

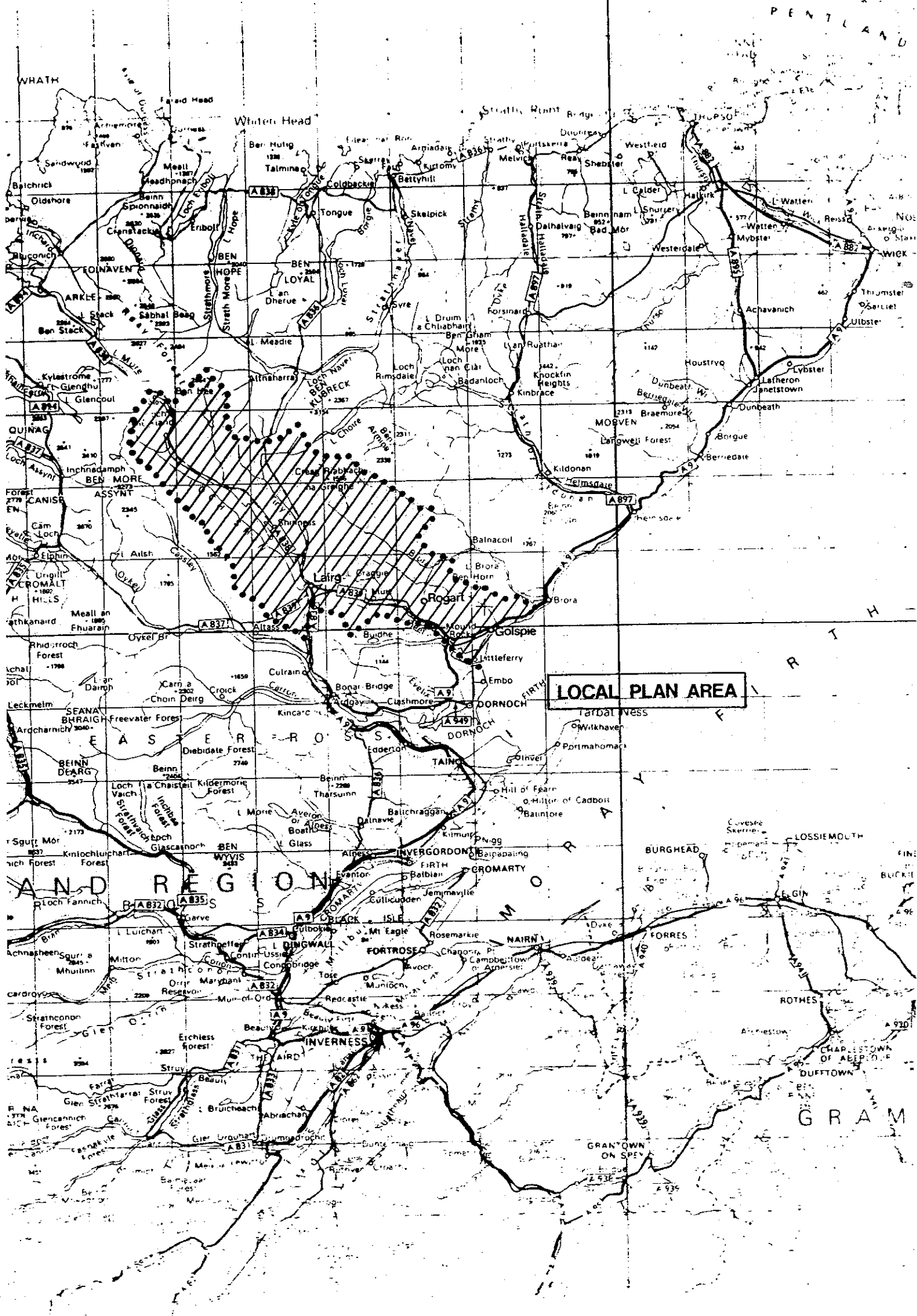
GOLSPIE
AND LAIRG

Written Statement

£15

Adopted Plan
July 1983

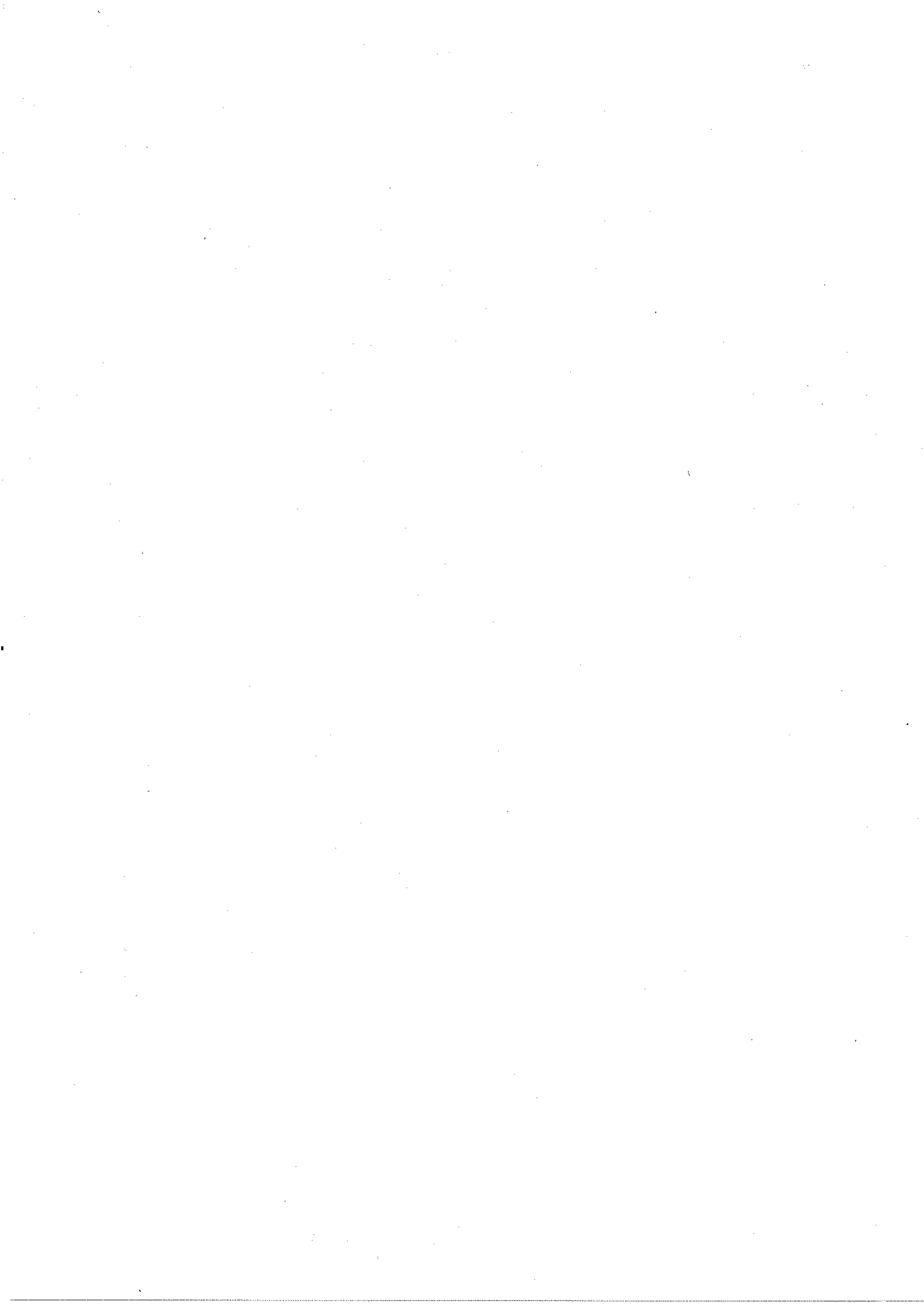
Highland
Regional Council



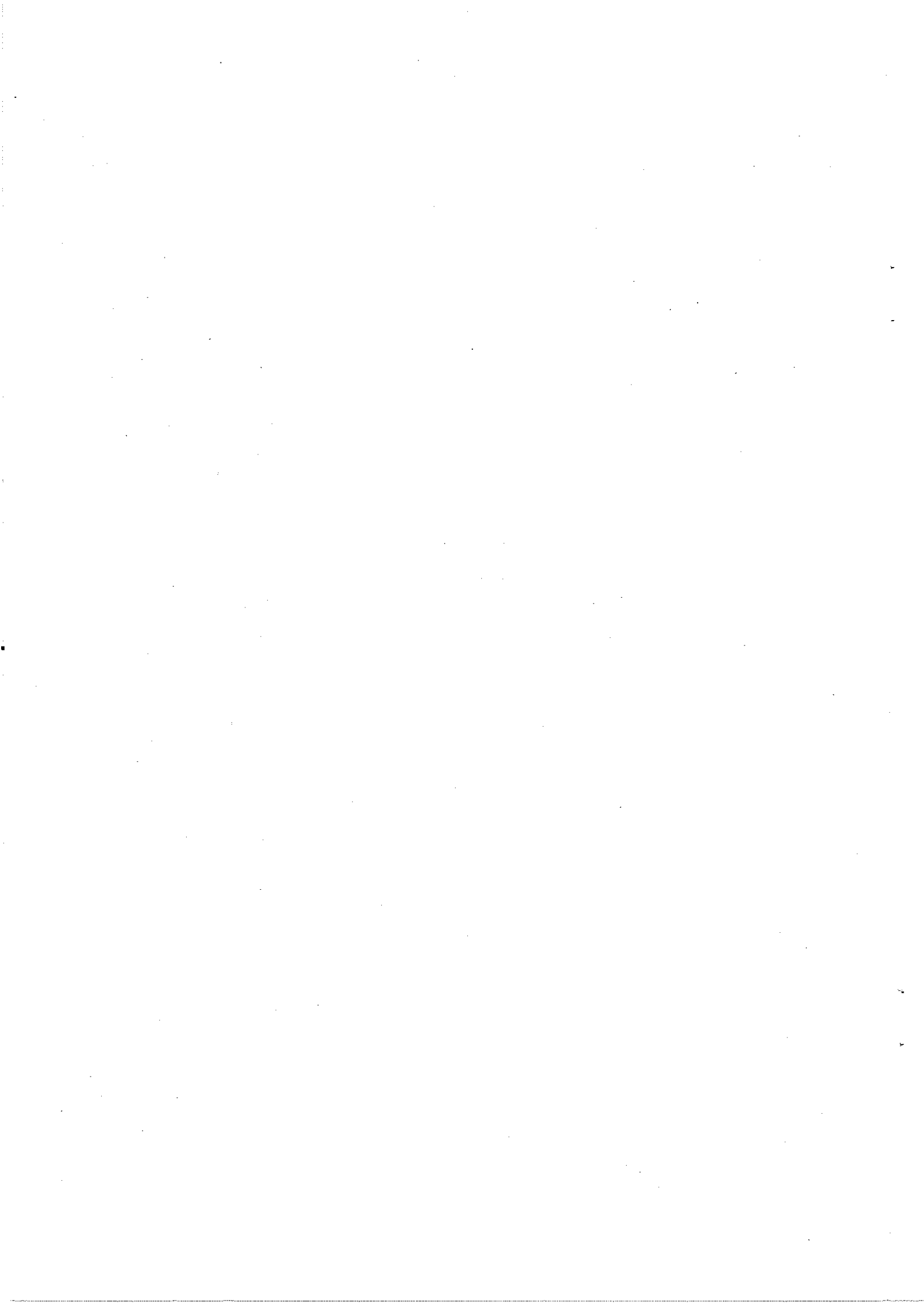
LOCAL PLAN AREA

AND REGION

GRAM



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PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

1. The Local Plan area consists of the former civil parishes of Golspie, Rogart and Lairg, which now make up Sutherland Electoral Division No.10. It comprises a narrow wedge of central Sutherland, reaching from Loch Merkland on the western watershed to Loch Fleet on the Moray Firth seaboard. Much of the 83,000 ha. is sparsely-populated hill, heath and moor given over largely to stock rearing and sporting uses, although steady expansion of forestry is continuing. Loch Shin, the third largest Loch in Scotland, forms part of a major hydro-generation scheme.
2. Lines of communication and the main population centres follow the narrow coastal plain at Golspie, and inland along Strathfleet and the Achany Glen to Lairg and the surrounding crofting townships. The number and spread of people living in the area has contracted significantly over the years. The crofting community of Rogart now supports less than 20% of the 2000 population attained in the nineteenth century. Significant transport improvements together with the growth of administrative, distributive and other service industries have underpinned the expansion of main centres during this period. Golspie and Lairg increased their populations by 28% and 17% respectively between 1961-81. However, in common with other parts of Sutherland, the marginal nature of many land use activities, depressed state of tourism and public sector cutbacks expose the vulnerability of the local economy and related services.

OBJECTIVES

3. The opportunities for change are relatively modest, and it would be unrealistic to plan for major expansion and any significant shift in the area's economic base. However, action is needed to consolidate existing communities, principally as follows:-
 - a) Lairg: to establish an industrial estate or serviced sites in the village; to identify the best route for replacement of the Black Bridge; and to reappraise housing sites in relation to servicing conditions.
 - b) Rogart: measures to reinforce crofting activity and associated local housing and employment requirements.
 - c) Golspie: the scope for further environmental improvements, particularly in the vicinity of the foreshore; the need for rationalisation of existing commercial area designations; and to resolve conflicts associated with heavy vehicle movements.

EXISTING DEVELOPMENT PLANS

4. The area is presently covered by the Golspie Local Plan and part of the Lairg and Bonar Bridge Local Plan. These are based on surveys made during 1977-78, and contain proposals for the period up to 1982. Local Plans have been adopted by the Council for the adjoining areas of:

- a) Dornoch *
- b) North West Sutherland
- c) Tongue and Farr
- d) Helmsdale *
- e) Brora *

(Plans marked * are currently under review).

