

Caithness Local Plan

(As Continued in Force) (April 2012)



Written Statement ▼ Adopted Plan ▼ September 2002

How to Read and Use the Plan

This Local Plan (as continued in force) must be read in conjunction with the Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP). The HwLDP contains the Spatial Strategy, Vision and all general policy against which development proposals will be assessed. Where Caithness specific allocations and policy are contained in the HwLDP these can be found in Section 17 of the HwLDP, with the general policies found in Sections 18 to 23 (inc).

Caithness Local Plan (as continued in force)

The adopted Highland-wide Local Development Plan replaced the Highland Structure Plan (March 2001) (except within the Cairngorms National Park) and updates/supersedes the “general policies” of the existing adopted Local Plans. In order to retain the other elements of the existing adopted Local Plans (including but not limited to; site allocations, settlement development areas not covered by the Highland-wide Local Development Plan and site specific policies) a Parliamentary Order was laid before Scottish Parliament on 16th March 2012 to enable these elements to remain in force to the extent so specified as required by Schedule 1 of The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 As Amended. The Order is called The Town and Country Planning (Continuation in force of Local Plans) (Highland) (Scotland) Order 2012 and came into force on 1st April 2012.

The elements of the adopted Local Plans which remain in force are included within the Retention Schedule as contained in Appendix 7 of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan. These retained elements of local plans will remain retained until the time a new area Local Development Plan is prepared covering that area. At that time the retained elements of the local plan will no longer be part of the Development Plan.

Habitats Regulation Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment

For the Order to be passed it had to be clear that the retained elements of the adopted local plans have met the requirements of European Community Law with respect to Habitats Regulation Appraisal (HRA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment. The Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) considers all the policies and proposals of the adopted local plans which are intended to be retained in force. The Plan must be read alongside the HRA, where the HRA identifies allocations that are likely to have significant effects either alone or in combination these are identified below.

Provisions of Local Plan Map(s) as continued in force

The provisions of the Proposals Map (including any inset contained in or accompanying it and the policies and proposals shown on such inset) and related notations, referencing and explanatory text, only to the extent to which those provisions show, illustrate or explain any provision of the local plan which is continued in force by the Parliamentary Order and as detailed in the Retention Schedule.

Retention Schedule for:Caithness Local Plan (Adopted: 12 September 2002) (as continued in force)

The Retained Elements of the Plan are contained in the following sections of this document, the original Local Plan documents have been redacted to remove or shade out sections of text no longer in force. The continued in force parts of the Plan remain with the HwLDP providing the general policy context for these sections of text and mapping.

Provisions of Caithness Local Plan to continue in force	Limitations and exclusions
1. The provisions of the Written Statement contained in—	
Chapter 3 (general policies)	Other than to the extent to which it sets out and applies “Primary Policies”
Chapter 4 (landward area)	Only to the extent to which it relates to—
	policy 5(c) (Dunnet);
	policy 8 (Mill and Mains of Forss);
	policy 13 to the extent to which that policy relates to development at Mey;
	policies 16 and 17 (Thrumster);
	policy 20 (Dunnet);
	policy 22 (John O’Groats);
	paragraph 23 (Dounreay) and related policies (a) to (f);
	paragraph 24 (oil and gas) and related policy;
paragraph 25 (land south of Murkle Bay) and related policy;	

Provisions of Caithness Local Plan to continue in force	Limitations and exclusions
	paragraph 26 (Forss); paragraph 32 (Gills Bay); paragraph 33 (Georgemas); and paragraph 39 (former mill at Westerdale);
Chapter 5 (Castletown)	Only the provisions of policy 15 (expansion) to the extent to which that policy relates to development for East of Stangergill Burn.
Chapter 6 (Dunbeath)	
Chapter 7 (Halkirk)	
Chapter 8 (Keiss)	
Chapter 9 (Lybster)	
Chapter 10 (Reay)	
Chapter 11 (Scrabster)	
Chapter 12 (Thurso)	
Chapter 13 (Watten)	
Chapter 14 (Wick)	
Appendices	Other than Appendices 1, 2 and 9

Provisions of Caithness Local Plan to continue in force	Limitations and exclusions
2. The provisions of the Proposals Map (including any inset contained in or accompanying it and the policies and proposals shown on such inset) and related notations, referencing and explanatory text	Only to the extent to which those provisions show, illustrate or explain any provision of the local plan which is continued in force by this Order.

Habitats Regulations Appraisal

Policy 57 of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan seeks to safeguard European sites. The HRA of the Retention of Highland Local Plans identifies the following allocations are likely to have significant effects on European sites either alone or in combination with other plans or projects in terms of the following:

Local Plan Sites	Natura Sites	Effects this development may have on European sites
Caithness Local Plan		
Westfield 5j	Caithness Lochs SPA	Loss of feeding areas for qualifying species, displacement of qualifying species from feeding areas.
Watten 5a, 5b, 2a-c	Caithness Lochs SPA	Loss of feeding areas for qualifying species, displacement of qualifying species from feeding areas.
Halkirk 3.01, 3.02, 5, 19	River Thurso SAC	Deterioration in water quality which will effect qualifying species
Thurso 16, 23 ,33, 39, 13e, 13f, 13k, 26	River Thurso SAC	Deterioration in water quality which will effect qualifying species
In-combination effects		
Westfield 5j Watten 5a, 5b, 2a-c	Caithness Lochs SPA	Loss of feeding areas for qualifying species, displacement of qualifying species from feeding areas including disturbance (construction and blade rotation) effects from nearby wind turbines and collision risk
Halkirk 3.01, 3.02, 5, 19 Thurso 16, 23 ,33, 39, 13e, 13f, 13k, 26	River Thurso SAC	Cumulative deterioration in water quality which will effect qualifying species

INTRODUCTION 3

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN 3
FORMAT OF THE PLAN 3
HOW TO USE THE PLAN 3
GLOBAL AND NATIONAL OBLIGATIONS 4
STRUCTURE PLAN 5
BACKGROUND 6
POPULATION 6
HOUSING 7
THE LOCAL ECONOMY 8
COMMUNITY FACILITIES 10
FRAGILE AREAS 11
INFRASTRUCTURE & UTILITIES 11
ENVIRONMENT 14

2. VISION 15

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES 15

PARTIAL RETENTION
3. GENERAL POLICIES 17

PARTIAL RETENTION
4. LANDWARD AREA 18

5. CASTLETOWN 29

BACKGROUND 29
COMMUNITY INPUT 30
DEVELOPMENT FACTORS 30

OBJECTIVES 31

POLICIES PARTIAL RETENTION 31

6. DUNBEATH 37

BACKGROUND 37
COMMUNITY INPUT 37
DEVELOPMENT FACTORS 37
OBJECTIVES 37
POLICIES 37

7. HALKIRK 39

BACKGROUND 39
COMMUNITY INPUT 40
DEVELOPMENT FACTORS 40
OBJECTIVES 40
POLICIES 40

8. KEISS 45

BACKGROUND 45
COMMUNITY INPUT 45
DEVELOPMENT FACTORS 45
OBJECTIVES 45
POLICIES 45

9. LYBSTER 47

BACKGROUND 47
COMMUNITY INPUT 47
DEVELOPMENT FACTORS 47
OBJECTIVES 48

POLICIES 48

10. REAY 50

BACKGROUND 50
COMMUNITY INPUT 50
DEVELOPMENT FACTORS 51
OBJECTIVES 51
POLICIES 51

11. SCRABSTER 53

BACKGROUND 53
COMMUNITY INPUT 53
DEVELOPMENT FACTORS 53
OBJECTIVES 53
POLICIES 53

12. THURSO 55

BACKGROUND 55
COMMUNITY INPUT 57
DEVELOPMENT FACTORS 57
OBJECTIVES 58
POLICIES 58

13. WATTEN 67

BACKGROUND 67
COMMUNITY INPUT 67
DEVELOPMENT FACTORS 67
OBJECTIVES 67
POLICIES 67

14. WICK 69

BACKGROUND 69
COMMUNITY INPUT 71
DEVELOPMENT FACTORS 71
OBJECTIVES 71
POLICIES 72

APPENDICES 78

APPENDIX I 78

CAITHNESS SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY AND FACILITIES ASSESSMENT 78

APPENDIX II 79

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT 79

APPENDIX III 80

CASTLEHILL/SHELLY HILL, CASTLETOWN: DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES FOR NEW HOUSING 80

APPENDIX IV 81

HALKIRK DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES 81

APPENDIX V 83

DRAFT DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR LYBSTER CONSERVATION AREA 83

APPENDIX VI 84

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR THURSO CONSERVATION AREA 84

APPENDIX VII 86

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR WICK PULTENEYTOWN AND HARBOUR AREA 86

APPENDIX VIII 87

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR ARGYLE SQUARE IN WICK 87

APPENDIX IX 88

LIST OF HOUSING GROUPS 88

GLOSSARY 90

INDEX 94

3. GENERAL POLICIES

The following General Policies apply throughout the Local Plan area as shown on the Proposals Maps.

Primary Policies

PP1

The Council will encourage development subject to detailed site factors.

PP2

The Council will favour development, unless this would significantly affect important features.

PP3

The Council will presume against development, particularly where there is significant damage to heritage, amenity or public health.

PP4

The Council will not approve development, unless there is a strong and over-riding social, economic, public health or safety reason, or for benefits of primary importance to the environment.

Settlement Policies

Settlement Boundary

The Council will maintain a strong presumption against sporadic development outwith settlement boundaries in order to protect their landscape setting or avoid adversely affecting their longer term expansion.

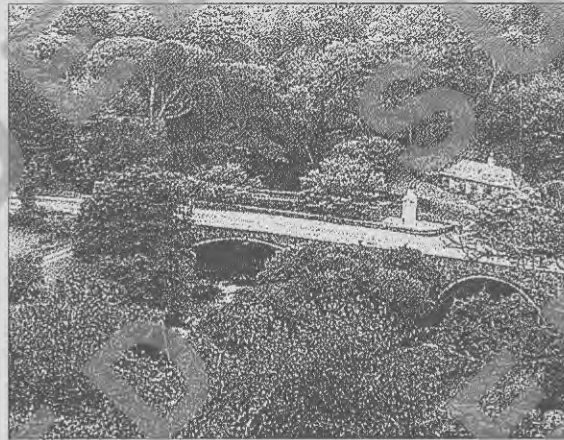


Photo: Berriedale Gorge

Town/Village Centre (C)

The Council will encourage town centre uses appropriate to the settlement's role in the hierarchy.

Housing (H)

The Council will seek to maintain and enhance the established character of residential areas and will encourage appropriate development.

Business (B)

The Council will maintain or promote business/tourism.

Industry (I)

The Council will maintain or promote industrial uses.

Special Uses (S)

The Council will expect other uses mainly of a community, service or tourist related nature to be maintained or developed where stated.

Expansion (E)

The Council will encourage development in accordance with a comprehensive master plan and will presume against piecemeal proposals.

Amenity Areas (A)

The Council will safeguard these areas from development not associated with their purpose or function.

The criteria for designating the above policies are defined in the separate General Policies Annex, together with details of supporting policies.

4. LANDWARD AREA



The Landward Area covers the largest proportion of the Local Plan area with the exception of the ten main settlements of Castletown, Dunbeath, Halkirk, Keiss, Lybster, Reay, Scrabster, Thurso, Watten and Wick, which are covered in Sections 5 to 14.

