



PLANNING &
DEVELOPMENT SERVICE

NEWSLETTER

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SUTHERLAND LOCAL PLAN

Issue 1: November 2005

The Highland Council is in the process of preparing a new Local Plan for Sutherland. It will cover all land use issues, including housing, business and industry, retailing, infrastructure, recreation and environmental protection to guide the future development of the area. It will also indicate policies for the conservation of the built, natural and cultural heritage and encourage improvement of the physical environment. This first issue of the Sutherland Local Plan Newsletter sets the scene and is the first in a series aimed at keeping you in the picture about over the progress of the new Plan. *If you would like to know more about what a local plan is and why the Council has to prepare it please see page 2.*

Notice of Intention to Prepare the Sutherland Local Plan

The Notice of Intention to Prepare the Local Plan will be advertised in the 11 and 18 November editions of the Northern Times. This is the first formal statutory advert in the process inviting people to come forward with issues and proposals direct to the Local Plan team.

WHY WE NEED YOUR INVOLVEMENT NOW

As local residents, you know your area better than anyone else and that is why it is important that you are involved in planning for its future. We are right at the official start of the plan preparation process and we hope that this is just the beginning of your involvement.

The policies contained in local plans affect your life everyday. Getting involved in local plan preparation gives you a say in the future of your community and environment. Your opinions at this stage can be more effective than trying to influence decisions over planning applications later. This is because planning applications must be decided in accordance with the Development Plan (unless material considerations indicate otherwise).

To get you started thinking about the issues now, we have put together some of the key facts and figures that are currently available about the area in a series of Ward Profiles and Background Papers.

Ward Profiles

In the last few weeks, work has been undertaken on the preparation of Ward Profiles, using information from the 2001 Census. These provide information on population change, number of households, employment and services so that communities have a better understanding of the context for the local plan. They have been prepared for the six Highland Councillor wards in Sutherland, and will be delivered to each household in the next few days. Whilst we, as planners, can begin to pick some key issues from these figures, they don't tell us what is really important to the people who live in Sutherland. You know what is important to you and what would improve your community. These also advise in more detail you about how you can get involved in preparing the new Sutherland Local Plan and of the timetable for consultation and your involvement.

Background Papers

To further set the context for the Plan, we have produced three Background Papers for information and comment. These papers set out the recent changes and the current context in terms of Housing, Economic Development and the Environment. The papers also raise a number of issues to be considered as part of the Local Plan process. They have been sent out to all the main local organisations and other agencies we would normally consult when we prepare a local plan. Copies will be available free of charge from the following: -

- The Area Planning & Building Standards Manager, The Meadows, Dornoch
- Council Service Points at Bettyhill, Bonar Bridge, Brora, Dornoch, Durness, Golspie, Helmsdale, Lairg and Lochinver,
- All local libraries and the mobile library service
- All local post offices
- Planning & Development, Headquarters, Inverness

Local Plans and the Planning System

How does the planning system work?

Planning is about the future development and use of land. Decisions are usually best taken at the local level, so planning is normally a matter for councils. The three main planning duties of councils are:

- preparing development plans;
- deciding on applications for planning permission; and
- taking action against development that hasn't been approved.

Development plans

The development plan is made up of two parts - the structure plan and the local plan. Between them they show how much development may take place, where it will take place and where it is unlikely to be allowed. Development plans are the basis for decisions on planning applications. They contain policies for the future development and use of land in an area. Plans can cover a wide range of issues such as housing, transport, employment, shopping, recreation and conserving and protecting the countryside.

The **structure plan** for an area takes a long-term view of development, considering its general scale and broadly where it should be located. The current Highland Structure Plan was approved in March 2001.

Local plans are often for smaller areas and must be in line with the approved structure plan. A local plan sets out detailed policies and specific proposals for the development and use of land that should guide day-to-day planning decisions. It must identify effective opportunities for development and encourage investment in an area. The aim is to exert a positive influence over land use decisions. It should contain policies relating to:

- the identification of land relating to different development types e.g. housing, business and industry, retailing, transport, leisure and recreation;
- the conservation of the built, natural and cultural heritage;
- the improvement of the physical environment;
- integrated transport issues; and
- urban and rural regeneration.

Councils must consult widely on the content of a local plan. After considering all views and objections and making suitable changes, councils will adopt the local plan as the basis for their decision making in the area.