5. The Local Plan must conform generally with the provisions of the Highland Structure Plan which was approved, with minor modifications, by the Secretary of State on 17th July, 1980. This identifies the key issue in the Highland Region as the scarcity of employment rather than land. The Structure Plan sets out general policies for the development and other use of land, improvements to the physical environment, and for the management of traffic. These policies are applied to specific sites or areas by the Local Plans. At the request of the Secretary of State, a review of the Council's Settlement Policy is presently underway.

FORMAT

6. The Local Plan consists of a Written Statement and Proposals Map.

WRITTEN STATEMENT

7. This sets out the Planning Authority's assessment of various needs, opportunities and changes likely to occur which will affect the development and other use of land. It takes account of economic and social policies and considerations, where appropriate, and the resources likely to be available over the Plan's duration. This assessment provides the reasoned justification for proposals, policies and recommendations.

8. Proposals

Development by the Regional Council, District Council and statutory undertakers which are:

- a) Programmed for implementation during 1982-87,
- b) and where sites have been identified.

Local Authority proposals are contained in the Financial Plans, Transport Policy and Programmes (TPP) and Housing Plans prepared by the Regional and District Councils. These documents have to be submitted to the Secretary of State and are reviewed annually. Proposals are subject to alteration from year to year in accordance with changing priorities and the resources available. The dates and costs shown against proposals in the Written Statement are therefore indicative only. In the event of a proposal being abandoned by a public agency, the Planning Authority will normally approve applications for development of the site which embody the same use or uses.

9. Policies

Guidelines to developers adopted by the Regional Council for the control of development. Certain policies apply throughout the Local Plan area. Others identify specific sites which are considered to be suitable for development but where there is no commitment to implementation within the Plan period. This includes all development by the private sector, and public schemes scheduled beyond 1987.

10. Recommendations

Made where the Planning Authority considers that further action or discussion is required. These will usually concern implementation and any matters not fully resolved by the Local Plan.

11. Applications for development not covered by the proposals and policies contained in the Local Plan will be considered on their merits. In such cases, the Planning Authority will normally seek to ensure consistency with the character and pattern of existing uses in the area concerned.

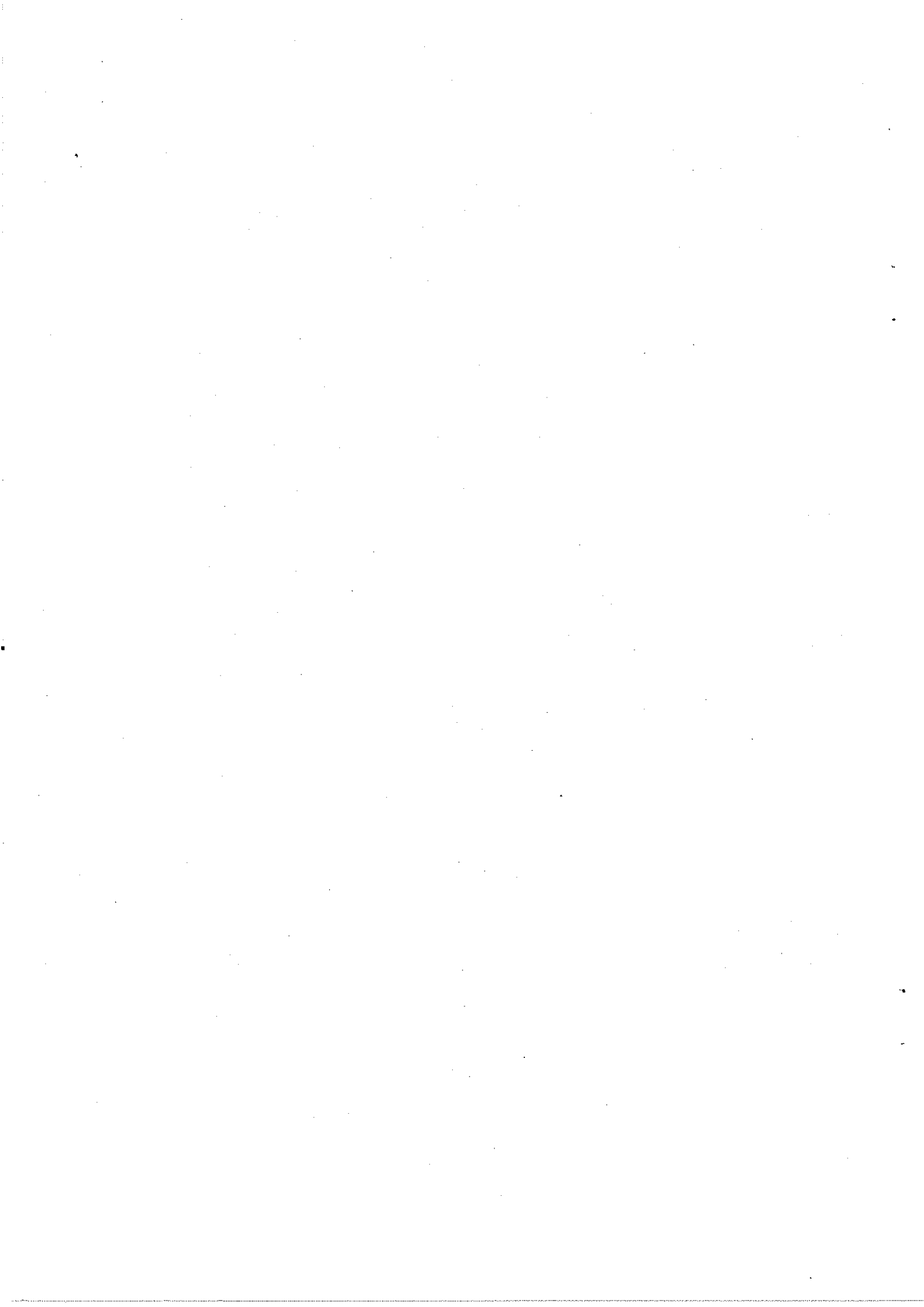
PROPOSALS MAP

12. This shows those parts of the Local Plan area in which changes are expected and where specific proposals and policies will apply. It also shows the boundaries of separate Inset Maps where proposals and policies are indicated at a larger scale. Symbols on the Proposals Map indicate the kind of land use involved (for example, IN - Industry) and the number of the appropriate paragraph in the Written Statement.
13. The Local Plan also includes a small-scale Analysis Map. This shows some of the major background factors such as rural resources, infrastructure and conservation designations which the Planning Authority takes into account when considering planning applications.

CONSULTATIONS

14. The Regional Council has published this document in the light of previous consultations with the public and a wide range of statutory bodies. The First Draft Plan was made available for a minimum of six weeks and public meetings were held in Lairg and Golspie to explain the proposals and hear views. The Council then carefully considered all the comments made and has altered the Plan where appropriate. This Final Draft Plan is made available for a period of four weeks during which time objections are being invited from the public and consultees. If any differences arise that cannot be resolved satisfactorily, it may be necessary to hold a public local inquiry or hearing, before the Plan can be adopted as the official Plan for the area.

Objections should be sent in writing to the Director of Law and Administration, Regional Buildings, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, IV3 5NX and should state the matters to which they relate and the grounds on which they are made.



PART TWO: THE AREA AS A WHOLE

People

15. Approximately 3000 people live within the Local Plan area. Some further decrease in the population of the smaller communities and outlying parts seems likely over the next five years. This drift is unlikely to be retained in the major centres of Lairg and Golspie unless these settlements are able to widen and consolidate their job base. In common with other areas, there is a trend towards a more elderly population which increases the demand on specialised housing, medical and social services. The loss of young people from the area is of particular concern.

Settlement Pattern

16. The area has been divided into three localities which are considered in more detail in Parts 3-5 of the Written Statement, namely,

- a) Lairg and Loch Shin.
- b) The Rogart area.
- c) Golspie and the adjoining seaboard.

The Council's basic concern is to encourage development appropriate to the needs of different communities within the Local Plan area, where this enables jobs, population and services to be maintained and improved.

(*STRUCTURE PLAN Policies 1, 3 and 5*)

Job Prospects

17. Employment has diminished since the mid-1970's. Despite the adverse conditions of recent years, the primary sector appears reasonably robust, although in terms of direct employment, this now amounts to less than 10% of all workers. 90% of jobs are in the service sector, notably transport, construction, distribution and administration. About 175 people are estimated to be out of work at present, and the situation would be worse but for the substantial numbers employed in Easter Ross. Opportunities for diversification of the local economy appear limited at present. Prospects must depend to a large extent upon a revival of the tourist trade, adding value to local primary products and reducing local dependence on transport-related activities.

(*STRUCTURE PLAN Policies 20-29*).

Timber-Using Industry

18. Despite its emerging importance as a timber-growing area, processing industries are poorly represented throughout the North. The steadily increasing output of local forests will generate employment in the harvesting and transport of timber over the years. Consideration should be given to the pattern and mode of transportation of

of the timber crop and the potential for small scale processing locally, especially saw-milling and related product manufacture. Consultants recently produced a report for the HIDB and SDA detailing a possible strategy for the forestry and wood-processing industries. Whilst the findings are to remain largely confidential, it is apparent that current trends, particularly in securing markets for forest products, may affect the viability of any local enterprise under consideration. Extra transshipment costs would appear to have ruled out any potential for movement of timber by rail, as transport costs have a major impact on delivered price. The forest industry is pressing for improvements to be made to the road network, especially for remote forests.

POLICY: *The Council will encourage the development of wood-using industries in the area where appropriate sites can be made available.*

Craft Industry

19. Craft operations complement the area's tourism functions and on the whole do not require the stringent siting conditions applied to general industrial uses. In addition to the opportunities for boosting local employment and incomes, such developments are an appropriate means of maintaining redundant farm and craft buildings, particularly in the landward areas.

POLICY: *The Council will encourage development of small-scale "cottage" industries in the landward areas and, where possible, identify suitable areas and properties for this purpose.*

Tourism

20. The area sits abreast two main tourist routes to the far north, and has developed a reasonably wide range of traditional visitor facilities and related accommodation. Provision of additional self-catering accommodation, particularly chalets, would assist in achieving more locally-based holidays or a greater proportion of stay - overs from among the passing trade through the area. Promotion of additional or improved tourist facilities (including wet weather provision) would also help in this respect. A list of locations which may have potential for interpretation across Sutherland and Caithness has been prepared by a Working Party in consultation with the Community Councils.

(STRUCTURE PLAN Policies 36 - 41)

POLICY: *The Council will encourage the modernisation and expansion of accommodation and related facilities needed to meet the changing tourist market in the area.*

POLICY: *The Council has adopted a general policy for the development of caravans, chalets and other temporary accommodation, and this will be applied throughout the Local Plan area.*

POLICY:

The Council will, in conjunction with other agencies, seek to promote interpretation of sites chosen from those listed by the Working Party and to develop visitor facilities covering Sutherland and Caithness. Detailed consideration will be given to the siting and design of any building, car parks and other facilities provided. The selection of areas will need to take account of landowner's views and the sensitivity to damage or disturbance of certain localities.

Communications - Economic Impact

21. Completion of the improved A9, including the scheduled Dornoch Firth crossing, will give fast, direct access to and from the south. This should be beneficial to many businesses, increase the number of visitors reaching the North, and ease the burden of commuting. However, these advantages will be far less-marked in the Lairg area, where a high proportion of existing jobs are related to the village's strategic position as a major road/rail intersection and marketing centre for north and West Sutherland. The situation is heightened by continuing under-investment in the Wick railway, ongoing improvements to the west coast road network/public transport services and the possible adverse effects arising from introduction of heavy vehicle tachographs. These factors emphasise the need for development of additional enterprises in Lairg and adequate signposting from the south in relation to the vital tourist trade.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Development Agencies should give consideration to means of diversifying local job opportunities in Lairg.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Trunk Road Authority should consider signposting "Lairg and the North West" via the alternative scenic routes at the Struie Road (Evanton) at both approaches to the Dornoch Firth Crossing.

Housing

22. There are approximately 1350 dwellings within the Local Plan area. Responsibility for housing matters rests with the District Council, and their priorities are set out in Housing Plans based upon the Government's annual financial limits. Council house building is normally concentrated in the main settlements where services are more readily available. Recent sheltered housing schemes in Golspie and Lairg have helped to meet the immediate specialist needs in these areas. Otherwise, turnover of houses has created sufficient relets to cater for priority waiting lists with the exception of the Rogart area. Almost half the Council's financial allocation is spent on modernisation and essential repairs of existing stock, and assistance is also given for the improvement of sub-tolerable dwellings in the private sector (although not if they are to be used as holiday accommodation).

(STRUCTURE PLAN Policies 8-16).

Private Housebuilding

23. Almost 50 private houses have been built in the area during the last ten years, mostly on individual plots. There is no speculative building, although the District Council has in mind to make land available within the larger communities as fees for the private market. Well-designed single houses outwith recognised settlements are normally acceptable where they occupy sites of negligible agricultural value, are not visually prominent, do not require inordinate public expenditure on services and help strengthen the social fabric of rural areas.

POLICY:

The Council has adopted a general policy for the development of Housing in the Countryside (RS1). This will be applied throughout the area, except within the main settlements and on land which is specifically allocated for other building purposes in the Plan.

Community Services

24. The area enjoys a reasonably high standard of community facilities. Primary schools are located at Golspie, Rogart and Lairg, the latter with one of the largest catchment areas in the Region. A health centre is to be built in Lairg in the near future. Golspie is a major service centre in its own right with the only 6-year secondary school and specialist surgical hospital facilities in Sutherland. With the completion of a 30-bed old persons home in the village, Rhives House has now been converted to a day centre for the mentally handicapped. Geriatric hospital facilities are presently available just outwith the area at Migdale and Cambusavie. Since the withdrawal of DHSS facilities from Golspie, enquiries are now routed through Wick but house visits are undertaken locally.

Roads - A9

25. The A9 trunk road is the direct responsibility of the Secretary of State. There is only one minor improvement scheme scheduled to the A9, at Golspie. In the longer term, it is hoped to bypass the village altogether, and the Regional Council is continuing to safeguard an alignment which might otherwise be jeopardised by building proposals. As indicated in Para. 21, the most significant trunk road project will be construction of the Dornoch Firth crossing due to commence in 1985/86.