The Council will apply General Policies PP1 to 4 throughout the Landward Area as shown on the Proposals Map. Under Policies PP2, 3 and 4 a degree of restriction is applied depending upon the nature and severity of the development constraint, be it for servicing, amenity, nature conservation or public safety reasons. A high quality of design for new and extended buildings, in keeping with the character of traditional rural buildings, is expected. More specific guidance for the siting and design of new houses is indicated in the General Policies Annex. Site and area specific policies, proposals and development

opportunities are shown below under the appropriate general policy.

Housing

1. *The Council will favour rehabilitation and re-use for residential purposes of the many vacant dwellings and other traditional buildings throughout the Caithness countryside, particularly where services are readily available. Assistance towards rehabilitation and repair may be available from the Council, Scottish Homes and the Scottish Executive Rural Affairs Department through the Empty Homes Initiative, the Highland Small Communities Housing Trust or the Agricultural Business Improvement Scheme.*

Under Primary Policy PP1 the Council will favour new housing development:

2. *In General Countryside Areas.*

3. *In the Fragile Countryside Areas of the Altnabreac and Dunbeath / Latheron Settlement Zones.*

4. *In the Dispersed Townships indicated in the table below, subject to the specified spacing between dwellings:*

LOCATION	SPACING (Metres)
(a) Auckengill	100 - 150
(b) Duncansby	100 - 150
(c) East Clyth	100
(d) East Mey	150
(e) Freswick	100 - 150
(f) Freswick South	150

(g) Gills	150
(h) Huna	150
(i) Raggra	100 - 150
(j) Thrumster	100 - 150
(k) Westend, John O'Groats	100 - 150

Minimum spacing distances may be varied in the event of a demonstrable need for social or amenity housing that is unable to be met in nearby clustered settlements [H3].

5. In the following settlements with capacity for infill development or expansion:

- (a) Ackergillshore
- (b) Canisbay
- (c) **Dunnet, where significant development has taken place to the west in recent years. This has led to traffic problems on the road to Dwarwick pier and altered the settlement pattern. To meet possible demand further land is needed in the village and potential sites are shown on the proposals Map. This includes a 1.4 ha. site for comprehensive development not exceeding 15 houses at the east end of the Dwarwick Pier road with its appropriate widening. Development is restricted to the west of this site along the pier road (see 11d).**
- (d) Glengolly (limit of 5 houses)
- (e) John O'Groats
- (f) Reiss
- (g) Sarclet
- (h) Staxigoe
- (i) Thrumster
- (j) Westfield

General Housing Policy H also applies to these settlements.

Under Primary Policy PP2 the Council will favour new housing development:

6. In the Dispersed Townships indicated in the table below, subject to overcoming the servicing constraints and meeting the specified spacing between dwellings:

LOCATION	SPACING (Metres)	CONSTRAINT
(a) Achavar	150	Water supply
(b) Achavrole	150	Water supply
(c) Achow	150 – 200	Water supply
(d) Balnabruich	100	Water supply
(e) Barrock	100 – 150	Poor sub-soil drainage
(f) Brough	150	Poor sub-soil drainage
(g) Borgue – Ramsraigs	100	Water supply
(h) Green Hill	150	Water supply
(i) Houstry	125	Water supply
(j) Keiss	150	Poor sub soil drainage
(k) Mid Clyth	150	Poor sub soil drainage
(l) Mybster	100	Poor sub soil drainage
(m) Occumster	100	Water supply
(n) Smerral	125 – 150	Water supply
(o) Ulbster	100	Poor sub-soil drainage
(p) Upper Lybster	125	Water supply
(q) West Dunnet	100	Road



Photo: Vacant house at Mybster

Minimum spacing distances may be varied in the event of a demonstrable need for social or amenity housing that is unable to be met in nearby clustered settlements [H3].

7. In the following settlements with limited capacity for infill housing:

- (a) Achvarasdal - sub-soil limitations.
- (b) Barrock – drainage/sub-soil limitations.
- (c) Bower – drainage.
- (d) Brough – drainage/sub-soil limitations.
- (e) Burrigill/Forse – water supply.
- (f) Latheron – water supply.
- (g) Latheronwheel – water supply. (The suitability of land to the south west for longer term development requires to be considered in discussion with land owners and the wider community).
- (h) Newport – water supply.
- (i) Shebster – water supply.
- (j) Spittal – water supply.
- (k) Westerdale – sub-soil limitations.

General Housing Policy H also applies to these settlements.

8. At Mill and Mains of Forss the Council will favour conversion and/or reuse of redundant buildings for permanent residential and/or holiday letting accommodation. Protection of the setting of listed buildings and woodland, and avoiding conflict with the continued operation of the farm, are also important considerations.

Under Primary Policy PP3 the Council will presume against housing development:

9. In the hinterland around the towns of Wick and Thurso, as indicated on the Proposals Map and Maps HAT 1 and 2. Exceptions will only be made where:

- a house is essential for the management of land and associated family purposes (see General Policies Annex);
- social housing is required to meet demonstrated local affordable needs that cannot be met within settlements; or
- development involves a conversion of a traditional building or redevelopment of a ruinous dwelling.

All proposals will be subject to adequate services being available and siting and design considerations.

10. Sensitive Areas as defined under General Policy PP3 in the General Policies Annex. Exceptions will only be made where a house is essential for the management of land and associated family purposes.

11. In the Dispersed Townships indicated in the table below, until the necessary

improvements are carried out. Thereafter any development should be adequately sited in accordance with the spacing indicated.

LOCATION	SPACING (Metres)	CONSTRAINT
(a) Hill of Forss	100	Drainage
(b) Rattar/ Scarfskerry	100 – 150	Drainage
(c) Swinney Hill	150	Water supply, drainage
(d) Dunnet - Dwarwick Pier Road	100	Road
(e) West of Lybster	75 – 100	Water supply, drainage

Minimum spacing distances may be varied in the event of a demonstrable need for social or amenity housing that is unable to be met in nearby clustered settlements [H3].

12. That creates new ad hoc clusters of housing or adds to the Housing Groups in Appendix IX. In exceptional cases there may be limited opportunities to add to these groups, and only then if their appearance is enhanced or infrastructure problems are remedied.

13. Within the following settlements until service deficiencies are eased or removed:

LOCATION	CONSTRAINT
Dixonfield/ Duncanshill	Road widening and footpath provision towards Thurso.
Gerston Farm Road, by Halkirk	Access
Gillock	Drainage

Mey	Drainage - following a new system programmed for 2003/4, potential will exist for the comprehensive servicing and development of 2.3 ha. of land north of the Castle Inn for 20 - 25 houses.
Newtonhill	Drainage; Roads – development allowed only after connection to Wick system and road improvements
Scarfskerry	Drainage

14. In all cases a strong presumption will also be maintained against development on land immediately outwith the defined settlement boundaries.

Business / Industry

15. The Council generally supports small business development or additions to existing indigenous industries in the Landward Area in accordance with Structure Plan Policy B7, provided there is no adverse impact upon adjacent uses and the development can be adequately serviced.

Under Primary Policy PP1 the Council favours the following:

16. The development of an Archaeological Visitor Centre at Thrumster.

17. Subject to suitable servicing and landscaping, land to the north of the garage at the former station yard in Thrumster has potential for business, commercial and light industrial development.

18. The preparation of a programme of improvements to the various small harbours around the coast. There is a need to prioritise improvements based on safety issues, heritage and tourism potential.

19. The renovation of existing buildings for self catering tourist accommodation:

- (a) at Crosskirk Bay, where limited additional development might be possible subject to avoiding impact upon the setting of nearby historical/archaeological features;
- (b) at the former lighthouse keepers' houses at Dunnet Head and Holburn Head;
- (c) on the foreshore at Berriedale; and
- (d) the derelict properties to the north of Lybster, which may also be suitable for permanent housing.

20. At Dunnet 0.2ha is identified for tourist related commercial uses. Land should be reserved to the north to ensure a safe visibility splay for access.



Photo: Lighthouse and former keepers' houses at Dunnet Head

21. At John O'Groats interest has been shown in the past in the development of a Visitor Centre. Planning permission has been granted for two Centres, although development has not commenced. The Council considers that the provision of a Visitor Centre at John O'Groats is essential for the development of tourism in Caithness. Both sites are identified for a Visitor Centre (see Framework Plan).

22. On land to the east of the existing industrial units at John O'Groats 0.1ha is allocated for business uses.

The following areas are identified under Primary Policy PP2:

23. Dounreay

The large scale industrial site of the UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) nuclear plant at Dounreay lies some 12 km. to the west of Thurso on the north coast. The complex, together with the adjacent defence establishment at HMS Vulcan have been major sources of direct and indirect employment in the Caithness economy for the last 40 years. Energy generation at the UKAEA plant ceased in 1994 and reprocessing of spent fuels has not been carried out there since 1996. In mid-1998, the Government announced that the main aspects of work for the future will be decommissioning and environmental remediation of the site. This work will be undertaken over the next 40 to 60 years, involving around £4,500 million of expenditure, including some £1,300 million in the first 10 years. In this early period the workforce is expected to rise to around 2,300 in the process of establishing an international Centre of Excellence



for decommissioning. Detailed proposals for development associated with the positive management of radioactive wastes from the site are expected to come forward for the consideration of the planning and other regulatory authorities. There is also scope to gradually add to the tourist/visitor interest, interpretation and access to the site as decommissioning progresses.

The Council is concerned that positive steps are taken to redress the longer term loss of employment from present activities. In principle, it supports diversification proposals being brought forward for Dounreay and the surrounding area, provided that these will not foreclose future options for the very long-term nature of the site. The Council through the Caithness Partnership also supports the view that Dounreay should continue for the foreseeable future as a location for large scale business and industrial activities, particularly in view of the major site infrastructure which exists. The prospects for creating a major science and technology centre, for example, will

be assisted by the availability of the highly skilled workforce in the area. The Council and Caithness and Sutherland Enterprise wish to explore the scope for developing a business and industrial park including use of the former airfield once the need for facilities associated with decommissioning becomes more apparent. In the meantime significant early tree planting around the perimeter of the airfield may be appropriate in order to create an attractive landscape setting for longer term development.

Decommissioning activities, including recruitment of staff, and prospects for diversification would be enhanced by:

- more private housing to rent and purchase in the West Caithness area;
- improved community facilities, such as a major indoor sports centre in Thurso;
- road improvements, notably to the A9 between Latheron and Clashmore, realignment of the A836 at Bridge of Forss and completion of a Thurso bypass;
- improved air links from Wick;
- maintenance and improvement of the rail network, particularly for freight;
- improved bus services; and
- upgrading of the Shebster water supply.

Policies

Safeguarding Zone

(a) A 5 km Nuclear Safeguarding Zone is delineated around Dounreay within which any planning applications shall be the subject of consultation with the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate and the Health and Safety Executive.

Decommissioning and Remediation

(b) The Council will work closely with the UKAEA to translate the decommissioning and restoration programmes described in the Dounreay Site Restoration Plan, as approved by the HSE and SEPA, into a land use planning framework for the timely, safe and environmentally acceptable decommissioning, restoration and after use of the Dounreay site (*see below).

Diversification

(c) The Council will consult with the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate and Health and Safety Executive on planning applications for diversification proposals on land within or contiguous to the Dounreay site. The Council will support such proposals provided that it is satisfied that they will not adversely impact on the future mainstream activities of the Dounreay site.