Local Plan coverage in Highland and Sutherland

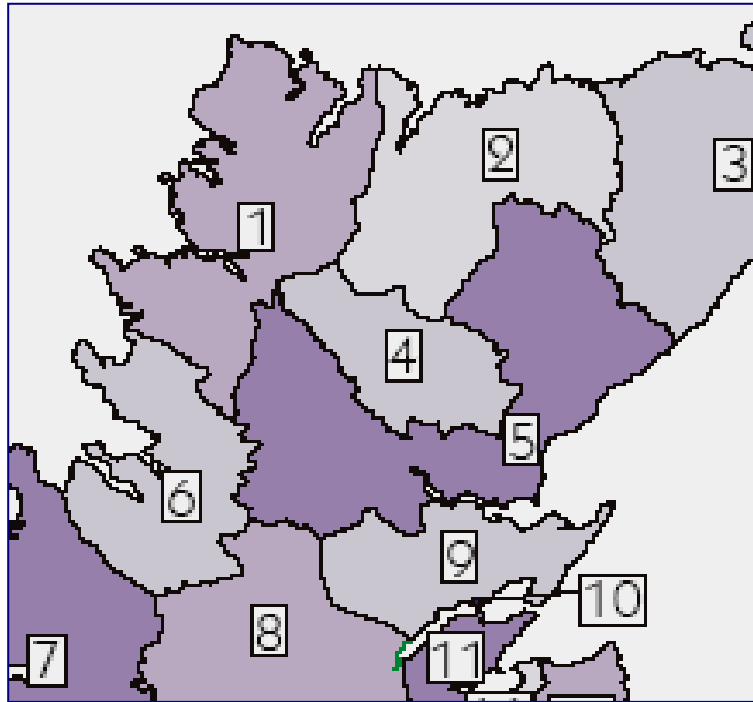
At present there are 19 local plans for the Highland Council's area, including 4 covering Sutherland. These are:

- **Golspie & Lairg (Lairg & Rogart areas only)**, adopted in 1983
- **North West Sutherland**, adopted in 1987
- **South & East Sutherland**, adopted in 2000
- **Tongue & Farr**, adopted in 1985

The move towards a new Sutherland wide Local Plan is part of the Council's programme of reducing the number of plans and preparing single local plans for each of its 8 existing administrative Areas. In theory, this should allow each plan to be reviewed on a 5 year cycle, in line with Government advice, so that it remains up to date and responsive to changes in circumstances and new issues.

Existing Local Plan Coverage

1. North West Sutherland
2. Tongue & Farr
3. Caithness
4. (Golspie &) Lairg
5. South & East Sutherland
6. Ullapool
7. Lochbroom Landward
8. Mid Ross
9. Easter Ross
10. Invergordon
11. Black Isle



SUTHERLAND LOCAL PLAN - PROPOSED TIMETABLE

Task	Target Date
Project Plan approved by Area Committee	Oct 2005
Awareness Raising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Circulation of Background Papers & Ward Profiles - specific informal consultations - Feedback 	10 Nov to mid Dec 2005
Publish Intention to Prepare Advert	11 Nov 2005
Survey Work	Ongoing to Mar 2006
Prepare Site Options	Dec 2005 - Mar 2006
Informal Consultation on Site Options and Settlement Development Areas	Apr & May 2006
Preparation of formal Deposit Draft	June - Sept 2006
Area Committee to Approve Deposit Draft for publication	Oct 2006
Publish Deposit Draft and formal consultation, including neighbour notification on site options.	Oct 2006
Public Local Inquiry for Unresolved Objections	Apr 2007
Adoption	Nov 2007

See web page for full details of timetable.

Contacts

Who are the Sutherland Local Plan Team?

Alan Ogilvie (Principal Planner) – Alan leads the team and has worked on local plans throughout Highland since February 1989, including the South and East Sutherland Local Plan from 1997 to 2000. Prior to that he worked for Dunfermline and Banff & Buchan District Councils. Alan's "migration" to the Highlands was partly influenced by his wife's Sutherland roots.

Brian MacKenzie (Senior Planner) – Brian started work with the former Highland Regional Council Planning Department as a technician, after leaving school in Inverness. He has considerable experience in data management, including the Council's Housing Land Audit. On obtaining his planning degree Brian moved into mainstream development plans work, including the Structure Plan and the Ross and Cromarty East Local Plan.

Katie Briggs (Planner) – Katie joined the Highland Council in April of 2005 having spent the first couple of years after graduating working for planning authorities in Falkirk and East Renfrewshire. She was brought up in the Highlands and is a former pupil of Dingwall Academy. Since her return north her main work has been the new Sutherland Plan.

You can also contact the Sutherland Local Plan team direct by:

- post at The Highland Council Planning & Development Service, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, IV3 5NX
- e-mail at sutherlandlp@highland.gov.uk
- phone at 01463 702262, 702271 or 702276

The Sutherland Area Planning and Building Standards Manager is **Allan Todd**. He manages the team of local officials based in Dornoch who deal with planning applications and building warrants.

The Local Plan Team would be grateful for any comments or information that you have, either on the content of the reports or the issues that have been raised. Further copies are available from our web-site at

<http://www.highland.gov.uk/plintra/devplans/suth/suth.htm>.