Other Roads

26. Three roads in the area now form part of the Council's strategic road network for the Region. The A839 Mound to Lairg route has been substantially improved in past years. Major improvements are underway to the A836 Bonar Bridge to Lairg and Tongue with the next phase of works scheduled at Lairg Station. The A838, Lairg to Laxford Bridge, was recently added to the strategic road network, but there are no major reconstruction schemes in the present 5-year programme. Other routes include the A839/A837 Lairg to Ledmore road.

POLICY:

Priority for road improvement schemes will be given to those routes on the Council's strategic road network, as overall resources permit. Other roads will be afforded less priority, being improved by minor schemes principally where development opportunities would otherwise be inhibited or a serious traffic hazard exists.

Roadside Development

27. The spread of commercial developments adjacent to major routes but outwith recognised settlements, can prejudice the well-being of communities, lead to calls for uneconomic extension of public services, and be detrimental to amenity. These developments are better located in existing settlements to consolidate the current level of services, and to reinforce the social and economic structure.

POLICY:

The Council has adopted a general policy for the Control of Roadside Development in the Region. This will apply to the A9(T), the A839, the A836 and A838.

Public Transport

28. Lairg and Golspie are presently served by both local and regional rail and bus services. These are subject to continuous review with the aim being to improve their effectiveness and hold subsidies at a reasonable level. As per Para. 21, the role of Lairg as a public transport node is coming under pressure. The awesome economics of maintaining even a basic level of service to outlying communities is exacerbated by improvements to the alternative coastal routes. The continued viability of the North railway line remains a matter of concern to the Regional Council, not only so as to maintain a credible alternative to the upgraded A9, but also because it underpins many strands of economic activity in the Lairg area.

RECOMMENDATION:

Central Government should acknowledge the importance of the Inverness-Wick/Thurso railway line to the communities of Sutherland and Caithness, and give this due weight in any review of services that is undertaken. Capital investment is required to ensure an adequate level of service on the line.

Electricity

29. Hydro electric power is generated by the extensive system based upon Loch Shin including the headwaters of the Brora and Cassley rivers. Bulk transmission of electricity supplies is undertaken by 132 kV lines and a 275 kV line which crosses the area from Dounreay. Depending upon the outcome of any decision to locate a CDFR at Dounreay there may be a requirement in the longer term to route a further 275 kV or 400 kV line across the area and to rebuild the existing 275 kV line to larger capacity. Such extension of the National Grid would require careful consideration in relation to amenity and safety, particularly where it crosses Strathfleet.

RECOMMENDATION *The Council seeks the earliest possible consultation on the selection of routes for further high voltage (275 or 400 kV) transmission lines from the NOSHEB.*

Rural Resources

30. 85% of the Local Plan area is devoted to agriculture and crofting, and a further 10% is given over to forestry. Productivity is highly dependent upon the better land which surrounds the three main communities. The Regional Council has no direct powers over rural land use change but will continue to use its influence to encourage the best possible use of rural resources in an integrated manner and to protect land capable of important agricultural or forestry production. This includes land of poorer quality which is essential to the viability of one or more holdings and crofts with their associated common grazings. The Council's prime concern in these matters is with employment and ensuring the continued health of rural communities. A smolt trap is operated on the Grudie Burn and there may be limited opportunities for hatcheries or fish farms in the area. There are substantial sporting interests in the area including limited salmon fishings, extensive deer forests and grouse moors. These attract a substantial number of visitors to the area and support a considerable amount of employment both directly and indirectly, giving an extended season to many services. Deer farming might also become an important supplementary land use in this area once established as a sound commercial venture elsewhere in Scotland.

(STRUCTURE PLAN Policies 30 and 68).

POLICY: *The Council encourages the development of innovatory rural land uses where these are compatible with neighbouring interests.*

Forestry

31. The Forestry Commission has extensive holdings based upon the Shin Forest, whilst there has been an upswing in commercial planting, primarily by private interests, around Golspie. Very little afforestation has occurred in the Rogart area, although there is land to the north which could be put under trees without loss to stocking levels. In line with the public service elsewhere, the Commission has to look for economies in its operations. Some smaller forest blocks may be disposed of and there is a possibility of small job losses. Visitor facilities have been provided in commercial plantations close by Golspie and Lairg and this is to be commended. Further opportunities of this kind seem limited and the Commission have no visitor facilities programmed over the next five years.

(STRUCTURE PLAN Policy 38)

POLICY: *The Council will encourage provision for increased public access and enjoyment of forest areas, and seek to identify suitable opportunities in conjunction with land-owners.*

River Systems Investigation

32. A great many activities and interests affect, or depend upon, the various burns and rivers which empty into the Kyle of Sutherland and Dornoch Firth, and this includes the Shin and Tirry catchments. Concern has been expressed over various changes in the performance of these rivers during the last 20 years. Most significant are the accelerating rate of silting and greater frequency and severity of flash-flooding, particularly on the Oykel, but also occurring elsewhere. These phenomena directly affect important river fishings, water supplies, flood prevention and hydro schemes, nature conservation interests and the continued viability of farms and crofts which work bottom land. Although the flood control system in force at Lairg has greatly reduced the risks of inundation to lives and property, this is not the case in other localities. Hydrological research elsewhere in Britain suggests a relationship between these changes and the run-off/erosion associated with ploughing of extensive tracts of land for forestry and hill-farming purposes, although other as yet undiagnosed factors may be at work. The Regional Council has begun discussions with a wide range of agencies representing all the various interests with a view to joint investigation of the problems. This work might also consider remedial action in concert with land-owners and tenants, and offer guidance on future large-scale land use change within river catchment areas.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Council wishes to maintain a close working relationship with all the agencies concerned and has set up a Working Party to assess what practical action can be taken.

Minerals

33. There are substantial deposits of bulk materials in the area. Local demand for sand and gravel (or crushed aggregate from the extensive areas of crystalline rocks) is low and supplies are available from working quarries in adjoining areas. There has been intermittent extraction on a small scale at a number of places, notably in Strathfleet, in the past. Stringent siting requirements should be taken into account when considering applications to open new workings. Blanket peat occurs extensively in the landward areas, but the only surveyed bog, at Strath Tirry, has now been substantially afforested. No economic deposits of metalliferous minerals are known but small quantities of molybdenite and other metals have been found near Lairg. The petroleum production licence issued to a consortium headed by Premier Consolidated Oilfields Ltd for land north of Golspie was relinquished in March 1982. It is possible that other companies may show interest in this area at some time in the future.

POLICY:

The Council has adopted a general policy on development of mineral workings in the Region, and this will be applied throughout the Local Plan area.

Nature Conservation

34. Five Sites of Special Scientific Interest as notified by the Nature Conservancy Council occur wholly or partly within the Plan area. Three of these are graded "key" sites of international or national importance as follows,

- a) Ben Klibreck (Biological/Geological interest).
- b) Loch Fleet (SWT Reserve) (Biological/Geomorphological).
- c) Mound Alderwoods (NNR) (Biological).

Detailed survey work by the Conservancy is continuing and a number of new statutory areas may be designated during the Plan period. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 now requires the Nature Conservancy Council to notify the owners and occupiers of land affected by designation, specifying the area and nature of interest and any agricultural or other operations which could damage that interest. Owners and/or occupiers are required to give notice of such operations to the Conservancy. DAFS must also take the Conservancy's views into account in administering the Farm and Crofting Agricultural Grants schemes. It is the Regional Council's policy to safeguard SSSI's from development insofar as this is compatible with the aims of achieving a sound employment base for the local population.

(STRUCTURE PLAN Policies 74-78).

Landscape

35. Scenic resources range from the variety of the narrow maritime seaboard through the bleaker open moorlands of Rogart and Shin toward the high mountain backbone of Central Sutherland. The whole area is "designated" countryside and thereby eligible for grant assistance from the Countryside Commission towards the cost of recreational and amenity schemes. The Secretary of State has recently designated a small part of the Local Plan area as a section of the Assynt - Coigach National Scenic Area. This requires the Planning Authority to consult with the Countryside Commission on certain planning applications. It is also necessary now to seek planning permission for agricultural/forestry structures over 12 m. in height and vehicle tracks located above 300 m. within this area. The Regional Council will continue its policy of seeking the best means of fitting development into different kinds of landscape. A clear presumption against development will only apply in a limited number of small areas. These will include Areas of Great Landscape Value where special control and management policies should be followed in order to maintain their intrinsic attractiveness and ensure the access, safety and enjoyment of these areas by the public.

(STRUCTURE PLAN Policies 72 and 73).

Amenity Woodland Study

36. A distinctive feature of the coastal margin from the Mound crossing to Strathsteven and along Strathfleet to Tressady is the incidence of hardwood trees. These wooded areas are important to general amenity, shelter and the wintering of stock, game and nature conservation, screening of development in the countryside together with their value as a timber crop. The advanced age of many policy and other incidental woodlands is such that these features will be lost unless active management steps are taken. The possibility also exists that substantial areas will be replaced by commercial plantations.

RECOMMENDATION:

A survey of amenity woodland should be undertaken to identify the most important and vulnerable areas. Discussions can then be held with landowners to formulate appropriate management programmes.

Trees within Settlements

37. There are no Tree Preservation Orders made in the Local Plan area at present, but the Council will consider such action should important trees be threatened in the future. Additional planting is encouraged wherever possible to replace the existing ageing tree population, to improve visual containment of communities and locally to improve general amenity. The southern fringes of Golspie and eastern approach to Lairg would benefit from some screen planting to round off existing development in these directions. Clear felling of expansive commercial plantations, where these are visually prominent or adjoin settlements, needs careful attention.

POLICY:

The Council will seek to conserve woodlands which represent an important amenity feature of a community, where these are threatened by development or other pressures. New planting will be encouraged in areas where development is exposed or unsightly.

Advertisements

38. Advertisements, in both town and country, are an essential feature of many businesses. Safeguards must, however, be established to protect general amenity, the scenic resources of the countryside and to maintain standards of road safety.

POLICY:

The Council has adopted a general policy for the Control of Advertisements in the Region, and this will be applied throughout the Local Plan area.

Listed Buildings

39. There are now 40 buildings listed as of special architectural or historic interest within the area. Three of these are of national importance ('A' grade) as follows: Dunrobin Castle, Carn Liath and Sallachy Brochs. Financial assistance may be available towards the cost of repairs or related works from the Historic Buildings Council for Scotland. The Regional Council also operates a small fund for this purpose. The Council endeavours to preserve buildings or groups of buildings which are of outstanding value. Continuity of use is a prime factor in considering the nature of proposals to alter such buildings.

(STRUCTURE PLAN Policies 80-82).

Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites

40. 36 Ancient Monuments have been scheduled in the Local Plan area. All are of national importance and one, Carn Liath Broch, is under the Guardianship of the Secretary of State. A further 153 sites of interest have been identified by the Ancient Monuments Division of the SDD. The Planning Authority has no statutory duty to protect these additional sites but has agreed to consult with SDD when planning applications impinge on the sites identified. Parts of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 have recently come into force. These increase the protection given to scheduled sites and the penalties for damage and disturbance. The Council will safeguard Ancient Monuments and other archaeological sites in so far as this is compatible with the aims of achieving a sound employment base for the local population.

(STRUCTURE PLAN Policy 83).

Derelict Land

41. Whilst there are no major tracts of derelict or waste land in the area, a number of localities could benefit from environmental improvement as resources permit. Work is presently being completed on a section of Golspie foreshore by the District Council on behalf of the Scottish Development Agency. There are wartime installations in the vicinity of the Lairg dams which would merit attention. The Council gives priority to the rehabilitation of derelict land which threatens public safety or is detrimental to the amenity of adjoining areas, where a beneficial after-use can be achieved.

(STRUCTURE PLAN Policies 85 and 86).

PART THREE: LAIRG AND LOCH SHIN

Prospects

42. About 950 people live in this area, of whom two-thirds are resident in the village of Lairg. As indicated in Para. 17 and 21, the overall prospects for stemming further depopulation by local job creation are not great, and merit the attention of the various Development Agencies.

Development Pattern - Lairg

43. The village occupies a bowl of lower-lying land, hemmed in by rising ground and the major feature of man-made Little Loch Shin. Four main roads converge on the centre and these have formed the spines for development in three separate localities - Lower Lairg to the north of the Allt a Choin-duinn, the village proper based on Main Street, and the outlier at Ord Place on the opposite bank of the Loch. Most of the land close in by the village is in crofting tenure and of good agricultural quality which poses a major development restraint. Although the anticipated rate of development is low, there are major servicing problems which will be expensive to overcome. Stringent drainage limitations apply throughout the area, and the majority of side roads are grossly sub-standard. A co-ordinated approach is required to enable development to proceed within these constraints.