(d) The Council will work closely with the operators and Caithness and Sutherland Enterprise, as well as the local community, to identify opportunities for diversification in the Dounreay area, including a business/ industrial park and science and technology business centre.

Supporting Infrastructure and Facilities

(e) The Council, through the Caithness Economic Partnership, will seek to progress improvements to strategic transport links and other infrastructure networks and to increase housing supply and community facilities to help maximise economic benefit from future activities associated with Dounreay. NOSWA proposes to

upgrade the water supply in 2003/04 at a cost of £2.5 million.

Tourism/Visitor Facilities

(f) The Council supports in principle the provision of additional visitor facilities and access as decommissioning progresses in order to potentially attract more tourists to the Dounreay site.



Photo: Dounreay Visitor Centre

* The Council's position on waste management

The statement below represents the Council's position on waste management related to decommissioning and remediation of Dounreay. This does not reflect national policy and is not part of the Highland Structure Plan as approved by Scottish Ministers [see Highland Structure Plan 2001: Foreword, paragraphs 2.17.20, 2.17.21 & 2.17.22 and policies W8 & W10].

The Council supports the decommissioning and environmental remediation of the Dounreay site. Pending arrangements for disposal at an appropriate time and in an appropriate way, proposals for retrieval, treatment, conditioning, packaging and storage of waste arisings will be considered sympathetically, provided they are in accordance with an appropriate waste management strategy and incorporate retrievability and monitorability.

24. Oil and Gas

The new Structure Plan indicates that there may be a need to identify the opportunity for a major oil/gas related landfall site on the north Caithness coast. However, if this involves processing of gas from the Aurora gas gathering project, for example, an area at least the size of the current complex and airfield at Dounreay would be required. Development of such a facility at Dounreay would raise serious concerns about the timing and scale of such a development being compatible with or prejudicing on-going decommissioning activities. The nature of both activities in close proximity also raises safety issues and there may be major infrastructure requirements well in excess of the current provision at Dounreay. This would include off site improvements to the road network, including a Thurso Bypass, appropriate access to the sea via an extended Scrabster Harbour and/or perhaps extension of the railway. In view of these requirements a site between Dounreay and Thurso, possibly in the vicinity of the former Fors Naval Base seems more likely. The situation with the World oil economy and on-going difficulties with activities in the Atlantic Frontier suggest a

major oil and gas processing facility in a much longer term timescale. Furthermore the extensive requirements associated with assessing the environmental impact and feasibility of such a major project and associated infrastructure precludes this Local Plan from identifying a more specific site. Nevertheless the potential jobs associated with the construction and operation of such a complex would be a major boost to the local economy and result in an upsurge in demand for housing and support services throughout the County. The long term safeguarded site at Murkle Bay and the former base at Forss are considered to have some potential as related or back up opportunities.

Policy

The Council will keep under review the need to accommodate a major oil and gas processing facility on the north coast. Potential sites should be considered in consultation with the oil industry and the community.

25. Since the mid 1970's successive development plans have acknowledged the potential of land south of Murkle Bay as a site for major industry requiring access to the sea. This was aimed in particular at possible oil-related development because of deep water close to the shore, the shelter afforded from the north west and the minimum road infrastructure required. The new Structure Plan identifies this area for major strategic business and industrial purposes and the site is expected to offer long term development potential.

Policy

Land south of Murkle Bay is safeguarded as a large scale strategic business and industrial development site. The Council will presume against any proposals which would prejudice its

longer term potential. Development proposals will require to be the subject of a full Environmental Impact Assessment accounting for:

- ***the importance of the surrounding countryside as an agricultural, recreational, tourism and conservation resource;***
- ***the scenic views afforded over the site from the A836 road to Dunnet Bay, Dunnet Head and Orkney;***
- ***the importance of the natural heritage, notably the wildlife interest of Dunnet and Murkle Bays;***
- ***residential amenity;***
- ***the special qualities of the adjacent Dunnet Bay and beach; and***
- ***large scale water demand with the potential adverse effect on supplies to Duncanshill and Sibster.***

26. ***The former US Navy communications base at Forss on the coast between Thurso and Dounreay is a large scale complex available for development. The major extent of the site and buildings, together with the existing infrastructure suggest potential for uses with a significant workforce and/or resident population. Consideration has been given to a range of uses including a research centre, a wind turbine site, long term secure storage, tourist facilities, residential and industrial storage associated with the oil industry.***

27. ***The Council supports the revival of the flagstone industry and will safeguard the potential of existing workings and appropriate dormant quarries from prejudicial development. Appropriate restoration measures will also be encouraged.***

28. ***In the Strathmore area the Council will seek to regularise working of the remaining sand and gravel resource at Dirlot and Knockdoo through the provisions of the Review of Old Mineral Permissions (Section 74 of the Town and Country Planning Scotland Act 1997).***

Under Primary Policies PP3 & 4:

29. ***The Council will encourage appropriate tourism and educational initiatives that derive local economic and community benefit from the many archaeological and historic features throughout Caithness. More specifically, Hill of Warehouse/Yarrows, Camster Strath and Dunbeath Strath have potential in this regard for interpretation facilities which are sympathetic to the protection of cultural and historic interests. Measures to derive economic benefit, including interpretation facilities, should respect that the integrity and sympathetic protection of the archaeological resource is of paramount importance.***

Special Uses

Under Primary Policy PP1:

30. ***The Council recommends to the Scottish Executive that priority is given to the upgrading of the A9 and A99 from Wick to Clashmore in Sutherland. Full realignment is imperative, particularly on the Ord to Helmsdale section, and should be associated wherever possible by funding improvements to the complementary rail route [TC5].***

31. The North of Scotland Water Authority intend to carry out the following improvements over the next three years:

Water Supply - mains renewals, commencing 2000/01 at a cost of £1.1 million

- (a) Bruan to Thrumster
- (b) Thrumster to Sarclet
- (c) Bowermadden to Reaster
- (d) Brabstermire
- (e) Nybster to North Keiss
- (f) Weydale to Haimer

Water Supply - new mains

- (g) Dunn to Haster, 2000 - 2002, £1,260,000
- (h) Haster to Reiss, 2001/02, £160,000
- (i) Stemster to Dunn, 2001/02, £450,000
- (j) Wick to Thrumster, 2001/02, £280,000

Drainage - waste water treatment

- (k) Mey, 2003/04, £150,000
- (l) Newtonhill (as part of the Wick agglomeration), 2001/03
- (m) Scarfskerry, 2004/05, £380,000

32. Planning permission has been granted for a new ferry terminal at Gills Bay where land is allocated for harbour related uses including marshalling areas. A further 1.2 ha. of land to the south of the pier is identified for business / tourist uses subject to the proposed ferry service commencing. Development will require new access arrangements.

33. The Highland Rail Partnership has developed a railfreight terminal at Georgemas. This is expected to include land for additional sidings, well screened external storage areas and transit storage warehousing. There may be scope for additional development in the future,



Photos: Above - Georgemas Junction with developing railfreight terminal. Below - traffic held up by adverse winter weather on the A9 Trunk Road at Berriedale Braes.



particularly of activities that would benefit from a location close to a major rail terminal. A framework or master plan will be required to guide development including an indication of

servicing, screen planting and landscaping proposals. Potential additional uses to be considered include an auction mart, agricultural centre, slaughterhouse, meat processing and other industrial uses adding value to primary products (e.g. timber processing), and possibly storage related to the oil industry. Such additional development potential will depend upon the availability of a satisfactory drainage system and a major power supply. If this full range of activities is developed there may be scope to provide commuter rail links to the complex from Wick and Thurso in the longer term.

34. The Council will work with the Thrumster community to identify suitable sites for a new hall and playing field. Implementation will be subject to securing appropriate funding.

Under Primary Policy PP4:

35. The Council operates a strategic landfill waste disposal site at Seater that covers the northern Highland area. The future of this facility is being examined as part of the developing waste strategy for the Highlands. More immediately, additional works are proposed for leachate treatment at the site.

36. The sites of all existing sewage treatment works and safeguarding areas.

37. The site of proposed sewage treatment works at Watten, programmed for 2000/02, Lybster, Mey and Scarfskerry, with the appropriate safeguarding areas.

Environment

Under Primary Policy PP1:

38. The Council will encourage the restoration, reuse or redevelopment of derelict land and buildings, subject to services being available and, in appropriate cases, investigation of archaeological interests. Proposals forcroft houses and other buildings in close proximity to the A9 and A99 roads should not prejudice future road upgrading.

39. The former Mill at Westerdale offers scope for restoration, interpretation and basic visitor facilities.

40. Castles Girnigoe and Sinclair have potential for improved footpath approaches and interpretation. The dangerous condition of the buildings prevents entry to them by the public.

41. There is an opportunity for further promotion and interpretation at Whaligoe, including the lime kiln, mill, steps and harbour. The steps would benefit from maintenance works. However, they can be dangerous and any works will have to be carefully considered.

42. The Council will support the expansion and improvement of tourist facilities at John O'Groats and has prepared a Framework Plan to highlight these opportunities. This is a long term vision which requires substantial investment and the co-operation of all public and private sector interests and the formulation of a co-ordinated programme of investment. The Council has allocated £30,000 in 2000/01 for environmental improvements as a first phase. A further

£50,000 is programmed for 2004/05. In the longer term the Council intends to work with other public agencies and the private sector to prepare an Action Plan to include:

- upgrading / expansion of the hotel;
- provision of a Visitor Centre;
- soft / hard landscaping improvements;
- rationalise signposting;
- improve car parking;
- provision of a coastal walk; and
- creation of a gateway feature.



Photo: John O' Groats

Under Primary Policy PP2:

43. The Council will encourage access to and enjoyment of the countryside and coastal area, subject to avoiding conflict with traditional land use activities. There is considerable potential for the development of tourist trails, themed or otherwise, notably the extension of archaeology trails. The development of a long distance coastal walk linking a whole range of

heritage features and areas would have potential to attract more visitors to Caithness, supporting more back up facilities. This would also be a significant resource for residents. Thurso Community Council are seeking to have the Thurso to West Murkle Lady Janet's walk restored with grant aid from the Crown Estates Commission. The Council will also promote a Countryside Around Towns Initiative for the hinterland immediately around Thurso and Wick.

44. The opportunity to provide modest interpretation and appropriate access to the following Sites of Local Nature Conservation Interest, will be considered with SNH, landowners and tenants:

- (a) Forss Water;
- (b) Loch Olginney;
- (c) St. Johns Loch;
- (d) Dunnet Head;
- (e) Noss Head;
- (f) Loch Watanan;
- (g) Keiss and Ackergill Links;
- (h) Flows of Leanas;
- (i) Burn of Houstry; and
- (j) Hill of Forss.

Additional sites may be identified in the future from Local Biodiversity Action Plans. The Council will also consider with SNH and local interests the potential for designation of Local Nature Reserves.

