



Welcome to the third edition of the Sutherland Local Plan newsletter.

Introduction

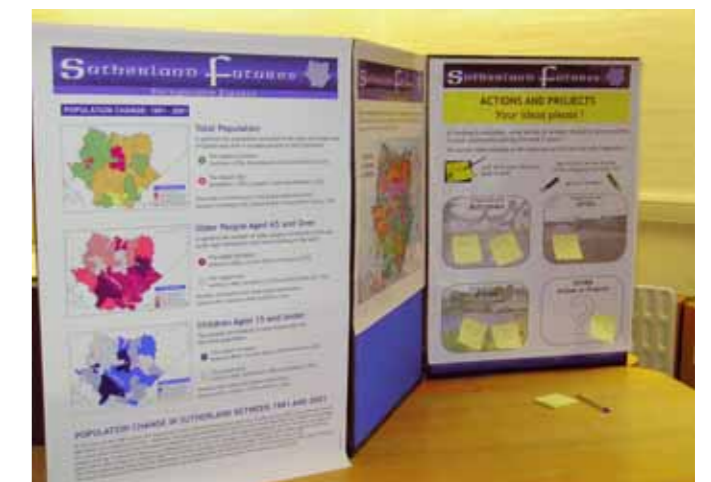
AS PART OF THE COUNCIL'S COMMITMENT to engaging communities in the preparation of the new Sutherland Local Plan we have recently carried out a number of public exhibitions and meetings, in tandem with the publication of the Sutherland Futures consultation document.

We found the consultation events hugely useful, and thanks are extended to everyone who took the opportunity to attend. They have enabled us to gather local knowledge and community views on the future development of the area. This will add value to the process of preparing the new Local Plan, and there will be a better Plan as a result.

This edition newsletter provides some information on the responses we have received and lets you know what the next stages in the Plan preparation process are.

Sutherland Futures

AS YOU MAY KNOW, A FEEDBACK FORM was provided with the Sutherland Futures consultation document. This form gave people an opportunity to express any issues, concerns, likes or dislikes about the future development in their area. The closing date for comments was 15 December 2006. A summary report of all the Feedback Form and other written responses will be available on the Council's website in early 2007 when we report to the Sutherland Area Committee. We have received around 400 responses, some raising just one or two matters and others covering a wide range of issues.



Public Meetings

18 PUBLIC EXHIBITIONS AND 17 PUBLIC MEETINGS were held around Sutherland during October and November. Over 400 people attended the afternoon exhibitions and over 300 people attended the public meetings.

Some of the key messages arising from the meetings were that:

Further Affordable housing is essential

Further **Affordable housing** is essential across Sutherland to try and encourage and enable local people to stay in the county. There are different affordable housing needs, with some people wanting to be able to build their own houses on affordable housing plots. We need to **attract and keep young families** in Sutherland in order to **sustain and grow the population**, retain our schools and services and slow the steady ageing of the population.



Having some **housing in the countryside** is necessary in Sutherland, given the patterns of development. However there is some concern that certain townships are becoming over developed and losing their character. We had a number of discussions regarding the merits of having boundaries around settlements and whether people felt that this would reduce the opportunities for building in some areas.

Some people felt that croft land should be protected

There was plenty of debate, but no consensus over whether **croft land should be used for development**. Some people felt that croft land should be protected; others felt it should be used to provide affordable housing for local people.

FLOOD RISK IS ALSO AN ISSUE

In some communities **water supply problems** mean that developments can not go ahead at the moment and it is vital this problem is solved quickly. **Flood risk** is also an issue that needs to be taken into account.

There is a need to **retain and invest in road and rail** services and to ensure that there are sufficient other **services and facilities** to support growing communities.

Further assistance is required to support **business growth**, including tourism and job creation. There was a view that at present there is insufficient marketing and promotion of the county.

There is general support in principle for small-scale **community renewable energy schemes**.

The Council needs to **monitor whether or not housing sites are coming forward for development** and if necessary identify alternative sites.

We also asked people for their views on environmental improvements that were needed in their areas. We received a good response and we will look at these as we progress the draft local plan.

NB: Notes of the issues arising at each of the meetings are available on the Sutherland Local Plan website.

What did you think?

WE USED THE OPINIONMETER at our events to gauge people's feelings on how they have been engaged in the Local Plan process so far and what they thought of the Sutherland Futures document. Of those that used the opinionmeter, 91% of respondents found the events either very useful or quite useful and 92% thought that we were either very good or quite good at explaining the issues. 74% of respondents felt that the Sutherland Futures consultation document was either very clear or quite clear in helping them understand the issues and options.

Glossary

You can access a glossary of common planning terms on our website, at the following address:

<http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/planning/developmentplans/localplans/glossary.htm>

What happens next?

THE NEXT STAGES OF THE PLAN process will involve putting together the results of all the consultation exercises and assessing which proposals can be taken forward through the Local Plan. We will be presenting a report to the Sutherland Area Committee in Spring 2007. After this, a draft of the Local Plan will be published and open to another period of consultation.

? Frequently Asked Questions

IF YOU HAVE ANY PROBLEMS understanding planning jargon or do not understand the local plan process, the answers to the most frequently asked questions are available on the Sutherland Local Plan website (<http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/planning/developmentplans/localplans/sutherland-local-plan.htm>)

Contact Us

You can contact the Sutherland Local Plan team (David Cowie; Brian Mackenzie; Katie Briggs; Julie-Ann Acheson) directly by:

Post at The Highland Council, Planning and Development Service, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, IV3 5NX

E-mail at Sutherlandlp@highland.gov.uk

Phone at 01463 followed by 702827, 702271, 702276 or 702266

Further information is available through The Highland Council website at www.highland.gov.uk

If you want detailed information on submitting a planning application, you should speak to the Sutherland Area Planning and Building Standards Manager, Allan Todd (Tel. 01862 812040).