Light Industry

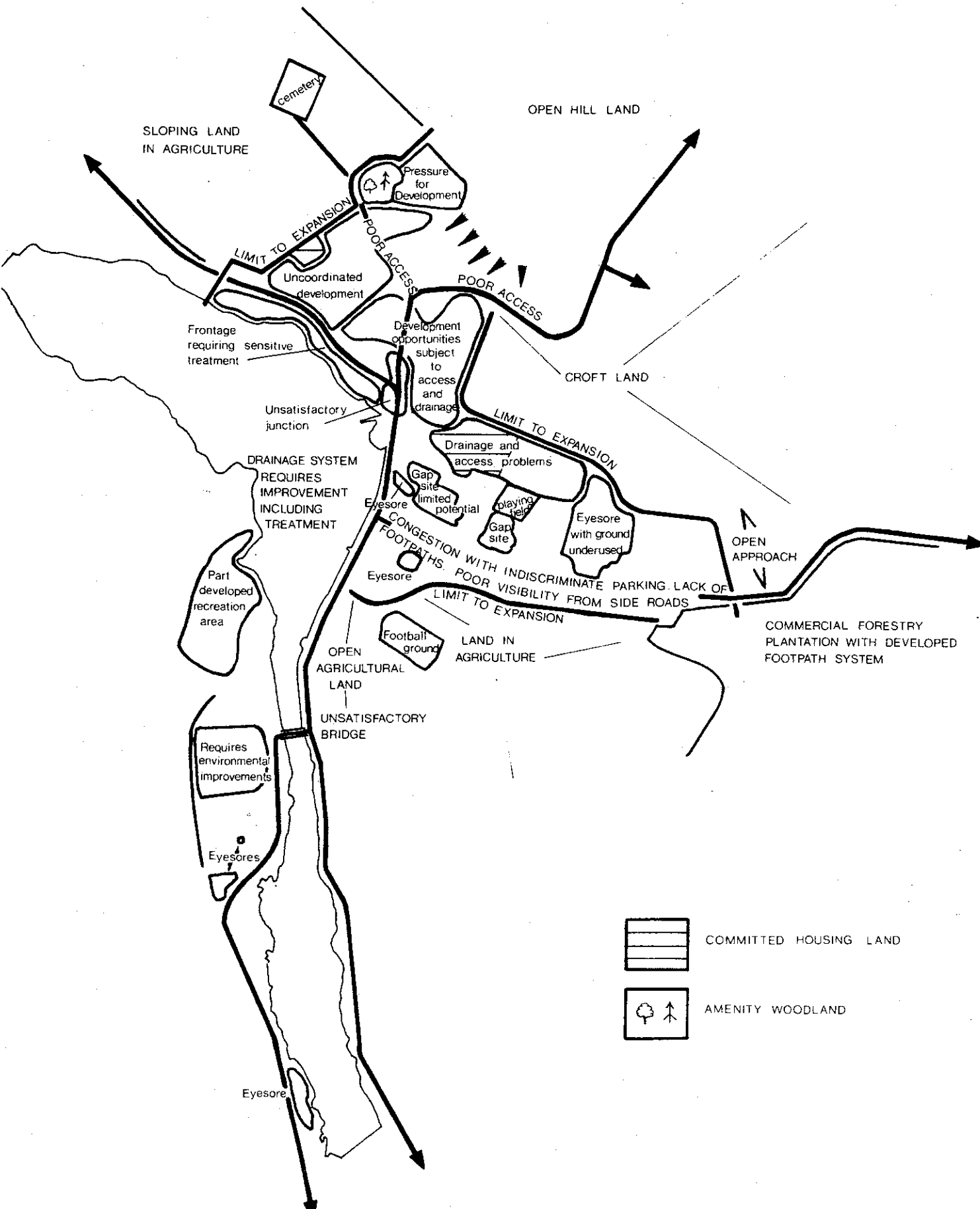
44. There are several opportunities for accommodating light or cottage industries in redundant premises, or on derelict land, within the village. These include the steadings east of the Sutherland Arms Hotel, the soon to be vacated Scottish Postal Board premises on Church Hill Road and Rosslyn House on Main Street. Land between Sutherland Transport and Trading Company's garage and Church Hill Road has been identified for industry in the past. Permission has been granted for LPG storage on part of this site, and there are steep side slopes unsuitable for building purposes along the northern flank, together with a main sewer through the site. Land behind Rosslyn House is used for the Laundry, a roads depot and heavy vehicle testing centre. There are significant areas of unused land and derelict buildings within and adjacent to this complex which would benefit from more intensive use and tidying up. There is surplus land in Forestry Commission ownership to the north of the Engineering Workshop at Ord Croft which appears suitable for light industrial development.

PROPOSAL: *The HIDB intends to construct an advance factory on approximately one acre of land at Lairg during the Plan period.*

POLICY: *1.09 ha. of land at Ord Croft is allocated for light industrial development. Subject to satisfactory ground conditions and servicing, this site may be available for development at an early date.*

POLICY: *Approximately 1.8 ha. (including existing uses) at the Laundry is allocated for industrial estate purposes. A development brief should be prepared for the site as a whole at an early date. This should take into account access and site servicing, clearance of derelict property, layout of plots and the need for early establishment of screen planting along*

LAIRG - ANALYSIS



along the eastern and western margins of the estate.

POLICY:

Approximately 0.5 ha. of land behind STTC's Garage is allocated for garage related or storage purposes. Tree planting should be considered on the steep rising ground to the north which backs onto houses and the Church.

POLICY:

Three sites totalling approximately 0.5 ha. are allocated for craft, similar light industrial, or commercial purposes — Rosslyn House, the former Postal Board premises and former Hotel steadings.

Tourist Accommodation

45. The area already has a good complement of accommodation facilities including hotels, guest houses, bed and breakfast establishments and touring caravan sites at Lairg and Achnairn. Planning consent has been obtained for a number of chalet schemes, and there is potential for further small and intermediate scale projects of this kind provided that these are dispersed about the area so as to minimise the impact on existing communities, infrastructure and amenity. The existing caravan site at Lairg is relatively small and preparations have been in hand for some years to create a second facility at Ferrycroft. There would also appear to be opportunities for the conversion of redundant croft buildings for holiday let purposes. These buildings already conform to the existing pattern of development, are traditional in character, and can easily be re-assimilated into the permanent housing stock if required.

PROPOSAL:

The Council has carried out the ground-work for a new caravan site at Ferrycroft, in association with the new playingfield. The District council is shortly to inherit responsibility for both, and completion of the caravan site project will depend upon the resources available. Landscaping will be an essential element of any scheme.

POLICY:

The following sites are allocated for chalet or similar holiday accommodation.

- a) Achany House - 6 units.
- b) Builnatobernich, Lairg - 5 units.
- c) Overscaig, Loch Shin - upto 14 units.
- d) Nearby Overscaig - a further 3 units.

Other developments on this scale throughout the Local Plan area will be considered on their merits, with the exception of the Overscaig area where there shall be a clear presumption against further accommodation.

POLICY:

The Council will encourage the renovation and conversion of redundant buildings throughout the area for self-catering holiday purposes, provided that this is not to the detriment of local housing needs and site servicing/access arrangements are satisfactory. Preference will be given to conversion for permanent occupation.

Tourist Facilities

46. Lairg offers basic tourist facilities in terms of an Information centre, shops, bars and other service requirements. The landward area caters for traditional informal outdoor recreational activities. A new caravan information centre has recently been installed in the main village car park, but a permanent building with its own parking and related facilities e.g. for picnics is the long term objective.

POLICY: *The site presently occupied by the temporary TIC in the car park adjacent the A836 would be suitable for a permanent facility.*

POLICY: *The Council will encourage proposals to develop additional facilities and activities which would help to draw or hold tourists in the area.*

Commercial Area - Lairg

47. The main shopping, office, tourism and ancillary facilities occur at the western end of Main Street, and further such uses should be consolidated in this area.

POLICY: *Commercial uses will be encouraged in the area identified for such purposes on the Proposals Map, without prejudice to other land where such uses are already established.*

Housing - Crofting Townships

48. There are a large number of crofting townships in the area surrounding Lairg. The layout of these communities is extremely scattered and provides opportunities for single housebuilding subject to local servicing conditions and the need to protect better inbye land. Three house plots are available on one site at Achnairn. The Council's objective is rehabilitation of townships and maximum use of the associated land.

POLICY: *Housing Policy RS4 applies to land at Achnairn which is capable of accommodating 3 houses.*

Housing - Lairg

49. There is a steady, but limited, demand for new houses in Lairg itself. The District Council priority waiting-list requirements are currently for additional sheltered housing. A limited number of possible house plots remain at Lochside and a number of infill sites exist in various parts of the village. The District Council owns a large area of ground at Milnclain which has been on the market for feuing purposes. There are drainage problems at this site and the access via Church Hill Road is inadequate particularly if further decrofted land to the east is ever to be developed. At Lower Lairg, there

are three areas of ground off Manse Road which might be considered. To the north, approximately 2 ha. of land, outwith crofting tenure was partly zoned in the previous Local Plan. However, this site is steeply sloping in places and crossed by an overhead electricity line. West of Manse Road, is a site of just over 1 ha. which is suitable for housing development but unlikely to be released from crofting tenure. To the east, a large area (2.3 ha.), comprised mainly of hummocky poor land between Ulster Cottage and the burn forms a natural extension to the village building envelope. Manse Road itself is of inadequate width, has a steep gradient and "fast" junction with the A836. Drainage capacity is very limited pending a major improvement scheme for the whole village.

PROPOSAL: *The District Council intends to construct 2 sheltered houses adjoining Sydney Court in Lairg in 1983-84 at a cost of £48,000.*

POLICY: *Housing Policy RS4 will apply to ground suitable for a further 2 houses at Lochside, and Policy RS2 to remaining gap sites in the village.*

POLICY: *Approximately 2 ha. of land, north of Manse Road is allocated for housing subject to preparation of a suitable overall layout plan and servicing provisions. Policy RS3 applies to control piecemeal development. This land should retain its agricultural character until such time as other housing sites are substantially developed.*

POLICY: *1.94 ha. of land south of Ulster Cottage and 2.65 ha. of land at Milnclarin is reserved for housing development. Access to the former site will be taken off Manse Road and to the latter, via Church Hill Road, (see Para.53). Provision of footpath access across these areas would benefit existing pedestrian movements from Lower Lairg to the school and other Main Street facilities.*

RECOMMENDATION: *The District Council may wish to consider retaining the Milnclarin site against longer term local authority housing requirements.*

Water Supplies

50. The present water supply at Lairg suffers from inadequate filtration which can give water quality problems unless frequent maintenance is undertaken. Proposals have been drawn up to provide modern filters, additional water storage and to upsize certain mains. Part of the Loch Beannach water catchment area is afforested, and a substantial further area is scheduled for planting during the Plan period.

PROPOSAL:

The Council intends to make improvements to the Lairg water supply during 1985-86 at a cost of £290,000.

POLICY:

The Council will closely scrutinise any further afforestation proposals affecting the Loch Beannach catchment area in order to ensure continuity of supplies and safeguard existing and future capital assets.

Sewerage

51. There are two public drainage schemes in the Lairg area, serving the main village and Ord Place. These utilise septic tanks which discharge into Little Loch Shin. Direct discharges also occur from other properties in the village which are not connected to these systems. The main village system has very little spare capacity remaining and future development is likely to be constrained until improvements can be carried out. These may take the form of collector sewers for all existing outfalls and future development areas leading to a full bacterial treatment facility below the Shin diversion dam. The actual detail of any scheme remains to be discussed with the Highland River Purification Board and the outline given above may be subject to change.

PROPOSAL:

The Council will improve Lairg drainage in 1984/85 at an estimated cost of £230,000.

Roads - A836 and A838

52. The A836 Bonar Bridge - Lairg route forms part of the Council's Strategic Road network for priority allocation of funds. Major improvement works have already taken place north of Bonar Bridge and further schemes are in hand for this section. The Council has been pressing Government for an increased allocation in order to bring forward schemes such as this to a more realistic date. There is no commitment at present to undertake major reconstruction work on the A836 (Lairg to Tongue) or A838 (Lairg to Laxford Bridge), although the limited number of passing spaces on these routes merits early attention.

PROPOSAL:

The Council intends to carry out a major improvement scheme on the A836 in the vicinity of the Auction Mart. This is expected to commence in 1984-85 at a cost of £447,000.

POLICY:

The Council will consider the level of priority which should be given to improvements to the A838, once traffic patterns have stabilised on completion of the Kylesku Bridge in N.W. Sutherland.

Other Roads

53. There are no crofting township roads presently programmed for improvement under the Congested Districts scheme. While other minor road improvements, e.g. the provision of additional passing spaces, would benefit local road users, priorities for attention need to be established in view of the limited resources available. In Lairg itself the vehicular access from Clashbreac onto Main Street is unsatisfactory. Access to the Milnclarin site via Church Hill Road would also require upgrading if a higher density development is to be encouraged here.

PROPOSAL: *The Regional Council is to improve the Clashbreac junction at a cost of £15,000 in 1983-84.*

POLICY: *A line will be reserved for improvement and realignment of Church Hill Road in relation to development of the Milnclarin area. This will need to take account of security arrangements at the new Telephone Exchange.*

RECOMMENDATION: *The Regional Council will investigate realignment and improvement of Church Hill Road during the Plan period in consultation with affected proprietors. The District Council should consider reserving land to the immediate west of the new telephone exchange against the possible future expansion requirements of British Telecom.*

Junction: A839/B864

54. The junction of the Lairg-Rosehall and Lairg-Inveran roads is substandard in alignment and visibilities are greatly reduced by cross-gradient and the brow to the west. A significant number of tourists use this junction during the summer season as part of the route to Shin Falls.

RECOMMENDATION: *The Council will investigate what measures might be taken to improve the above junction with a view to undertaking a scheme as resources permit.*

Black Bridge

55. This bridge carries traffic on the A.839 across Little Loch Shin and also serves the Ord Place housing area and nearby commercial premises. Structural surveys have shown that the bridge is in poor condition, given the traffic being carried. This is exacerbated by the narrow carriageway, whilst there are also substantial pedestrian movements across this link between the two parts of the village. Replacement by a double carriageway route with footpath is a matter of urgency. A number of alternative routes have been considered. Two possibilities remain, one 60 m. downstream of the existing bridge and the other 9 m. upstream. The upstream option would involve very little change in present traffic circulation. However, it would intrude on private garden land and is less favoured in cost and engineering terms (due to poorer ground conditions). Based on surveys of local traffic movements, road safety considerations would also be inferior. The downstream route is estimated to give a cost

saving. However, in view of public support for the upstream option, a detailed engineering assessment is to be carried out to establish costs more accurately. There are mature trees and shrubs on the west flank of Little Loch Shin in the vicinity of the two bridge routes which greatly enhance the amenity of this area. The A836, on the other bank of the Loch, is substandard in alignment and width.

PROPOSAL :

The Council intends to construct a replacement for the Black Bridge commencing 1984/85 at an estimated cost of £600,000. In the event that the downstream option proves substantially more cost-effective, the Council will consider retention of the existing bridge as a pedestrian link to Lairg. Improvements will be made to the A836 approaches as part of this contract. A replacement landscaping scheme will be undertaken in conjunction with works on the west bank of Little Loch Shin.