Under Primary Policy PP3:

45. The following areas, identified as Regional Scenic Coasts, would benefit from improved interpretation and small scale visitor facilities:

- (a) Dunnet Head; and
- (b) Duncansby Head

5. CASTLETOWN



Background

Castletown (popn. 1030) is a planned village located on the north coast some 7km. to the east of Thurso. It is set on gently rising ground overlooking Dunnet Bay surrounded by good quality agricultural land. The settlement area extends to Castlehill to the north with its attractive harbour, policy woodlands and former quarry. This area was once the centre of a thriving flagstone industry. This led to the development of the village as a local service centre with a good range of community and commercial facilities along higher ground straddling the A836 road. The village did not recover from the demise of the flagstone industry until after the development of Dounreay in the 1950's. Substantial house building followed on land to the north of the village centre.

While a significant number of residents still work

in Thurso and at Dounreay, the successful development of the Norfrost freezer manufacturing plant has provided a major source of jobs in the village with room for expansion. This subsumed the small industrial allocation in the former New Mossy Quarry area, so additional land for other business and light industrial uses needs to be identified elsewhere. The worked out area of the Upper Castletown Quarry at the west end of the village as well as in the grounds of the former Castlehill House offer potential in this regard.

The A836 running through the village is a major tourist route linking North Sutherland with John O'Groats. Opportunities exist to take advantage of this and derive more local benefit in association with the Castlehill/Dunnet Bay area. The attractions of nearby Dunnet Bay, notably the superb beach and unique dune formation, are of significant nature conservation and recreational interest. The development of a heritage centre in the village, together with the restoration and appropriate reuse of the old Castlehill mill, harbour, steading and wooded policies, all offer potential to attract more visitors and permanent residents to the village. These could all be supported by additional interpretation of the flagstone industry, tourist facilities and quality accommodation. The service role of the village could be greatly enhanced if its tourist potential is developed in association with further housing. Existing facilities may at least be sustained and there is local support for the development of a bowling green.

House building in the village in recent years has been suppressed through a lack of serviced sites for individual development. This has transferred demand to the surrounding countryside,

particularly towards Thurso, and to Dunnet with resultant amenity, drainage and traffic problems. It is now necessary to release more land within the village and apply more restrictive policies in the countryside. Existing gap or infill sites in the village only allow for 15 to 20 houses.

Permission has been granted for a further 16 houses through the restoration and conversion of the Castlehill steading. These provisions fall well short of the anticipated housing requirement over the next 10 to 15 years, which will be influenced by the upsurge in demand in the Thurso housing market area and restrictions on building in the open countryside. A more readily available supply of land and wider range of housing opportunities in all tenures in a choice of locations will help support the attraction of further jobs to the village.

For any area comprehensive servicing is required and development is restricted until improvements are carried out to the mains drainage system. Development close to Castlehill could assist the regeneration/ restoration of that area and enhance prospects for attracting more visitors and tourist related jobs. More significant development would help to sustain existing community facilities and services and secure additional leisure, recreation and social facilities, as well as public access to and management of woodlands. Opportunities are identified for 150 to 200 houses, to be developed in phases over the next 15 to 20 years.

A mains drainage scheme exists but there is no treatment of sewage. Improvements are required to treat sewage to comply with a European Directive for raising Dunnet Beach to bathing water standard. Early improvement is urged to enhance growth prospects.

study is considering the potential for a heritage centre, craft/produce from Caithness outlets, hostel /bunkhouse accommodation, ranger base, exhibition, performance and community space. Development could be linked to the recreational use, management and interpretation of Dunnet Bay, as well as the flagstone industry. The location of the Mill on the A836 road could draw passing tourist trade but the suitable diversion of the main road to the south for access is a pre-requisite for development. This in turn would create potential for a new beach car park/focal point, taking pressure off the foreshore. Footpath links with the existing flagstone/harbour trail to the west and the proposed Stangergill Burn footpath to the north are desirable (see 15a & 20a).

11. The former Traill Hall is considered to have potential as a heritage and visitor orientation centre for the village. This may include the main interpretation display for the flagstone industry. Alternatively there may be potential to provide community care and/or residential accommodation, linked to the adjoining housing development to the west (see 4a).

I: Industry

12. The existing Norfrost factory and land with potential for its expansion are allocated for industrial use. The Council will seek improved screening around the periphery of the site in line with the conditions of the existing planning permission and in association with any further development.

13. The Council will consider the potential of the western section of the former Upper

Castletown Quarry for small business, light industrial and storage purposes with screen planting around the southern periphery.

S: Special Uses

14. The Council will encourage the North of Scotland Water Authority to progress early improvements to the existing drainage system in order to increase the capacity for additional development. A new screening plant is programmed during 2000/01 and the main improvements estimated at £380,000 are programmed for 2003/04. Primary Policy PP4 applies to the site of the existing macerator and a cordon sanitaire at least 45 metres around it.

E: Expansion

15. Land indicated in Table 15 below is allocated for longer term planned expansion of the village, linked to the restoration/

regeneration of the Castlehill area. Developers will be required to prepare a master plan or overall layout to guide development accounting for the principles indicated in the Framework Plan. It is important that the community is closely involved in this exercise, particularly in relation to provision for recreational and social facilities. Developers/landowners should also be prepared to enter into Agreements with the Council to:

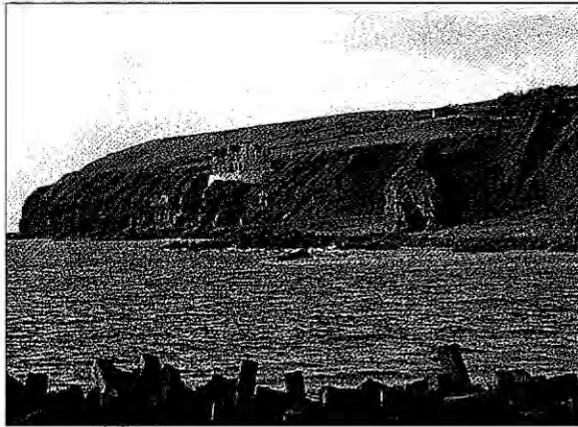
- tie in with restoration proposals for the Castlehill area;
- undertake or contribute to necessary infrastructure improvements and servicing;
- provide landscaping/open space; and
- secure woodland management, footpaths and public access having regard to the Footpath Audit carried out in 2000.

The layouts and building designs should contain a strong element of traditional or vernacular style features to complement the Castlehill buildings and include use of Caithness flagstone.

Table 15: Village Expansion Areas

Site	Capacity	Comments
(a) East of Stangergill Burn	140	Includes existing housing allocations. A mix of house sizes and tenures, including a proportion of affordable homes, is required, together with community/leisure facilities. Potential exists for up to three road accesses and creation of a traffic calmed (Home Zone) environment. Remote path links should be made to the village, Castlehill and Dunnet Bay via woodlands, burn sides and open spaces. Developers will be required to provide a range of open spaces/play areas in consultation with the local community and in accordance with the Council's standards. This includes a large playing field and a site for a bowling green set in parkland immediately to the north of the Harland Road area.
(b) South of Castlehill Steading	20 - 25	Housing on 2.4 ha. A play area, mounding, screen tree planting (farm woodland scheme) over a further 2.5 to 3 ha. Contributions will be required to improving the road south towards the village. See Castlehill/Shelley Hill Layout and Design Features and Appendix III

6. DUNBEATH



Background

The small village of Dunbeath (popn. 250), lying 30km to the south of Wick, occupies a key position on the A9 (T) road. The steep terrain along the banks of the Dunbeath Water has resulted in a fragmented community. The original parts of the village lie to the west of Knockglass Farm, where the local hotel and shop are found, and at Balnabruich around the war memorial. More modern development, mainly of public housing, has been built along the banks of the river and adjoining the Primary School. Opportunities for infill development remain but consideration must be given to identifying further housing land. Potential expansion areas are restricted by the steep slopes. The previous Local Plan identified a substantial area of ground off Neil Gunn Road. This still remains suitable, but the site is visible from the A9 and any development would need substantial landscaping / planting. Land off Campbell Avenue may also offer an opportunity.

Services and community facilities are of a reasonable standard. The main servicing constraint is the water supply which is poor south of Lybster and there are drainage difficulties, although a new sewage treatment works is planned. Local jobs are limited mainly to the service sector, although several fishing boats still use the harbour. Tourism remains a key sector, with the local Heritage Centre playing a central role. Dunbeath's strategic location on the A9 (T) provides an opportunity to exploit this position further for both the local, and the wider Caithness, economy. In particular, a Visitor Orientation Centre providing tourist information for the whole of Caithness is a key requirement.

Protecting the local heritage and environment is also important. The river and historic harbour are significant attractions as are the various archaeological sites in the wider locality. These need to be protected together with croft land, open spaces, trees and footpaths.

Community Input

The main concerns of the community put forward at community workshops in the Spring of 1998 were:

- provide family houses and affordable housing;
- protect open space, particularly on the margins of the village;
- promote further interpretation;
- upgrade and improve the facilities at the harbour;
- provision of tree planting / community woodland;

- provide for tele-working / distance learning; and
- maintain / establish footpaths.

Development Factors

The future development of Dunbeath will be shaped by several factors. The main constraint is the steep ground alongside the Dunbeath Water. The need to protect better farmland and restrict access to the A9 (T) road are further constraints.

Objectives

The Plan seeks to:

- identify further land for housing;
- identify land for a possible Visitor Orientation Centre;
- promote improvements to the harbour area; and
- protect important community, heritage and amenity features.

Policies

In the built up area of the village, Primary Policies and Settlement Policies apply as shown on the Inset Map. Site and area specific policies, proposals and development opportunities are as follows.

H: Housing

1. The Council will encourage further infill housing development, subject to Settlement Policy H.

2. *Land between Achorn Road and Neil Gunn Road was previously a Caithness District Council new build site. This was never progressed and the site would be suitable for housing development.*

S: Special Uses

3. *The Council supports the provision a Visitor Orientation Centre for Caithness at Dunbeath. Possible sites are to the east of Neil Gunn Road or adjacent to the Heritage Centre.*

4. *The Old Mill is empty at present but has potential for a variety of uses particularly tourist related and / or interpretation of the archaeology further up the Strath. It would also have potential for small business unit or community distance learning facility.*

5. *Further works to the pier area could enhance its attraction, including:*

- *repairs to the pier walls;*
- *upgrading of facilities;*
- *improved interpretation;*
- *small boat jetty; and*
- *craft / tourist uses*

Proposals should not adversely affect the Listed Buildings.

E: Village Expansion

6. *4ha are allocated for housing development to the east of Neil Gunn Road. Developers will be expected to prepare a Master Plan for the site showing a detailed layout, phasing, landscaping and open space. Proposals should be low density (4/5 per ha.) and must*

incorporate significant tree planting. The existing path should be safeguarded and improved.

7. *2 ha. to the south west of Campbell Avenue. Significant boundary tree planting will be expected. Developers will be expected to prepare a Master Plan for the site showing a detailed layout, phasing, landscaping and open space.*

A: Amenity

8. *The Council will protect important open spaces and amenity areas, particularly:*
(a) play area / playing field at the hall;
(b) the riverside; and
(c) existing trees.

