncompleted development.
- The question was raised about whether the Council could use Compulsory Purchase powers to bring forward sites for development where they have not yet done so, such as at Embo. However, the Council officers explained that whilst it cannot be ruled out, there needs to be a very clear and robust case that the land in question is essential, that there is not other suitable land and that there is a specific programme in place to undertake the development. The Council is unlikely to be in the position of using those powers in that way.
- The Council will try to reflect in the Local Plan any specific proposals relating to the proposed community buyout at Embo.
- There are a number of sites requiring improvement, such as the old school (hall) and pier at Embo. This seems at odds with the Council's intentions for tourism to play a key role in the economy. There is opportunity to submit ideas for actions and projects in response to this consultation and the Council will investigate suggestions, including whether funding may be available.
- The question was raised about how service delivery would be affected by the forthcoming changes next May, with multi-member wards and changes to the Council's operational areas. In particular it was asked whether people would still have opportunity to comment on planning applications locally. The changes will see a continuation of the local delivery of services and a reasonably local office will be dealing with planning applications, therefore there will remain opportunity to enquire about these locally and discuss concerns at that level. The new Planning Act will bring in a new type of Local Development Plan, review at least every five years. Between reviews there will be on-going work such as environmental improvements and masterplanning of developments and there will be feedback on progress through Annual Monitoring Reports.

[Back](#)