Lairg - Manse Road and Main Street

56. Manse Road serves a substantial area of housing, and is subject to surface flooding problems. Much of Main Street, the main commercial thoroughfare in the village, lacks footpaths. This can create dangerous conditions for pedestrians and traffic emerging from narrow side roads.

PROPOSAL:

The Council will undertake improvements at Manse Road to be implemented as a revenue scheme during the Plan period.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Council will examine the scope for introduction of footpaths on Main Street, Lairg. Implementation will depend upon an overall design being agreed for phased construction as resources permit.

Health Centre

57. The present doctor's surgery does not provide satisfactory accommodation for the full range of local health services. Proposals for a purpose built facility have been under consideration by the Health Board for many years. The possibility of providing further public car parking behind the new centre has been discontinued for the present time.

PROPOSAL:

The Highland Health Board intends to construct a Health Centre on Main Street at an estimated cost of £200,000. It is hoped to commence during 1983-84.

Recreational Facilities

58. The Regional Council has now completed work on the Ferrycroft playingfield and it is expected that the surface will be ready for use by September 1982. 0.3 ha. of land has been acquired for the purpose of forming a play space for use by the Primary School. The existing tennis courts behind the former Library on Main Street are being rehabilitated by local community effort, but reinstatement to a high standard would require grant assistance.

PROPOSAL:

A small school playingfield is being created on land adjoining the Primary School. This will be formed incrementally as resources permit.

RECOMMENDATION:

The appropriate bodies should recognise the local effort being made to bring the Tennis Courts in Lairg back into use and give favourable consideration to any approaches made for assistance.

Forestry

59. Considerable further planting is expected to take place in the Lairg area during the Plan period, by both the Forestry Commission and private landowners. There is potential for additional afforestation provided that this is carefully integrated with other land uses, and care is taken with both the rate and detailed execution of ploughing operations (see Part Two: River Systems).

PROPOSAL:

The Forestry Commission intends to plant a further 1030 ha. east of Loch Beannach and to the south of Sallachy during the period upto 1986.

POLICY:

Major planting schemes have been cleared at Overscaig (1472 ha.) and Sallachy (1200 ha.) by private owners but the latter is unlikely to proceed. The Council will encourage afforestation of land where this is not to the detriment of other uses which are capable of retaining population and services on the ground.

Countryside Projects

60. The Lairg area abounds with places of considerable social and natural history value which would be of interest to local people and visitors if provision for easier access, signposting and suitable interpretive material were made. This would be subject to agreement with landowners and other interests in each case. Limited funds are available for projects of this kind, although voluntary effort or work experience schemes could be employed.

POLICY:

The Council will encourage provision of facilities for enjoyment of the countryside. The following locations are suggested for consideration,

- a) The broch at Sallachy.*
- b) The early settlement field systems and cairns to the south west of Ord Place.*
- c) Signposting the footpath system adjacent to the proposed caravan site at Ferrycroft.*
- d) The Land Improvements memorial at Achnairn, Shinness.*
- e) Stopping places and picnic sites near the loch-side on the A838 between Fiag and Merkland.*
- f) Similarly on the A836 at the Crask.*

Environmental Improvements

61. There are a number of areas in and around Lairg which would benefit greatly from work to tidy up and enhance them. Where appropriate, the Council will take up possible environmental improvement schemes with the agencies concerned. Elsewhere specialist advice will be offered on request in matters of design and amenity tree planting.

POLICY:

The Council will encourage environmental improvement schemes in the following areas:

- a) *Landscaping of the approaches to Lairg, particularly to the east, and on the loch side of the A836 at Lower Lairg where enhancement of existing buildings is already taking place.*
- b) *The car park and adjoining land fronting onto Little Loch Shin - in particular screen fencing for the STTC garage vehicle compound.*
- c) *Landowners might request the District Council to remove scrap cars at Blairbuie, Achnairn, Colaboll and Saval Road.*
- d) *Undergrounding of overhead hydro lines as circumstances permit. Ord Place might take priority as this could be incorporated with a scheme to improve the very poor pavements in the older part of the local authority housing.*
- e) *Tidying up of the single track access road from the Forestry Commission offices to Ferrycroft.*
- f) *Investigation of the possibility of relocating the prominent salt store on the A839 on Little Loch Shin. In view of the operational advantages of a store in this vicinity it may be possible to seek use of the dilapidated depot site nearer Ord Place for this purpose, subject to some screen-planting with suitable species.*

PART FOUR: ROGART

Prospects

62. Preliminary results from the 1981 Census confirm that less than 400 people now live in this area. Recent surveys by the Scottish Consumer Council have shown the population structure to be imbalanced, particularly in terms of the low numbers of children and young adults. There is concern locally that the community stands close to the threshold of viability in relation to services such as the local mart. Employment is dominated by the primary sector, notably crofting, although local services and commuting to other areas are significant. There is a need to stimulate additional jobs in the locality, particularly for younger women. This would help to retain population and give a stimulus to the crofting economy.

POLICY:

0.3 ha. of land at Rogart Station is allocated for small-scale light or cottage industries. The Council will encourage job-related uses for the former Station House and Meal Mill.

Crofting Reorganisation

63. The bulk of land in the Rogart area is given over to crofting tenure and supports 159 crofts, occupied by 105 tenants. Soils in the less rocky and remote areas are of reasonable quality given the climatic limitations and, together with extensive grazings, allow stocking of over 7,000 sheep and several hundred cattle. The crofting community as a whole must be counted as relatively vigorous, and is anxious that improvements are undertaken to provide for a secure future. Amalgamation of crofts on any scale might however benefit few at the expense of depopulation and the community as a whole. Some recasting of croft lands among the active population would help meet the objectives of retaining population and better use of the land. With the community's support, such a scheme would also provide a sensible framework for agricultural improvements to enhance productivity and crofter incomes. Complementary action by other agencies in relation to housing and employment would also be required. A combination of development measures along these lines could be prepared by the statutory agencies in close consultation with the community and would be well placed to attract financial assistance from the Government and EEC. The proposals for an Agricultural Development Programme made by the NFU and Local Authorities, supported by the HIDB, would be of assistance in this regard.

RECOMMENDATION

The Crofters Commission should discuss the scope for a recasting scheme and related improvements with the local community and public agencies with a view to securing financial support for any subsequent projects from Government and the EEC.

Tourism

64. Despite its proximity to major tourist routes at Lairg and Golspie, the area's tourist facilities are under-developed. Accommodation is limited to the Rogart Hotel, bed and breakfast premises and the small chalet site at Inchcape which is undergoing some expansion. However, the 1981 Census indicates that approximately 20% of the local housing stock comprises second homes and holiday accommodation. Any further development of tourism depends upon improving the stock of accommodation (particularly the self-catering variety) and local amenities (see Para. 69). Planning permission has been granted for 15 chalets at Tressady, but the main opportunities probably lie with property conversions and small-scale chalets or caravan developments. Schemes of this kind would conform better with the existing pattern of development as well as providing a useful supplementary income to crofters.

POLICY:

The Council will encourage development of small-scale chalet or caravan sites in the Rogart area. Close attention to siting, access, servicing and landscaping is needed to achieve satisfactory schemes. Applications for conversion of existing property to holiday-let accommodation will be dealt with on their individual merits.

Housing

65. There is a steady but limited demand for new private house sites. The Council applies its Housing in the Countryside policy to the majority of crofting townships where dwellings occur in a scattered pattern. Whilst it is important to safeguard the better in-bye land as far as possible, it is usually possible to accommodate single houses in such areas subject to satisfactory access, soakaway conditions and availability of a wholesome water supply. Existing development in the vicinity of Pittentrail is more substantial and tightly grouped. New housing here should reflect the existing character and layout, achieve economical servicing and safeguard agricultural and amenity interests.

POLICY:

Housing Policy RS2 will apply to land identified at Pittentrail although special attention may have to be given to surface water drainage conditions.

Ten local authority dwellings have been built during the last ten years. However, the low rate of relets has meant some households moving outwith the Rogart area and a consistent waiting-list. The District Council

has undertaken to provide further general needs housing. Consideration might be given to sheltered or amenity provision given the numbers of elderly residents, particularly where this would help with mobility of crofts to younger families.

PROPOSAL:

Sutherland District Council intends to build six houses at Pittentrail. Work has started on the first phase of four dwellings at Murray Place costing £96,000. The second phase is programmed to commence later in 1982/83 at a cost of £60,000, subject to suitable access and drainage conditions.

Sewerage

66. There is no mains sewerage system serving the Rogart area at present. The Highland River Purification Board considers that a scheme will be necessary to accommodate any significant house building in Pittentrail, and restrictions may affect the second phase of the District Council's scheme.

PROPOSAL:

The Regional Council intends to provide a drainage scheme for Rogart with a start in 1983/84 at a cost of £74,000.

Other Roads

67. Crofting township roads are eligible for improvement under the congested Districts scheme where circumstances permit. The position of existing speed restriction signs in Rogart does not take account of recent development to the south of the village.

PROPOSAL:

The Council is to improve the Balchraggan township road.

RECOMMENDATION:

Although proposals for repositioning of speed restriction signs at Rogart have been rejected by SDD in the past, the Council will be investigating the situation further.

Playingfields

68. There is no formal playingfield at Rogart, although regular use has been made of an area of ground at Corrie Meadow. The opportunity exists to create a purpose-made facility on land to the rear of Murray Place, in association with the District Council's housing access. Although somewhat remote from the primary school, this site would be advantageously placed in relation to the new community hall. Responsibility for funding this project, and the degree of priority which can be accorded, are not clear at this time.

POLICY:

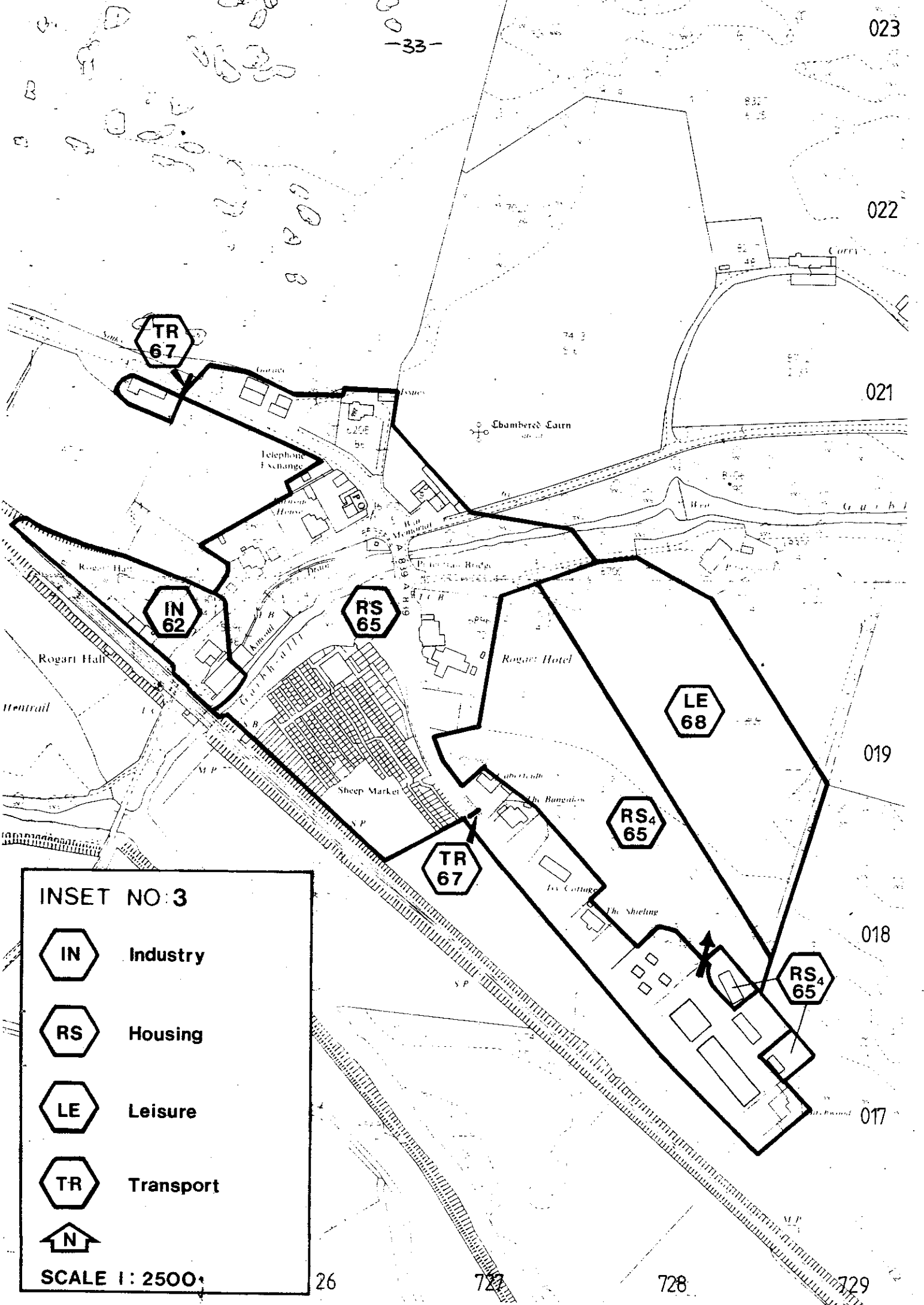
The Council will encourage proposals to establish a permanent playingfield at Pittentrail, and will safeguard the area of ground involved meantime.

Countryside Projects






69. A number of countryside facilities have already been developed in the Rogart area. These include the picnic site on the Little Rogart Loch road and, most notably, the monument to John MacDonalld of Rogart who became first Prime Minister of Canada. Tidying up and related improvements would increase the amenity and visitor appeal of these facilities. Similarly, the partially collapsed footbridge over the Fleet at Rovie has been put forward for attention under the Army's OPMAC scheme. There also appears to be some potential at Kinnauld to tidy up the former quarry floor and accesses for informal car parking. A footpath could then be formed to the hill fort and broch sites on the hill above. Interpretive material could relate to these ancient monuments, local geology and fauna (including wild goats) and the fine views down Strath Fleet. Limited funds are available for projects of this kind. Members of the public may be able to suggest other possible schemes which might be considered in the future, particularly under job creation or similar work experience schemes.