Environmental Action

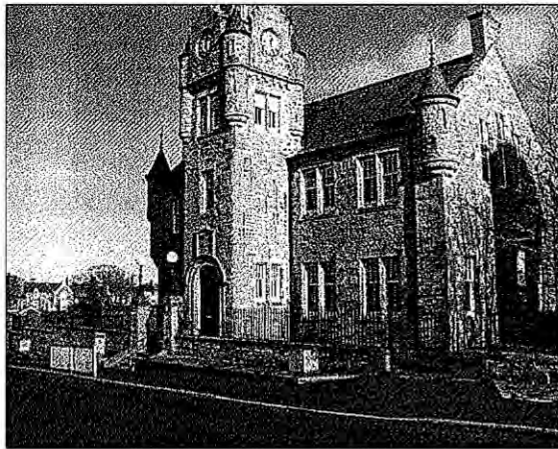
9. *The Council will safeguard the footpaths which link the parts of the village and encourage their improvement. Modest landscaping along the riverside would be of benefit together with basic interpretation and seating.*



Photos: Above - Dunbeath Harbour
Below - the Old Mill



7. HALKIRK



Background

Halkirk (popn. 970) is one of Scotland's earliest planned villages, established on its present grid-iron pattern of streets during the early and middle part of the last century by the agricultural improver, Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster. The bulk of the village lies between the bridge crossing of the River Thurso and the railway line to the south surrounded by a vast flat agricultural hinterland. With a good range of community facilities and local businesses Halkirk plays an important role as a local service centre. It is also a desirable commuter settlement, given its location less than 10 kilometres (6 miles) south of Thurso.

The original development concept was based on 1 acre smallholdings with small cottages located close to the access roads. Few holdings now remain undeveloped with most of the pressure for housing in the last 30 years being met through infill as the agricultural use of the land ceased.

The nature of this development in the recent years has given the impression that it has not been well planned, despite the existence of Council guidelines. Local concern has been expressed about the high density of development, overlooking of property, lack of building lines and inconsistent provision of roads, footpaths, lay-bys and boundary enclosures. Existing guidelines and shortage of public funding have also failed to provide common open space/recreation areas, particularly in close proximity to new houses at the southern end of the village. Problems intensified with the recent upsurge in housing pressure due to a shortage of land in Thurso and the haphazard pattern of development. There is now a need for greater co-ordination of future development, notably through detailed siting and design guidance and to agree a mechanism for securing recreation areas in association with such development.

Within the village remaining undeveloped infill sites can accommodate up to 120 houses. This should be more than adequate for the anticipated requirement in the next 10 to 15 years. Outwith the current village limits additional land at Comlifoot Terrace is capable of development, but this should be for longer-term development. The rate of development will continue to be influenced by the level of demand displaced from Thurso. Although it is hoped that the village will become more self-sustaining and not just be seen as a commuter settlement for Thurso and Dounreay. In this respect, maintaining existing businesses is important, as is the creation of new employment opportunities within or nearby the village. Halkirk is well placed to benefit from more significant development at Georgemas Junction, where consideration is being given to

expanding railfreight handling initially and more substantial development in the longer term.

The provision of additional community facilities and amenity areas is also important, particularly with an increasing population. In addition to the area for a new football ground development, the community's priorities are for another equipped playground at the south end of the village, and a bowling green and millennium garden close to the centre.

The grid iron pattern of the main part of the village provides a high level of access. However, the increased level of traffic associated with development has led to calls for traffic calming and limitations on use by heavy vehicles. The need for further improvements and calming measures in association with development has to be balanced with the maintenance of the character of the lanes.

The riverside area is an important amenity for the village, although public access is somewhat limited, mainly for ownership, safety and angling reasons. If a series of paths could be developed along the riverside linking the old Milton Mill, the bridge, the Abbey Church, churchyard and Braal Castle, this could become a significant asset for the village and attract more tourists. Continued protection of the riverside area from intrusive development is also important in this regard, as is the restoration of the Mill and the Church.

Community Input

The main issues put forward by the community at the workshop in the Spring of 1998 were:

Village

HOUSING - affordable/sheltered; sites at Comlifoot Terrace.

EMPLOYMENT/COMMUNITY - convert/re-use/demolish former Poor House (Fair View) for care facilities for elderly or as a craft industry centre; reuse empty wing of primary school for cottage industry.

RECREATION - village park on vacant site south west of Sinclair Street; bowling green; upgrade and extend existing play area at playing field.

COMLIFOOT ROAD - improve/do not improve road; pavement; street lighting/no street lighting; protect historic site; protect woodland.

Countryside

Protect historic sites/promote for tourism

Tourist facility & picnic site at Loch Calder

In addition representatives of the Community Council participated in site visits around the village with the local Member, Roads and Planning officials to highlight concerns about the effects of past development and to identify solutions and priorities for the future. The outcome of this consultation is reflected in the Plan.

Development Factors

Expansion of the sewage works will be required for development in excess of 80 houses and until such time will limit opportunities to the infill areas. Larger agricultural holdings beyond the settlement boundary, and the riverside amenity



Photo: Riverside area and primary school

area with associated woodland are important to the setting of the village. These merit stronger safeguarding policies to avoid encroachment by development and encourage improved amenities within the village. There are also servicing restrictions along the Comlifoot and Gerston Farm roads. Future long-term expansion for housing should not be too remote from the commercial centre of the village. This suggests development between Comlifoot Terrace and the river but not until existing infill opportunities are substantially taken up. Uses generating more in the way of traffic or needing to be sited away from housing (e.g. industry) require a location near to main access roads. The potential of land at the south end of the village towards the railway will be examined in this regard.

Objectives

The Plan seeks to:

- identify further opportunities for housing development over the next 15 years and beyond;
- establish a revised framework for co-ordinating new housing development, including specific guidance on siting, design and access;
- set out a protocol for securing financial contributions to improve the amenity of the village in association with future development;
- encourage reuse of vacant property;
- encourage more business and light industrial development in suitable locations; and
- preserve the setting of the village from encroachment by unplanned development.

Policies

In the built up area of the village, Primary Policies and Settlement Policies apply as shown on the Inset Map. Site and area specific policies, proposals and development opportunities are as follows.

C: Village Centre

1. ***The Council will encourage consolidation of the central area through a mix of uses by infill or redevelopment. Scope exists for further commercial activities, parking, housing to a higher density and improvement of open space provision (see 2).***

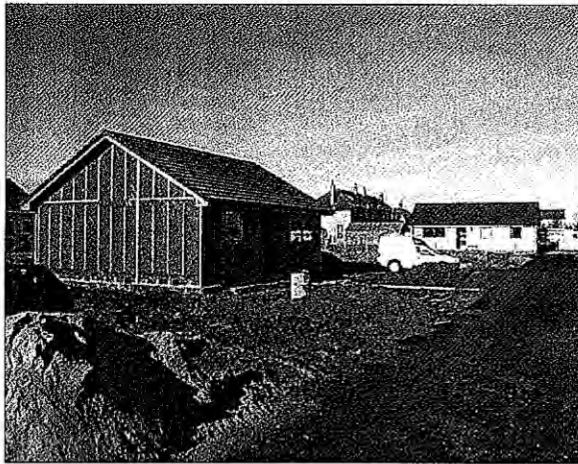


Photo: Housing development, Church Street

2. On vacant ground at the west end of Sinclair Street the Council will encourage the development of a community garden, a small car park and housing (see 17b).

H: Housing

3. The Council has prepared a Framework Plan to guide future housing development. This indicates remaining development opportunities with individual site capacities and road access points. Any further proposals for new housing the areas indicated on the Inset Map and Table 3 below will be expected to conform to the Framework Plan, and development guidelines in Appendix IV. These guidelines indicate standards for access and footpaths, building lines, boundary treatment and design criteria. Developers will be expected to provide a financial contribution in lieu of the development of new or enhanced public open space, recreation facilities (see 17) and minor road

Table 3: Housing Sites as indicated on Halkirk Framework Plan

Site ref.	Capacity	Site ref.	Capacity	Site ref.	Capacity	Site ref.	Capacity	Site ref.	Capacity
1	4	9	1	17	1	25	3	33	2
2	1	10	3	18	8	26	3	34	1
3	2	11	3	19	2	27	2	35	9
4	2	12	4	20	3	28	1	36	2
5	1	13	1	21	3	29	1	37	2
6	2	14	9	22	7	30	1	38	2
7	4	15	1	23	1	31	1	3	1
8	5	16	2	24	5	32	3	9	1
Sub Total	21	Sub Total	24	Sub Total	30	Sub Total	15	40	20
TOTAL 110									

SEE FRAMEWORK PLAN

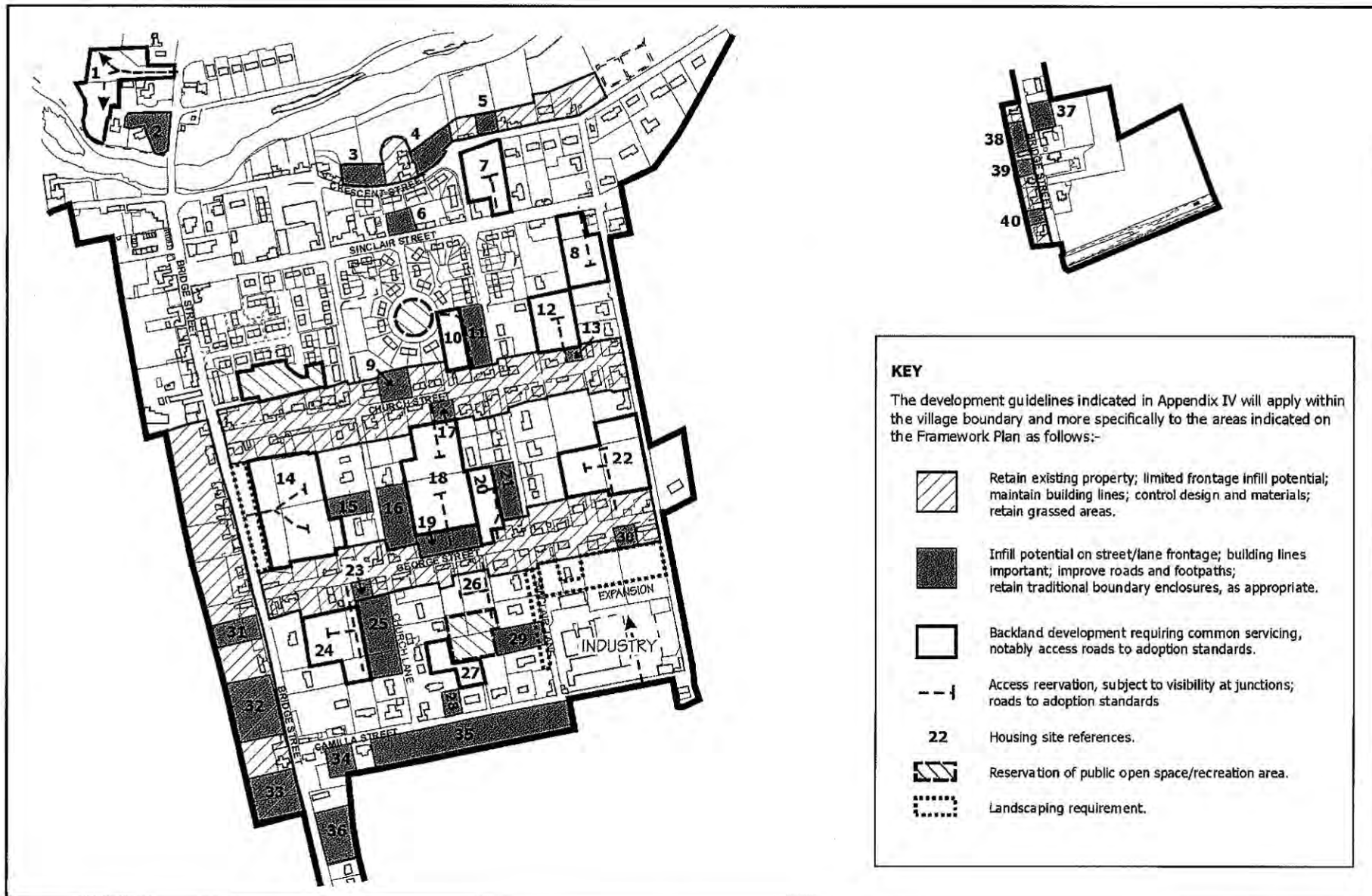
safety improvements (see 15). This will be a one off capital payment to a central fund for use in Halkirk. This is payable in advance of granting planning consent either through a Section 75 legal Agreement or other proper arrangement with the Council. The amount will vary in relation to the number of apartments in the proposed house with the scale of contributions indicated in Appendix IV.

4. At Henrietta Street approximately 0.8 ha. of Council land remains undeveloped. Its requirement for public sector housing within the Plan period is unlikely. There is community support for developing a bowling green over this area, which would be an appropriate alternative development of local benefit (see 17d). Any development for housing should not exceed 10 dwellings and accord with the Framework Plan and Development Guidelines (see 3). This includes financial contributions to the provision of open space.

5. At Fairview, the former Poor House at the north end of the village, the Council will favour conversion to dwellings, along with additional development within close proximity to the building, including extension. All additional buildings should complement the existing, particularly through use of finishing materials. Alternatively the use for business, tourism, office or light industrial purposes possibly mixed with residential, or 'stand alone', would be appropriate provided there is no detrimental impact on the amenity of existing or future residents (see 9).

6. The Council will favour conversion of the former Milton Mill to residential use, either as a permanent dwelling or for holiday letting, perhaps mixed with small business use. Potential for other uses would be subject to access, notably the upgrading of the substandard road on the north side of the Ulbster Arms, and other services being available.

▼ Halkirk Framework Plan



7. *The potential of land to the south of Comlifoot Terrace and west of Bridge Street will be considered for longer term development with landowners. Approximately 3.4 ha. with potential for 30 to 40 houses is identified. In the meantime the land will be safeguarded from premature development in order to avoid prejudicing the servicing of allocated land elsewhere in the village. More specifically, the Council will not approve development in advance of the sewage works being upgraded and as long as allocated land elsewhere in the village with capacity for more than 20 dwellings remains undeveloped. Limited access may be feasible from the south east corner, but most development should be served from Comlifoot Terrace. Developers will be expected to prepare a master plan for development of the site to indicate a detailed layout, phasing, landscaping, open space and remote footpath access.*

8. *The Council will maintain a strong presumption against new housing development on land immediately outwith the village boundary (see 21), in the vicinity of the riverside, along the Comlifoot Road towards Braal Castle and on all areas safeguarded for open space or recreational purposes.*

B: Business

9. *At Fairview there is potential for business, tourism, office or light industrial purposes, possibly mixed with residential or 'stand alone' would be appropriate provided there is no detrimental impact on the amenity of existing or future residents (see 5). This could be a particularly attractive rural location for high technology or knowledge-based business activities.*



Photo: Former Poorhouse at Fairview

I: Industry

10. *Adjacent to the premises of DM Geddes land is allocated for limited expansion of industrial activities. In view of traffic problems in the area the Council will seek an alternative access arrangement in association with further development. Ideally this should involve moving the main access for larger vehicles to the Camilla Street frontage and modest widening of the junction with Bridge Street (see also 13). Consideration will also be given to placing restrictions on related traffic approaching the site from the north. The Council will presume against further development in the defined buffer area where additional screen planting would improve the amenity for surrounding residents.*

11. *The Council will consider the potential for the location of more significant industrial development at the south end of the village*

adjacent to the railway line. Development will be subject to adequate drainage and substantial screen planting around the land. Potential may exist for railfreight related activities.

S: Special Uses

12. *The current capacity of the sewage treatment works will limit the level of housing development in the longer term. A maximum of 80 additional house completions from mid 1999 will be permitted in advance of upgrading of the works in longer term.*

13. *The Council will consider scope for additional widening of the carriageway and footpath provision on the south side of Camilla Street (see 10).*

14. *The Council will consider the scope for providing a new footpath on the south side of Crescent Street between the Ross Institute and the Garage.*

15. *The Council will introduce a 20 m.p.h. speed limit to the narrow streets and lanes and a number of traffic calming measures using contributions from developers (see 3).*

16. *The former Halkirk halt on the railway line will be safeguarded from development which would prejudice its potential to be re-opened as commuter station in longer term.*

A: Amenity

17. *The Council will require contributions towards the following public open space/recreation facilities in the village in association with applications for new houses on*

sites covered by the Framework Plan (see 3 above and Appendix IV):

- a) upgrading of the existing play equipment in the Recreation Park north of Braal Terrace and at Church Lane;
- b) the development of land at Sinclair Street for a millennium garden and car park (see 2);
- c) the development of a further recreation area south of George Street between Church and Sinclair Lanes; and
- d) the development of a bowling green on vacant land to the south of Henrietta Street, if not required for housing (see 4).

18. Land to the north of the existing recreation ground is considered suitable for a new football ground, as per the 1994 proposal.

19. Along the riverside area consideration will be given to the possibility of enhancing and extending the network of paths and provision of basic interpretation and seating. Completion of a loop would depend upon the co-operation of landowners and the restoration of the footbridge at Braal Castle.

20. The Council will encourage reconstruction of the Abbey Church with appropriate interpretation of it and the churchyard to attract more visitors.

21. Positive enhancement, improved access and education through interpretation of the surrounding countryside will be sought through a Countryside Around Towns partnership (see Map HAT 1, Landward Area 43 and Thurso 36).



Photos: Above – Church Lane play area
Right – Milton Mill and riverside path
Below – Abbey Church and church yard



8. KEISS



Background

The small community of Keiss (popn. 300) lies some 10 km. to the north of Wick on the John O' Groats road. Situated in a prominent position overlooking Sinclair's Bay, the village now mainly serves as a dormitory settlement for Wick, although there are opportunities at the pipeline yard at Wester. There are few employment opportunities in the community itself, although it has a reasonable level of services including primary school, shop, hotel and play facilities. Development in the village has been limited in recent years to individual houses off South Street. More development has taken place in the surrounding crofting community. In accordance with national planning policy, the Council is now stressing the need to meet the bulk of demand for new houses in existing settlements. This means identifying further land.

Although local employment is limited, the community is located on the key tourist route to John O' Groats. There may be an opportunity to take advantage of this situation. It would be prudent therefore to allocate a small area of land to meet any demand that may arise. The former garage is in a prominent location next to the A99 and the local hotel. Redevelopment for a more appropriate use would benefit local amenity.

Keiss harbour is a key part of the areas heritage. Several buildings are listed, including the "A" category harbour and warehouse. Such a resource needs to be both safeguarded and promoted. The old drying areas off High Street are also important to the amenity of the village as are the views across the bay. The approaches to the village along the A99 are straight and fast. Although there is a speed limit in the village speed reduction / traffic calming measures would be of benefit.

Community Input

The main concerns of the community put forward at community workshops in the Spring of 1998 were:

- provide family houses and affordable housing;
- introduction of traffic calming measures;
- upgrade and improve the facilities at the harbour;
- minor road improvements and the provision of car parking; and
- maintain / establish footpaths.

Development Factors

The future development of Keiss will be shaped by several factors. There is a need to safeguard the surrounding croft land from ad hoc development. The sea clearly restricts further expansion to the south east and access to the A99 is a further constraint. The best opportunities appear to be allowing further development at South Street and to the north west of Robertson Crescent.

Objectives

The Plan seeks to:

- identify further land for housing;
- protect the open space and playing field off High Street;
- promote improvements to the harbour area;
- safeguard a site for business uses;
- protect important community, heritage and amenity features, including identification of a Conservation Area; and
- safeguard views across the bay.

Policies

In the built up area of the village, Primary Policies and Settlement Policies apply as shown on the Inset Map. Site and area specific policies, proposals and development opportunities are as follows.

H: Housing

- 1. The Council will encourage further infill housing development within the settlement**

boundary, subject to Settlement Policy H. Further development at South Road will require upgrading of the road itself and improvements to the junction with the A99.

B: Business

2. 0.1ha is allocated on the southern approaches to the village for provision of a high amenity tourist related commercial development. Access onto the A99 via South Street will require improvement.

3. The Council will encourage the relocation of the Garage to a less high profile location. The site would be suitable for business / tourist uses or housing development.

S: Special Uses

4. The Council will encourage improvements to the harbour. The community workshop suggested a need for:

- improvements to the pier;*
- provision of a picnic site*
- a scheme of environmental improvements; and*
- promoting the area as a tourist attraction.*

5. The Council will examine the scope for speed reduction / traffic calming measures on the approaches to the village as resources permit.



Photo: Potential for traffic calming

A: Amenity

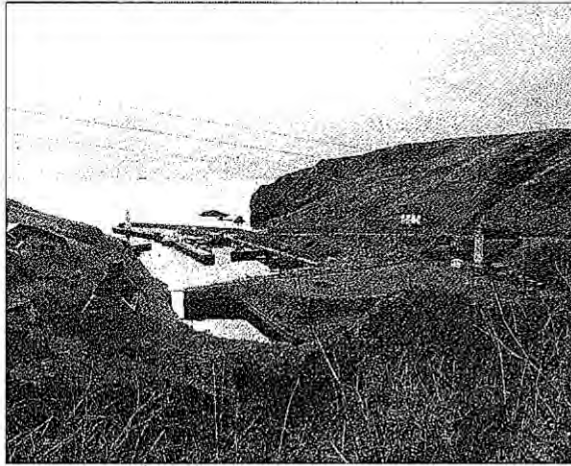
6. The Council will protect important open spaces and amenity areas, particularly:

- (a) Open space off the High Street; and*
- (b) Playing field / play area at the school.*

Environmental Action

7. The Council proposes to designate Keiss Harbour as a Conservation Area. Separate statutory advertisement and consultation would be required.

9. LYBSTER



Background

Lybster (popn. 530) is a key settlement on the A9 serving a large rural hinterland. It was laid out as a planned village with a coherent structure and design by General Patrick Sinclair at the beginning of the 19th century. Like many other Caithness communities it expanded as a result of the herring trade. The first pier was opened in 1810 and by the 1830s around 100 boats were using it. The trade collapsed in the late 19th century and with it a key element in the community's prosperity. Economic opportunities today are mainly service related with many residents commuting to Wick for work. Land has been identified at the golf course for industry but has never been progressed. The Gallery and pottery are important local craft enterprises offering a nucleus on which to build similar enterprises. A few boats still use the harbour and

there may be opportunities to build on the work of Lybster Heritage Trust through promotion of the harbour.

The village contains a good range of services, including bank, hotels, a range of small shops, community hall, football pitch and golf course. The Council's Structure Plan supports the expansion of such communities. There is potential for new development, although the infrastructure network is a constraint. This will be overcome with the completion of a new sewage treatment works. With the exception of the public housing at Mowat Place / Shaltiegie Road, most development has been infill along the Village Road. However, most opportunities have now been realised and future expansion will require backland development. The previous Local Plan identified a significant area of ground to the east and west of the main road. Most of this ground has never been developed and still offers prospects for new housing development.