RECOMMENDATION:

The above countryside schemes will be examined with a view to their being incorporated into future programmes.



INSET NO: 3

-  **IN** Industry
-  **RS** Housing
-  **LE** Leisure
-  **TR** Transport
-  **N**

SCALE 1 : 2500

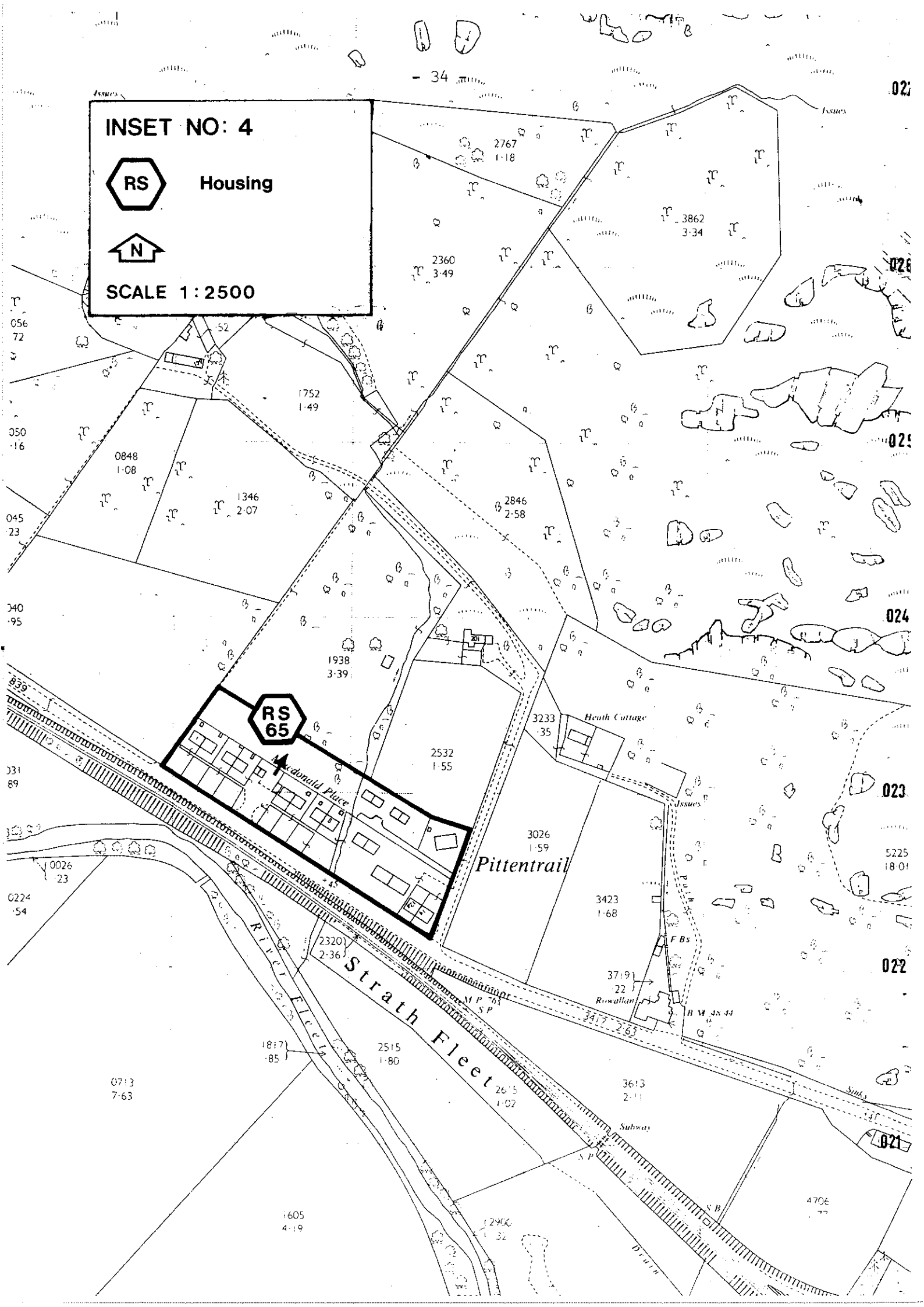
INSET NO: 4



Housing



SCALE 1 : 2500



PART FIVE: GOLSPIE AND THE SEABOARD

Prospects

70. 90% of the local population lives in the village of Golspie, the remainder being scattered principally off the line of the A9 and lower Dunrobin Glen at Backies. The narrow coastal strip is given over to prosperous farms, commercial forestry plantations, recreational and conservation uses. Higher ground to the north west is given over to extensive grazings and sporting uses. Golspie is the main administrative and service centre in Sutherland, and is very much affected by the decline of tourism and wider changes in population and servicing patterns. The best prospects for job creation probably lie with encouraging small scale enterprises which can be related to existing service functions.

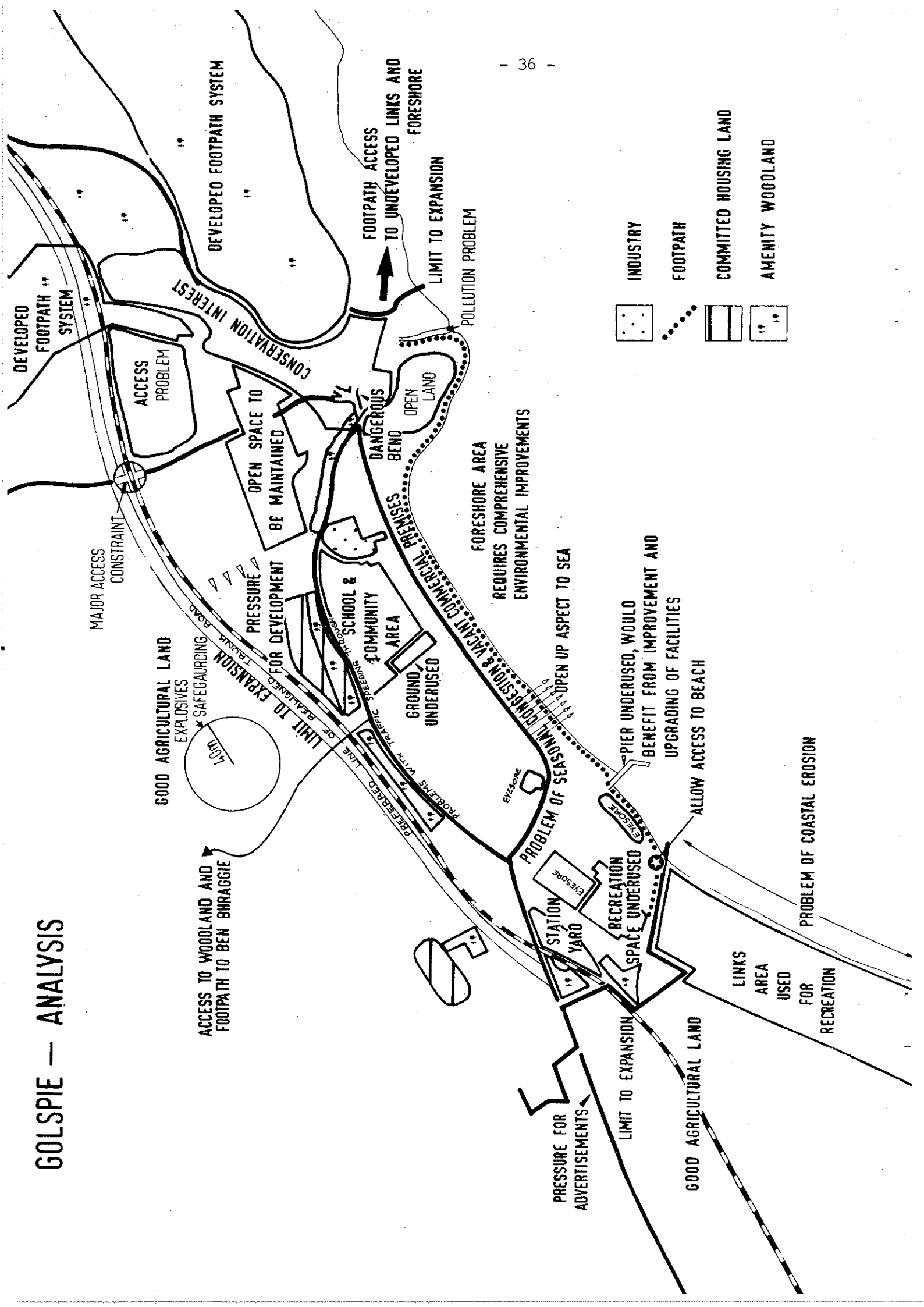
Development Pattern - Golspie

71. With the exception of development in the Ben Bhraggie Drive area, the village is contained by four major restraints. To the north, the elevated railway forms a continuous barrier (two narrow under-bridges) from good agricultural land. To the west lies further good agricultural ground and the golf course. The foreshore to the south, and Golspie Burn together with the policies of Dunrobin Castle to the east are equally firm boundaries. Within this building envelope, there are opportunities for limited infilling and redevelopment of sites, and three more substantial areas of open ground at Rhives Field (6 ha.), east of Argo Terrace (3.8 ha.) and south of Ford Park (3 ha.). The bulk of Rhives Field is owned by the District Council and was committed for development in the previous Local Plan. The land between Argo Terrace and Sibell Road offers no obvious access point, whilst the Ford Park policies contribute significantly to the amenity of this part of the village. Given the likely building needs over the next five years and servicing constraints, it should not be necessary to allocate land for development in the other two locations.

Light Industry

72. Various improvements have been carried out to the Industrial Estate, which now provides a range of premises for local businesses. The HIBD recently completed two starter workshop units and is making further provision. Whilst immediate needs are catered for, additional sites for light industry will be required within the Plan period. British Rail has indicated that land previously identified for industry at Golspie Station might shortly become surplus to requirements. There is a building at Littleferry which would be suitable for conversion to a craft workshop or similar activity. Alternatively it may be suitable to house interpretive material explaining the Loch Fleet Nature Drive (see Para. 98).

GOLSPIE — ANALYSIS



PROPOSAL:

The HIDB is constructing 2 further advance workshops at the Golspie Industrial Estate at an estimated cost of £50,000.

POLICY:

Approximately 0.76 ha. of land at Golspie Station Yard is allocated for light industrial purposes (see Para. 86).

POLICY:

The Council will encourage development of a craft workshop or similar enterprise in a redundant building at Littleferry.

New Technology Industry

73. New high technology industries are likely to form one of the most vigorous parts of the national economy over the next decade. These industries cover a wide range, including bio-technologies producing drugs, foodstuffs and other materials to electronics and robotics. Many involve high value - low bulk products (reducing the importance of proximity to markets) and favour self-contained sites in high quality environments. The Council is currently identifying potential locations for such industries in co-operation with land-owners and other agencies, with a view to selective promotion. The Golspie area may prove a suitable location particularly in light of scheduled improvements to the A9 including a Dornoch Firth crossing. Whilst it is not possible to identify specific sites at this stage, should a proposal come forward, this will be advertised in the normal way in order to provide an opportunity for the issues to be discussed locally.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Council will continue to investigate the potential for attracting high technology firms to appropriate parts of the Region.

Tourism

74. Golspie already offers a wide range of tourist accommodation and any substantial further provision is unlikely during the Plan period. Proposals continue to be brought forward to improve the facilities for visitors (see later Paras.) and further enhance the village's "well-kept" image. The District Council is to take over ownership of Golspie caravan site.

PROPOSAL:

The District Council are to upgrade facilities at Golspie Caravan site. £15,000 has been allocated for 1983/84.

POLICY:

The Council will encourage proposals to improve the range of facilities available for tourists, particularly in terms of outdoor pursuits and wet weather activities.

Housing - Golspie Tower and Backies

75. Demand for new private housing in Golspie has been very low during the last decade, although this may in part reflect the shortage of serviced plots within the village. By contrast, there has been considerable interest in new housing and the refurbishment of existing properties in the Golspie Tower and Backies area to the north. The greater part of these areas comprises good farmland, working crofts and related grazings together with forestry plantations. The road network serving these communities is grossly substandard due to its narrow width, steep gradients, a series of bad corners, severe pinch-points at the railway bridges and inadequate number of passing spaces. If existing trends continue unchecked, a very substantial and expensive programme of road improvements will need to be carried out. The Council does not consider this can be justified in the face of other priorities at a time of financial restraint.

POLICY:

Housing Policy RS2 will apply to limited areas of ground identified at Golspie Tower and Backies. Elsewhere, the Council will resist further applications for development unless it can be shown that a clear over-riding occupational requirement exists in connection with the working of land for agriculture or crofting.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Council will investigate minor improvements, particularly the provision of further passing spaces, in these areas, subject to the availability of resources.

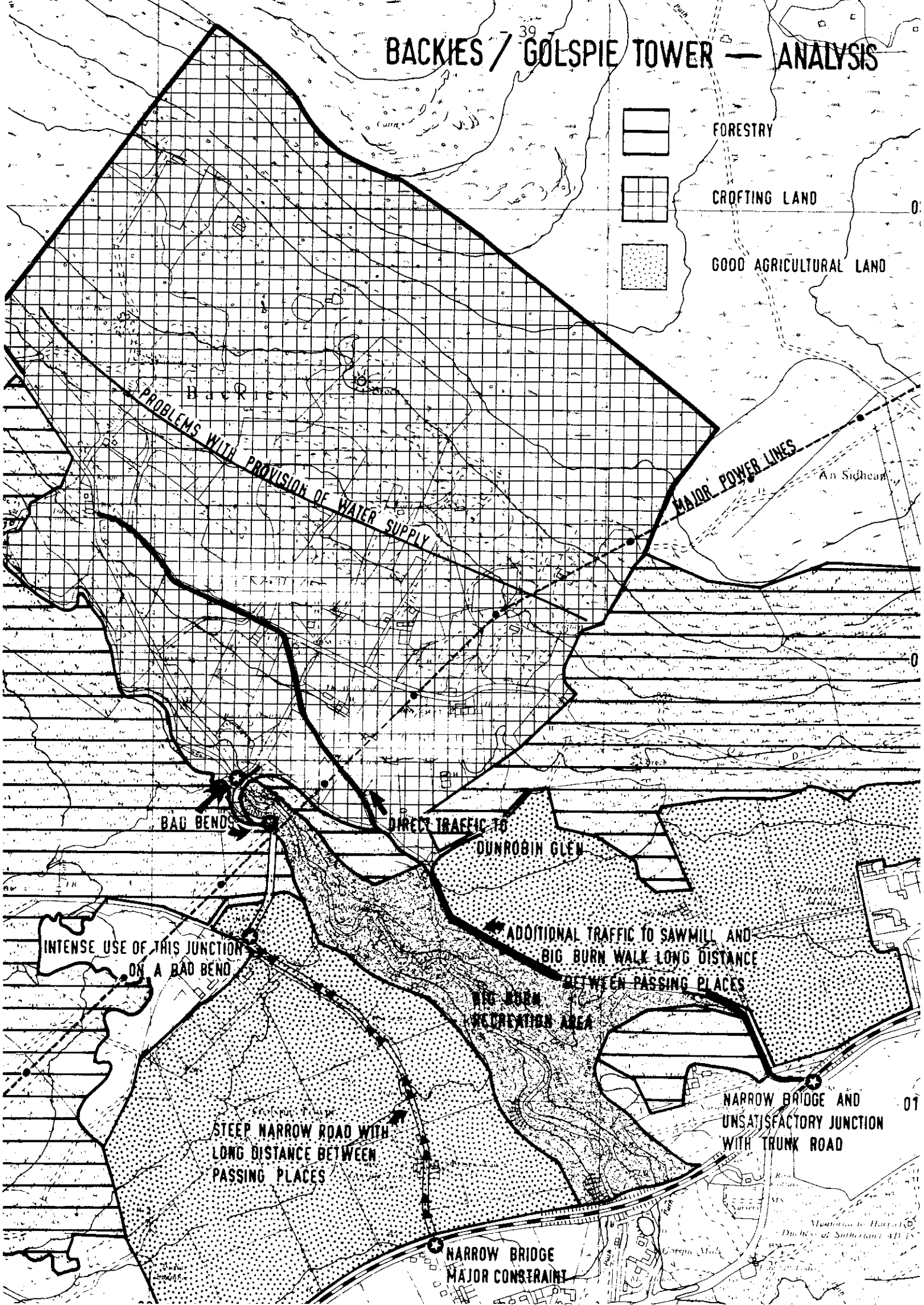
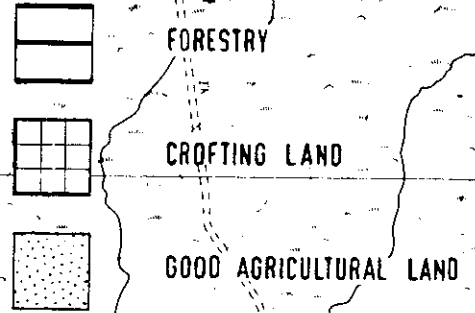
Housing - Rhives Field

76. Land at Rhives Field, Golspie is capable of accommodating substantial future housing development. The District Council expect to meet needs arising from their priority waiting-list. Access will be taken from Rose Street, with the longer term intention of linking through to the new spur road onto Back Road. (See also Para. 84). This will help to spread traffic generated by the existing Tower development, which must take access from Argo Terrace and the adjoining narrow roads into the village. In accordance with their policy to provide serviced plots for individuals to build their own homes, the District Council has planning consent for eighteen feus along the southern edge of Rhives Field. Little interest has been shown in these plots to date, and further servicing work has been undertaken to overcome consumer resistance. The Council has also resolved to provide amenity houses on part of the site to the north of the new service road while a further area to the east of the service road is to be sold to Albyn Housing Society to provide amenity houses for older married couples and younger single people.

PROPOSAL

The District Council is building six amenity/sheltered houses in Golspie at a cost of £144,000. Eight general needs houses will be constructed in 1984-85 at a cost of £192,000.

BACKIES / GOLSPIE TOWER — ANALYSIS



PROBLEMS WITH PROVISION OF WATER SUPPLY

MAJOR POWER LINES

BAD BENDS

DIRECT TRAFFIC TO
DUNROBIN GLEN

INTENSE USE OF THIS JUNCTION
ON A BAD BEND

ADDITIONAL TRAFFIC TO SAWMILL AND
BIG BURN WALK LONG DISTANCE
BETWEEN PASSING PLACES

BIG BURN
RECREATION AREA

STEEP NARROW ROAD WITH
LONG DISTANCE BETWEEN
PASSING PLACES

NARROW BRIDGE AND
UNSATISFACTORY JUNCTION
WITH TRUNK ROAD

NARROW BRIDGE
MAJOR CONSTRAINT

Map drawn to scale of
1:50,000 by Sutherland AD 15

PROPOSAL:

The Albyn Housing Society intends to erect 6 amenity houses and 12 units for younger single persons, on 0.65 ha. at Rhives Field. This is expected to commence in 1983/84 at a total cost of £360,000. A second phase development may follow in 1986/87 depending upon demand.

POLICY:

Housing Policy RS4 will apply to development of the remaining land at Rhives Field. Access arrangements should provide for ultimate linking of Ross Street and Back Road as development proceeds.

Housing - Littleferry Road

77. Land on the west side of Ferry Road was allocated for private housing in the previous Plan, following grant of planning permission which has since expired. Part of this site consists of two small fields which are of poor quality and unworked. Development of this land would help to increase the choice of sites for private housing in the village.

POLICY:

Housing Policy RS4 will apply to approximately 0.5 ha. of land off the Ferry Road.

Housing - Ben Bhraggie Drive

78. Considerable house building has occurred in this area over the years. An overall layout plan for the final phase has been approved and services can be provided. Development of several plots has commenced.

POLICY:

Housing Policy RS4 will apply to the remaining 0.4 ha. of ground (10 plots) at Ben Bhraggie Drive.

Housing - Gap Sites in Golspie

79. There are a limited number of gap sites remaining within the built-up area of Golspie that would be suitable for infill housing purposes. Because of the difficulties in securing a suitable use for Heavitree Farm over the years and the poor nature of the access, this site may lend itself to a small infill-housing development (see also Para. 72).

POLICY:

Applications for housing development on gap sites within Golspie, including Heavitree Farm will be encouraged subject to the appropriate siting and servicing requirements being met.

Water Supplies

80. Whilst most development can be accommodated by the existing water supply system, problems can arise during periods of peak demand and in respect of the quality of product. Substantial investment is required to provide a reliable source of water from Loch Lundie, new filtration and additional mains capacity.

PROPOSAL:

The Council intends to commence an improvement scheme, involving new storage capacity, to both Golspie and Brora supplies during 1984-85 at a cost of £290,000.

POLICY:

Further improvements to the supply will be phased over a number of later years at an estimated cost of £535,000.

Sewerage

81. Untreated sewage is presently discharged from several outlets directly into the sea. Under certain conditions, this can give rise to localised pollution on the beach. The problem is not given a high priority by the River Purification Board, and no development restrictions seem likely during the Plan period. Provision will need to be made for collector sewers and a treatment plant, probably in the vicinity of Golspie Burn, in the longer term.

POLICY:

The Council expect to undertake improvements to Golspie drainage at an estimated cost of £80,000 in later years.

A9- Churchyard Corner

82. The acute bend in the A9(T) at St. Andrews Church presents a hazard to traffic, particularly for the larger vehicles which are unable to negotiate it without cutting the corner. This situation is exacerbated by the number of poorly located access points which join the A9 in the vicinity. Great care is needed with any improvement scheme since this will involve disturbance of the burial ground and trees as well as dismantling of stone walls which contribute to the attractive qualities of this part of the village, containing several listed buildings in addition to the Church.

PROPOSAL:

The Scottish Development Department intends to realign the A9 in the general area of Churchyard Corner. This work is scheduled to start in 1982-83 at a cost of £300,000. Walls will require to be reinstated to a high standard and replacement tree planting undertaken as necessary.

A9 - Long Term Bypass

83. Although the long mooted bypass is unlikely to be built for at least ten years, the momentum of improvements northwards along the A9 is continuing. The road safety and amenity benefits of the route identified in the previous Local Plan still apply, particularly in respect of diverting heavy through traffic.

POLICY:

The Regional Council will continue to safeguard a line for the A9(T) Golspie bypass until such time as the Trunk Roads Authority are in a position to make the necessary Orders.

Back Road

84. Continued use of Back Road as an alternative through route to the village gives cause for concern. Regulations prohibiting through traffic and raised strips have been introduced, but use continues and speeds can be excessive. The road passes the entrance to both schools, the Swimming Pool and Community Centre, and the Industrial Estate where there is the likelihood of heavy vehicles manoeuvring. Pedestrian use of the road is high, many being unescorted children, and the crossing patrol can only be effective at one point. Major improvements have been carried out to accesses for the schools and industrial estate at substantial cost in recent years. In the longer term the opportunity might be taken to improve access from Golspie Tower Housing to Main Street by a more direct route.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Council will consider measures to stop up Back Road to through traffic, allowing access only in the longer term. (Special provision would have to be made for emergency vehicles stationed on Back Road). This might include investigation of possibilities for an alternative link between Back Road and Main Street.

Sutherland Road

85. Sutherland Road is a short cul-de-sac which serves fourteen houses. The District Council has recently undertaken to provide a water main. There is no footpath serving the road at present.

PROPOSAL:

A scheme for a turning area has been programmed for 1983/84 at a cost of £5,000. Further improvements are being investigated.

Lorry Parking

86. Lorry parking in the village remains a problem, particularly in relation to vehicles carrying dangerous loads. It has proved difficult to pinpoint a suitable site which would fulfil the safety and amenity requirements and yet remain close enough to the village to encourage continued stop-over by drivers. A site off Alistair Road was provisionally identified in the last Local Plan but no progress has been made. Several other sites have been examined, including land to the immediate north of the railway bridge on Rhives Road, which proved unacceptable to the landowner.

POLICY:

The Council will seek removal of lorries, particularly those carrying dangerous loads, from overnight parking in the centre of the village. Further investigation will be undertaken, and it may be that part of the Station Yard could be used for this purpose.

A9 - Loading and Unloading

87. The advent of larger commercial vehicles for servicing of major shops has highlighted the deficiencies of Main Street in coping as through trunk route, local access, parking and servicing area. Heavy lorries making deliveries to the SCWS premises must negotiate into, and reverse out of, the narrow lane to the shop. This results in delays to traffic and the risk of an accident. Service vehicles have resorted to use of Fountain Road and then crossing vacant land adjoining the school bus park which is in the ownership of the Regional Council.

The SCWS has recently been granted permission for a major extension to their store.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Council will consider measures to minimise the problems associated with servicing and rear access to properties in this area at such time as the Education Authority's land requirements are clearer. Proposals may include introduction of further waiting restrictions on the A9.

Education

88. The Council does not envisage further alterations to school accommodation during the Plan period, although land is reserved in Golspie for a further hostel. A thorough review of secondary education provision in the Region is to be carried out in the near future, and this will need to take into account the long-term position of the High School and feeder establishments in other parts of Sutherland. A Sub-Committee has been considering the future of Drummie Farm.

POLICY:

In the event of the hostel site off Fountain Road being declared as surplus to long-term requirements, the Council will endeavour to identify alternative community uses. It is the Council's intention to retain Drummie Farm in hand.

Health Services

89. The Scottish Ambulance Service has recently completed construction of a four-bay Ambulance depot within the grounds of the Lawson Memorial Hospital at a cost of some £43,000. The Health Board is giving preliminary consideration to the possibility of incorporating a geriatric care unit within the grounds of the Hospital. Any extension will need to safeguard the route for the A9 bypass. (See Para. 83).

Telephone Exchange

90. British Telecom is undertaking a programme of modernisation and improvement to equipment across the country.

POLICY:

A new telephone exchange will be erected on land at Back Road. This is scheduled to be brought into operation during 1989.

Electricity

91. The Hydro Board is required to match its capacity with changes in demand. An additional transformer will be required,

although on present load growth this may be outwith the Plan period. The Board may require additional land at the proposed location for this facility. There are longer term reinforcement proposals for 33 kV supplies between Golspie and Brora.

POLICY: *The Hydro Board intends to install an additional transformer at the Rhives Road substation.*

Refuse Disposal - Amenity Tip

92. Refuse disposal facilities in East Sutherland are now centred upon the pulverisation plant at Brora. The District Council are investigating various sites for sanitary landfill in East Sutherland at the present time. The District Council has a policy of establishing amenity tips to cater for dumping of bulkier household refuse in each locality. Consent has been granted for such a tip at Kirkton Quarry off the A9, but this may not proceed due to the costs of providing a suitable access. Backies Quarry has been ruled out because of limited capacity, poor access and possible supervisory problems.

POLICY: *The District Council intends to establish an amenity tip in the Golspie area. Further investigation is necessary before any commitment can be given to a particular site.*

Sports Facilities

93. Substantial improvements are being undertaken to the tennis courts off Back Road. However, the squash court facility at Dunrobin Castle has been closed to the public, and a replacement is needed to meet local demand. The Council has prepared a scheme to provide new courts as part of the improvements to Golspie Swimming Pool. Although this is contained in the five-year building programme, responsibility may shortly be passed to the District Council under Government proposals for rationalisation of local authority responsibilities.

PROPOSAL: *It is intended to provide additional changing facilities to serve the Golspie Swimming Pool in conjunction with new squash court facilities, at a cost of £93,000. This project will be reassessed once the responsibilities of the two Councils are clarified.*

Commerce

94. Although the bulk of commercial facilities are located on Main Street, these are disjointed and interspersed with residential and other uses. The current recession has increased the number of empty premises at a time when applications for commercial use of other properties continue to be received by the Council. It is the Council's view that commercial activities need to be controlled more closely given that over-provision exists, particularly where further changes of use would be detrimental to residential amenity and the visual appearance of Main Street (see Para. 102).