The local townscape is one of the finest in Caithness. The Conservation Area contains a number of listed buildings and the harbour is one of the gems of the Highlands. There is a need to ensure that this is protected and enhanced. Extending the Conservation Area to cover the harbour would highlight its quality and ensure that it is protected from inappropriate development and complement the work of the Heritage Trust.

Community Input

The main concerns of the community put forward at community workshops in the Spring of 1998 were:-

- improvements to the harbour area including tourist facilities, pier improvements, toilets, interpretation and provision of a small boat jetty;
- promote tourism projects especially at the vacant church / golf course and the provision of more signs;
- provision of affordable / sheltered housing to the north of Golf View Drive and off Harbour Road;
- transport improvements, including speed limits, bus shelters and road widening;
- provision of a fire station; and
- protection of open space and farmland.

Development Factors

There are no physical constraints on expansion of the village and there are a number of opportunities for development, particularly to the rear of the main street. These must be carefully developed to ensure that the setting of the Conservation Area is protected and the loss of agricultural land is carefully controlled. Equally, significant development must await the upgrading of the sewage treatment works.

Objectives

The Plan seeks to:

- identify land for further housing expansion;
- protect the older core of the village from inappropriate development;
- allocate land for business and tourist uses;
- safeguard a site for a new sewage treatment works;
- support improvements to the harbour area; and
- extend the Conservation Area to cover the harbour.

Policies

In the built up area of the village, Primary Policies and Settlement Policies apply as shown on the Inset Map. Site and area specific policies, proposals and development opportunities are as follows.

H: Housing

1. The Council will favour further small scale infill housing development, subject to Settlement Policy H. However, there will be a presumption against more significant development until the waste disposal system is upgraded or the means of effluent disposal is agreed by the Council and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency.

B: Business

2. The following sites are identified for business uses:

- (a) **0.9ha. to the south of the golf club house for business or tourist related uses.**
- (b) **The former church has potential for conversion to business or community uses. It also has potential for conversion to housing.**

S: Special Uses

3. 0.3ha to the north of the playing field is identified for a play area or similar community facility.

4. Land to the south of the village is identified for a new sewage treatment works and associated 90m safeguarding area. This is not currently programmed until after 2009 and village expansion will be limited meantime.

E: Village Expansion

5. Land is allocated for the expansion of the village as indicated in table 1. Proposals must await completion of sewage treatment works. Significant proposals may require improvements to the water supply.

Site	Area (Ha)	Capacity	Comments
(a) East of Stewart's Building	3	40	An overall Master Plan must be submitted showing details of access, layout, house design and landscaping. Development must accord with the special character of the adjoining Conservation Area. In this regard: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the north south street pattern should be maintained; • house ridge lines should be north – south; • the roof pitch should be in the range 35° - 55° and ideally be between 40° and 45°; and • design of built form and selection of materials must take account of the traditional architecture of the Conservation Area.
(b) Russel Street	1.8	15	An overall Master Plan must be submitted showing details of access, layout, house design and landscaping.
(c) West of the Police Station	2	25	An overall Master Plan must be submitted showing details of access, layout, house design and landscaping
(d) South of Harbour Road	3	5	Planning permission has been granted for two large plots. The remaining ground should be developed at a similar density.
(e) North of Harbour Road	1.5	12	An overall Master Plan must be submitted showing details of access, layout, house design and landscaping. Land must be set aside for an area of open space / play area.

A: Amenity

- 6. The Council will protect important open spaces and amenity areas, particularly:**
- (a) Open spaces along Main Street; and**
 - (b) playing field / play areas.**

Environmental Action

7. The Council proposes to extend Lybster Conservation Area to cover the Harbour area and place an Article 4 Direction over the whole area. Separate statutory advertisement and consultation will be required. Development within the Conservation Area should have regard to the Design Guidance in Appendix V.

8. The Council has allocated £30,000 in for environmental improvements in 2004/2005. Part of this sum is dedicated to completing a scheme of environmental improvements at the former Joiners workshop to include provision of a car park and landscaping. The scheme also involves storage for the Fire Service and land for the Community Centre. The remainder will go towards funding the Lybster Heritage Trust project to convert the Old Cooperage / Salt Store to a Visitor Centre, café and picnic site.

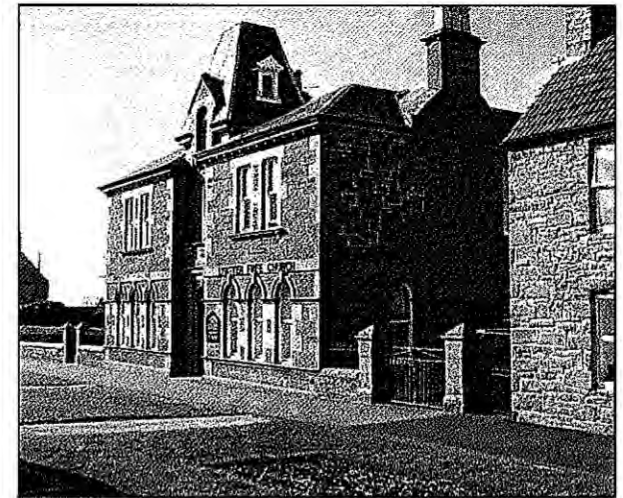
9. The Council, in conjunction with other interested parties, will consider other potential improvements to the harbour area to encourage its use for fishing, recreational sailing and other tourist related uses.

10. Other opportunities exist to improve the village environment. The Council will consider potential environmental improvement schemes as follows:

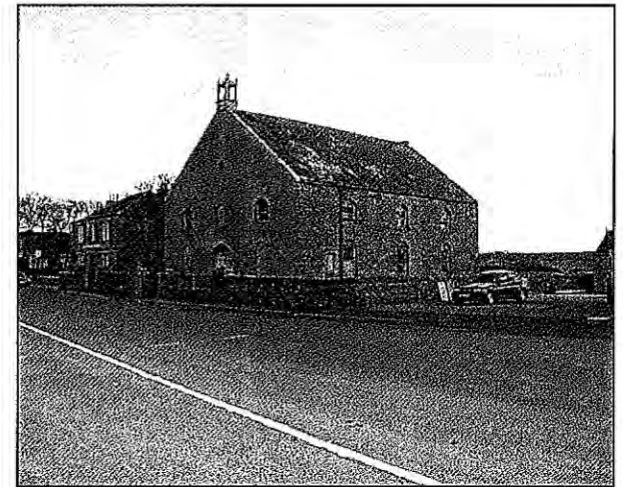
- (a) enhancement of the village entrances**

including improved signage, landscaping and speed reducing measures;

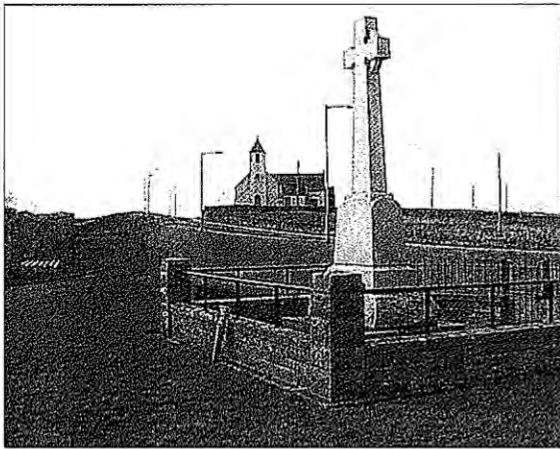
- (b) improvements to the main street, including streetscape improvements, traffic calming / management and provision of interpretative materials; and**
- (c) improvements to the local network of village and coastal footpaths.**



Photos: Above - the Free Church, a listed building in the existing Conservation Area.
Left - land for expansion of housing north of Harbour Road.
Below - former church with potential for conversion to business community or residential use.



10. REAY



Background

Reay (popn. 300) is located on the north coast some 15km. west of Thurso and just 2 km. west of Dounreay. It overlooks the dune fringed Sandside Bay and links area to the north, which is a valuable wildlife habitat, local scenic and recreational resource. The settlement area is in two distinct parts, Old Reay to the east and New Reay to the west linked by the A836 road. Both parts of the village have been expanded in recent years due to demand from commuters to Dounreay and Thurso.

While the village and its immediate hinterland became part of the Sutherland Area in May of 1999, Reay still has an important supporting role to play in the Caithness Economic Strategy. This is mainly because it is a commuter settlement and there is an expectation that it will continue to offer an attractive choice of location in the West

Caithness housing market area. Unfortunately there are very few jobs based in the village and identification of additional land for small business activities would help in this regard.

There is a modest range of services spread throughout the whole village and the community wishes to attract more facilities, notably a post office, small hotel/restaurant/public house and a doctor's surgery. However, additional population may be needed to support them. The loss of the post office and one of the petrol outlets in recent years illustrate how fragile facilities can be. The existing facilities, combined with the availability of significant housing opportunities could attract more residents from the upsurge in decommissioning activity at Dounreay. The A836 running through the village is a major tourist route linking North Sutherland with John O'Groats. Opportunities exist to develop commercial facilities to take advantage of this and derive local benefit in association with Sandside Bay. There is also a range of historical and archaeological features in and around the village that would merit more in the way of interpretation. The strategic location of the village as a gateway to Caithness and Sutherland offers scope for the establishment of a visitor orientation centre in association with other facilities.

The rate of housing development in the past 10 years has been affected by a run down of activities at Dounreay. Projection of future house building requirements on this basis suggests that 12 to 15 houses might be built in the village in the next 10 years. However, with the anticipated increase in the Dounreay workforce in this time a higher rate of between 2 and 5 per year is planned for. Allocations are also made on a

much longer term basis of up to 25 years, consistent with those proposed for other key settlements in West Caithness.

In addition to Sandside Bay, the golf course and a small playing field are the main recreational facilities. The need to upgrade the playing field has been identified locally and the inclusion of play areas in association with new development would be of considerable benefit. Policies for the protection of surrounding farmland, the links and the Sandside House woodland will help to maintain the setting of the village, avoid piecemeal development and so assist its proper development.

Community Input

The main issues put forward by the community at the workshop in the Spring of 1998 were:

Village

NEW REAY – sheltered housing; shared ownership housing; post office; public house; surgery; public toilets.

OLD REAY – clinic; care facilities for the elderly;
RECREATION GROUND AREA – develop football pitch; restaurant; civic amenity site (skip).

Countryside

SANDSIDE BAY/BEACH – marina; camp site; keep toilets open; protect/interpret/landscape historic site (ice house); sports field; play area; improve water quality; tidy up beach; manage for wildlife.

DOUNREAY – protect historic site/list/preserve sphere; retain existing use; science park; industrial site; open storage; no nuclear waste repository.

Development Factors

Spare capacity exists in most service networks to accommodate a significant level of development. Limiting development to a maximum rate of 7 dwellings per annum over an 8 to 10 year period will avoid overloading the primary school and a significant reduction in the water pressure. A few infill opportunities remain in each part of the village. Maintaining the separation between Old and New Reay is important to preserve the distinction between them. Ribbon development along the main road is also undesirable on road safety grounds. Difficult ground conditions and the amenity of the land around the Sandside Burn limit development to the north. Archaeological features, especially Big Keoltag, and steeply rising ground to the south should also be avoided. Limited expansion at Keoltag would help the feasibility of housing and provide opportunities for small business development. The proximity of the village to Dounreay requires any planning applications to be referred to the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate and the Health and Safety Executive.