POLICY: *Commercial activity will be encouraged in the area defined for these purposes on the Proposals Map. There will be a presumption against the introduction of such uses elsewhere, without prejudice to land where such uses are already established.*

Advertisements

95. The approaches to Golspie and the Mound are subject to heavy commercial pressures for advertising. Unauthorised signs are frequently erected. The Council is anxious to avoid the situation where competition for size and positioning of advertisements detracts significantly from local amenity and becomes a traffic hazard.

POLICY: *The Council will support efforts to erect composite signs to the approved design on the immediate approaches to Golspie. All other advance signs not in accordance with policy will be strongly resisted.*

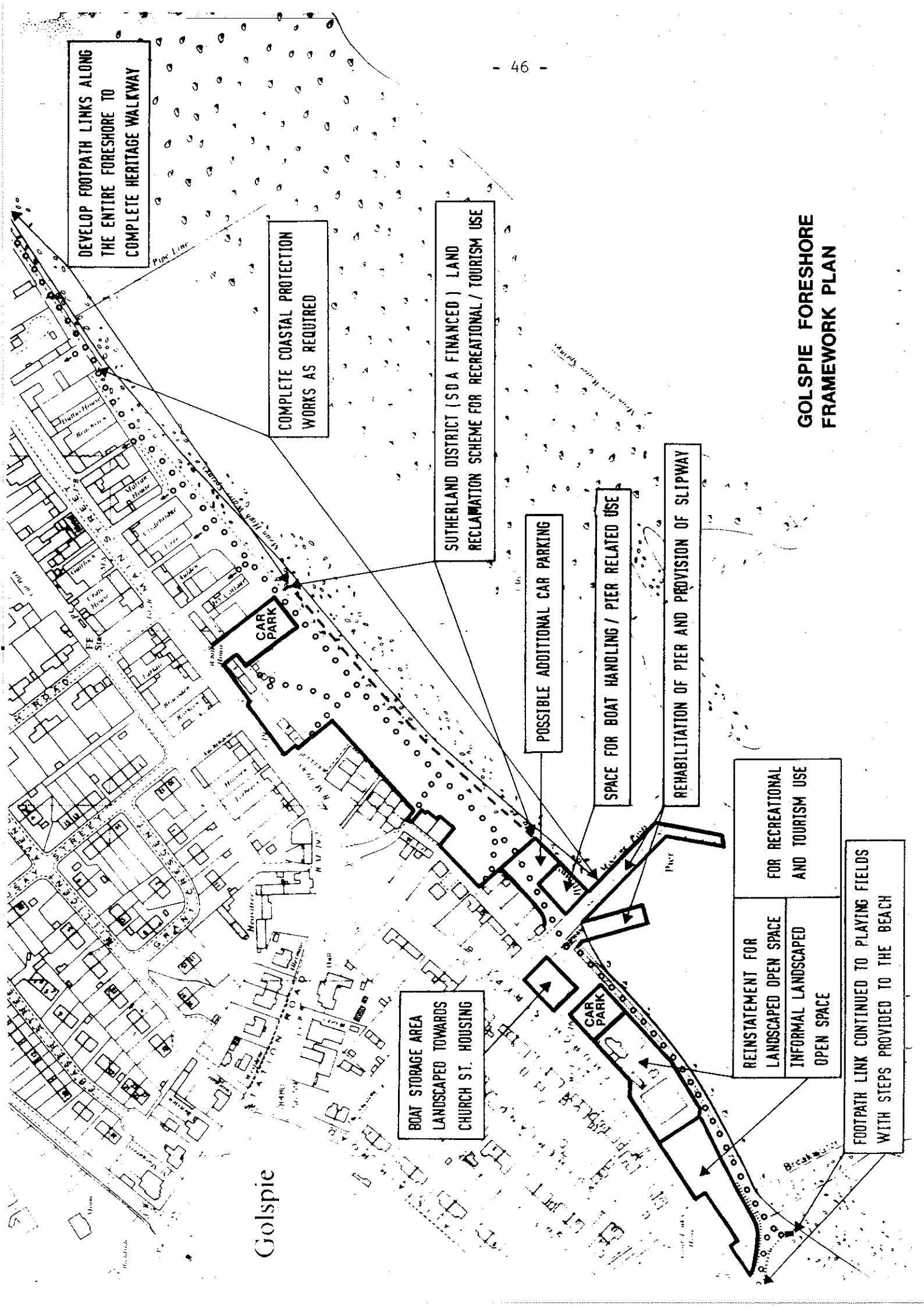
Golspie Foreshore

96. The village tends to turn its back to the sea, surely one of its assets. Considerable effort has gone into the foreshore in recent years including: the substantial coast protection and promenade schemes behind Main Street and west of the pier; the rip-rap coast protection work at the golf course; and the recently completed SDA scheme to improve an area of foreshore to the east of the pier and open up an aspect to the sea. Scottish Gas demolished the former gas works last year, although the office building has been retained pending offers on the open market. The adjoining contractors yard has been in an unfinished state for some time, and now seems an inappropriate use for this locality. The pier and adjoining land are owned by the Regional Council. Sutherland Estates own ground to the east linking up with the District Council's improvement scheme. If the present momentum can be maintained, then it may be possible to complete a comprehensive facelift of the whole foreshore area, from the golspie Burn to the Golf Course, during the coming decade. The Council has prepared an outline framework plan (overleaf) as the basis for discussion of what further action might be taken by various public agencies and local community effort.

PROPOSAL: *The Regional Council is presently negotiating for land on the foreshore at Golspie to allow a further land renewal scheme to go ahead. This was recently submitted to the SDA for funding and is expected to cost £65,000.*

PROPOSAL: *The Community Council intend to improve access to the beach by the provision of steps. These will need to be designed in such a way as not to prejudice recent coastal protection work.*

GOLSPIE FORESHORE FRAMEWORK PLAN



DEVELOP FOOTPATH LINKS ALONG THE ENTIRE FORESHORE TO COMPLETE HERITAGE WALKWAY

COMPLETE COASTAL PROTECTION WORKS AS REQUIRED

SUTHERLAND DISTRICT (SDA FINANCED) LAND RECLAMATION SCHEME FOR RECREATIONAL / TOURISM USE

POSSIBLE ADDITIONAL CAR PARKING

SPACE FOR BOAT HANDLING / PIER RELATED USE

REHABILITATION OF PIER AND PROVISION OF SLIPWAY

BOAT STORAGE AREA LANDSCAPED TOWARDS CHURCH ST. HOUSING

REINSTATEMENT FOR LANDSCAPED OPEN SPACE	FOR RECREATIONAL AND TOURISM USE
INFORMAL LANDSCAPED OPEN SPACE	

FOOTPATH LINK CONTINUED TO PLAYING FIELDS WITH STEPS PROVIDED TO THE BEACH

Golspie

POLICY: *The Council will encourage further schemes to complete enhancement of the foreshore area for the public's access and enjoyment. Subject to discussions with interested parties and the public, the Council will support measures in accordance with their framework plan for the area.*

Other Environmental Improvements

97. There are several areas which would benefit from small-scale tidying up and landscaping, such as the dykes along Back Road and embankment around the all-weather playing field. Areas which require particular attention are the King George's field and football ground boundary fence, open ground at the Tower housing scheme which is poorly utilised and maintained at present, the open yard immediately north of the Sutherland Arms Garage and land in the ownership of the District Council at Lindsay Street.

POLICY: *The Council will encourage schemes for environmental improvement in the above areas of Golspie.*

Countryside Projects

98. A number of local features of historic or natural interest could be further developed so as to improve facilities for local people and visitors to the area. The broch at Strathsteven is worthy of some form of interpretation, although access across the A9 from the existing layby would need careful attention. The adjacent Roads Depot should be better screened from the elevated sections of the trunk road. A small car park might also be provided at the edge of the plantation near Golspie Tower. This would cater for people wishing to climb to Ben Bhraggie by the more gentle route, and could incorporate simple picnic facilities given the fine return views over Golspie to the Moray Firth. Advantage should also be taken of access to the foreshore between Golspie and Brora.

PROPOSAL: *The District Council, in co-operation with landowners, the Nature Conservancy Council, Scottish Wildlife Trust and the Countryside Commission is developing a nature drive and related facilities around Loch Fleet at a total cost of £41,500. The second phase is to be carried out during 1982-83.*

POLICY: *The Council will encourage provision for enjoyment of the countryside at Strathsteven and Golspie Tower and will encourage a scheme for improvements to car parking, beach access, upgrading of the Golspie/Brora coastal footpath and the provision of picnicking facilities at Sputie Burn for inclusion in the current MSC programme.*

Coastal Conservation

99. The A9 and railway are close by the coast in the vicinity of Strathsteven, permitting fine views over the foreshore and out to sea. Intervening land between the road and coastline is in farming and crofting use and heavily constrained for development by reason of access limitations.

POLICY: *The Council will follow a policy for restraint of development which is not essential for the working of land for crofting/agriculture or public access along the seaboard at Strathsteven.*

Heritage Walkway

100. Heritage trails or walks are proving an increasingly popular means of promoting tourism and generating interest in local history. The concept is being investigated elsewhere in Highland Region at present. The Golspie area has a fine range of such assets, particularly those associated with the Sutherland Clan. Indeed, the basis for an extensive footpath network already exists (Dunrobin-Big Burn - Dairy Wood - Foreshore - Ben Bhraggie) linking places of interest.

RECOMMENDATION: *Local tourist organisation should consider the scope for creation of a Heritage Walkway, which could be promoted by leaflets made available within the area.*

Listed Buildings - Dunrobin Castle and the Meal Mill

101. Dunrobin Castle has attracted many visitors since opening to the public some years ago. The newly-created Sutherland Trust are now responsible for the upkeep of the Castle. Golspie's Meal Mill, until recently in working condition, is of undoubted visitor interest and has been promoted by the Council as offering development opportunities in tourism.

POLICY: *A five-year programme of essential repairs is to be undertaken at Dunrobin Castle by the Sutherland Trust. This is expected to cost £70,000 and has attracted financial contribution from a number of public agencies.*

POLICY: *The Council will encourage the restoration for tourist-related use of Golspie Meal Mill. The Village Amenities Club has put forward an £80,000 scheme with the primary objective of creating a local museum.*

Urban Conservation - Golspie

102. Main Street, and the area surrounding Duke Street and Old Bank Road have been considered for possible designation as Conservation Areas. Both possess some individual buildings of particular architectural or historic importance, but their main value lies in their character as a whole. In the case of Main Street, it is the scale and traditional styles of buildings and their setting in a closely-knit street pattern. The other area takes its character from a generally grander scale of building, linked by mature woodland and the Golspie Burn.

POLICY: *The Council will closely monitor development pressures in the two areas shown on the Proposals Map. Any proposals which might seriously erode the existing character of these areas will be resisted.*

INSET NO: 1



Housing



Transport



Environment



SCALE 1:10 000

Backies

RS
75

TR
75

EV
98

RS
75

TR
75

Golspie Tower

Golspie

Sidhean

Dunrobin
Mains

02

01

83

84

High Water Springs

Mountain Water Springs

Adopted by the Highland Regional Council at their meeting held in Dingwall on the Seventh day of July Nineteen Hundred and Eighty Three.

John Teacook Member
[Signature] Member
Harold Jamman Director of
Law & Administration

APPENDIX 1

SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS 1982-87

Year	Agency	Project	Place	Cost £000	Remarks
1982/83	HIDB	2 x 750 f ² advance workshops	Golspie Industrial Estate	50	Complete.
1982/83	District	6 Houses	Pittentrail	156	2 phase. First phase underway.
1982/83	District	Nature Drive	Loch Fleet	41.5	Underway.
1982/83	District	Install electricity supply	Private feus, Golspie	12	Complete.
1982/83	SDD	Realignment of A9(T)	Churchyard Corner, Golspie	300	
1982/83	District	6 amenity/sheltered houses	Golspie	144	Underway.
1983/84	District	2 sheltered houses	Sydney Court, Lairg	48	
1983/84	Region	Improve junction	Clashbreac, Lairg	15	
1983/84	Region	Provide turning space	Sutherland Road, Golspie	5	
1983/84	Health board	Health Centre	Main Street, Lairg	200	
1983/84	District	Upgrade facilities	Golspie Caravan Site	15	
1984/85	Region	Replacement bridge	Black Bridge, Lairg	600	
1984/85	District	8 houses	Golspie	192	
1984/85	Region	Road realignment	A826	447	
1984/85	Region	Improved storage capacity	Golspie/ Brora Water Supply	290	
1985/86	Region	Improvements to water supply	Lairg	240	
1982/86	Forestry Commission	Planting of 1030 ha.	Lairg area		

YEAR	Agency	Project	Place	Cost £000	Remarks
<u>PROPOSALS LIKELY TO GO AHEAD 1982-87</u> <u>BUT WITH NO DEFINITE START DATE</u>					
	HIDB	Advance factory	Lairg		Site required
	Region/ District	Completion of caravan site	Ferrycroft, Lairg		
	Region/ District	Squash courts/ changing facilities	Golspie Swimming Pool	93	
	Region	Improvements	Balchraggan Township Road		
	Region	Improvements	Manse Road, Lairg		
	Region/ SDA	Environmental Improvements	Golspie Foreshore	65	
	Albyn Housing Assoc.	Houses for single persons	Golspie	360	

APPENDIX 2

MAJOR LAND USE ALLOCATIONS

Allocation	Place	Area (ha)	Remarks
Industry	Off Main Street, Lairg.	1.8	Part developed. Development Brief required.
Industry	Ord Croft, Lairg.	1.09	Subject to satisfactory ground conditions and servicing.
Residential	North of Manse Road, Lairg.	2.0	Longer term.
Residential	Lower Lairg - Milnclarin	4.59	Subject to satisfactory access and servicing.
Industry	Rogart Station	0.3	
Residential	Rhives Field, Golspie	5.7	2.2 ha. private feus. 3.5 ha. unallocated.
Residential	Ben Bhraggie Drive, Golspie.	0.4	Underway.
Residential	Ferry Road, Golspie	0.5	