Objectives

The Plan seeks to:

- identify opportunities for small business development;
- encourage housing development in a choice of locations
- sustain and expand the range of services and facilities, including those available to tourists; and
- protect the edges of the village from encroachment by unplanned development.

Policies

In the built up area of the village, Primary Policies and Settlement Policies apply as shown on the Inset Map. Site and area specific policies, proposals and development opportunities are as follows.

H: Housing

1. The Council will favour infill development in the areas shown subject to satisfactory access. This includes the remaining plots in Phase 1 of Keoltag development. On two of the plots opposite the garage views are sought on the option of a small travel lodge/pub/restaurant development on the main road frontage (see 6b).

2. Land allocated for new development is shown in Table 2.

3. At Keoltag, 5.5ha. of land is allocated for up to 33 houses which should be guided by a master plan or overall layout (see Table 3). Tree planting should be undertaken along the along south and east boundaries. All buildings should be set back the requisite distance from power lines.

4. The Council will maintain a strong presumption against housing development on land immediately outwith the village boundary and more specifically on land between to the two parts of the settlement.

B: Business

5. Land at the east end of Old Reay is allocated for small business and light industrial. Appropriate screening and planting should be provided within the periphery.

Table 2: Land for new development

SITE REF	AREA (ha.)	CAPACITY	COMMENTS
2(a) west of the Crescent, New Reay	0.27	2 - 4	2 detached or 4 semi-detached. Access from A836.
2(b) west of the Avenue, New Reay	0.2	4	Access from the south. Flood protection measures.
2(c) North of the Terrace, New Reay	1.53	15 - 20	Single access from A836 to serve most of the development; RS4 policy (layout plan required).
2(d) east of Old Reay	1.46	10	Single access from A836; RS4 policy (layout plan required); equipped play area; planting adjacent to burn and along the south boundary; part of site may be suitable for a surgery.

S: Special Uses

6. *The Council will favour the siting of a small hotel/public house within the village. Views are sought on the following alternative locations:*

- (a) *in the vicinity of the golf clubhouse;*
- (b) *opposite the Garage (see 1);*
- (c) *conversion of an existing property at Old Reay; or*
- (d) *as an extension to the public hall.*

Consideration should also be given to a mixed use development at locations (a) and (d) to include a visitor orientation centre, surgery, public toilets and post office.

7. *Primary Policy PP4 applies to the existing sewage works and a safeguarding area around it.*

A: Amenity

8. *The Council will consider improvements to the playing field.*

9. *The Council will consider environmental improvements to the old Graveyard.*

SITE REF	PHASE	AREA	CAPACITY	COMMENTS/REQUIREMENTS
3(a)	1	1.1	7	
3(b)	2	2	10	<i>equipped play area and remote footpath link towards the school</i>
3(c)	3	1	7	
3(d)	4	1.4	9	

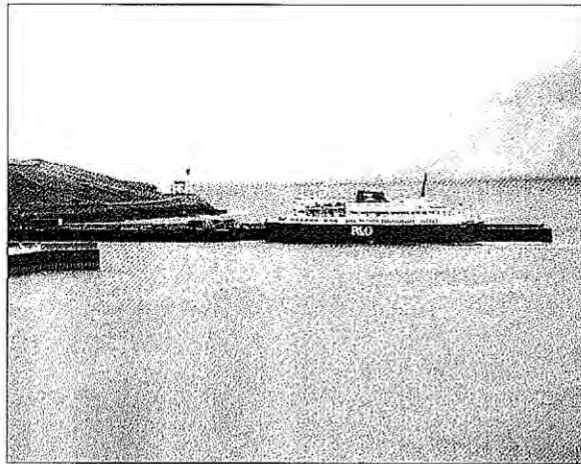
Dounreay Consultation Zone

10. *A 5 km Nuclear Safeguarding Zone is delineated around Dounreay within which any planning applications shall be the subject of consultation with the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate and the Health and Safety Executive.*



*Photo: Above - housing development at Keoltag
Left - Village hall*

11. SCRABSTER



Background

Scrabster (popn. 290) is situated in the north west corner of Thurso Bay, approximately 1 km. from Thurso town. Scrabster harbour is an important fishing port and ferry terminal for the main Orkney crossing. It also has traditional trade links with other northern isles and northern Europe. As such, the harbour has a major influence on the Caithness economy and is a key employment area. This includes a major area of reclaimed land that accommodates fuel storage, fish market, storage and road haulage depot.

Only a small number of dwellings remain below the cliff line, mixed with commercial and harbour related uses. The largest proportion of residents live in newer housing above the Braes of Holburn Head to the north and south east of the imposing Scrabster House and its wooded policies.

Pressure to expand Thurso has also seen housing development spread towards Scrabster from the south east. Community facilities are limited to a small hall and playing field possibly due to the close proximity to Thurso. The potential for further housing expansion requires detailed consultation with landowners. The Hall Association is also has plans for expansion of the hall.

The Scrabster Harbour Trust operates the harbour with powers under Harbour Orders approved by Act of Parliament. While this means that planning permission is not required proposals for major development still require detailed environmental impact assessment. Previous land reclamation provided valuable back up land for the fishing industry and development opportunities still remain. Harbour Orders were extended in anticipation of being able to develop a forward supply base for the Atlantic Frontier oil fields although the associated berthing and deepening improvements have yet to be implemented. Nevertheless imminent improvements are needed to accommodate a larger Orkney ferry vessel and the larger new type of fishing vessels. Growth in fish landings and related fish processing therefore offer greater prospects than oil in the short to medium term. Prospects could be further enhanced through identification of suitable land close to the harbour for related transit storage and haulage activities as well as the construction of a Thurso bypass road.

Community Input

The main issues put forward by the community at workshops in the Spring of 1998 were: -

- improve the harbour;

- affordable housing;
- sports hall/play area.

Development Factors

Ongoing drainage works will aid development. Any expansion of harbour related activities must have regard to the landscape and nature conservation features of Thurso Bay, together with the setting of Scrabster House and the agricultural viability of Scrabster Mains Farm.

Objectives

The Plan seeks to:

- identify land for modest housing expansion and community facilities;
- support expansion of the harbour including identification of back up land;
- minimise the impact of development upon Scrabster House, the Braes, nature conservation interests and the broader landscape setting of Thurso Bay.

Policies

In the built up area, Primary Policies and Settlement Policies apply as shown on the Inset Map. Site and area specific policies, proposals and development opportunities are as follows.

H: Housing

- 1. The Council will consult with landowners about the scope for allocating 0.6 ha. Of land north east of St.Clair Avenue for 6 to 10 houses. There will be a need to underground or re-route overhead power lines.**

I: Industry

2. At Scrabster Harbour land is available for related industrial uses, notably fish processing. The Council recognises the need to provide additional back up land associated with potential expansion, particularly for transit storage warehousing and possible short term external storage for the oil industry. Reclamation of more land from the sea to the south of the existing harbour requires careful consideration in relation to the nearby SSSI, traffic generation and visual impact. Alternatively, land to the south and west of the Scrabster Mains steading complex may have potential, subject to not conflicting with the farm operations, the availability of services and substantial screen planting/landscaping around the perimeter.

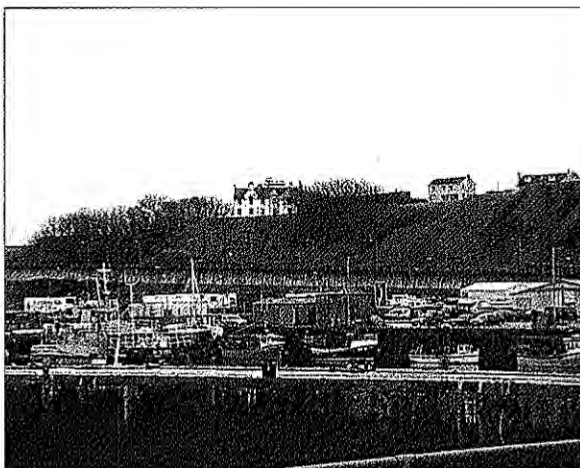
S: Special Uses

3. The Council supports upgrading of Scrabster Harbour to sustain and increase its use, including accommodation of a larger Orkney ferry, modern deep sea fishing boats and oil supply vessels. Longer term expansion, possibly for the development of an oil service base to serve the Atlantic Frontier area, will require careful consideration under Environmental Assessment procedures.

4. The Hall Committee proposes to extend the existing hall, essentially to provide indoor bowling facilities.

5. A provisional route for a western bypass or distributor road for Thurso will be identified as the basis for discussion with land

owners and other interested parties. Preliminary investigations suggest that part of the route will extend north from the A836 road to Scrabster west of the West Gill housing development (see Thurso 29).



*Photos: Above - Scrabster Harbour and House
Right - Scrabster Mains and Housing*



12. THURSO



Background

Thurso (popn. 9000) is the principal market, service and social centre for West and Central Caithness and a wider hinterland reaching deep into North Sutherland. It lies at the mouth of the River Thurso overlooking a deep sheltered bay. Abundant local fisheries, fertile land, a fordable river crossing and readily available building materials, allowed development from early Norse beginnings into an important judicial, religious and fishing community trading with Scandinavia and continental Europe. The street plan of the medieval "Fisherbiggins" west of the river mouth remains largely intact. At the end of the eighteenth century changing social and economic circumstances led the visionary Sir John Sinclair to found the gridiron "New Town" over adjacent land to the south. As this developed, roads to the south of Caithness improved, followed by the

railhead established in 1874, whilst Thurso and adjoining harbours, including Scrabster, became vital to the burgeoning flagstone trade.

The town lost ground after World War I with the decline of traditional industries and consequent depopulation. This decline was not arrested until after the nuclear industry development at Dounreay in 1954, when the population more than doubled from 4000 to 10000 in the following twenty years. This period saw a succession of major housing and community projects when Thurso strengthened and consolidated its service functions. The population slowly declined during the 1980s because of the faltering economic prospects for second and third generation families. This decline was exacerbated from the end of that decade by a large number of job losses at Dounreay and Vulcan, and through the closure of the US Base at Forss. Special measures to help counter the effects of these losses have included attracting new technology enterprises to the Thurso Business Park and promoting Scrabster Harbour for fish landings, downstream processing and as a forward supply base for Atlantic Frontier oil-related activity. Creation of new service sector jobs at the BT call centre and the lithium ion battery factory were recent major investments. There are strong prospects for further hi-tech enterprise and new opportunities for the College as part of a future University of the Highlands and Islands. A build up of jobs at Dounreay are expected underpin more immediate growth prospects as activities switch towards decommissioning and site remediation in the next 10 years. The effects of longer term run down will also be strenuously addressed, particularly through encouraging more diversification into new areas of work using new technology, skills

learned in the nuclear industry and the availability of training. Thurso has a major role to play as a location for associated development. There is also a need to promote opportunities for more conventional small and medium sized businesses.

The Council is involved in partnership initiatives to regenerate the town centre and the peripheral housing estate of High Ormlie. The main emphasis of the town centre project so far has been to progress a revamp of the pedestrian precinct, encourage better shop front designs, improve security and promote reuse of vacant or derelict properties. A detailed strategy document is emerging as the basis for co-ordinating future action. While in Ormlie measures are largely being taken under the government's Social Inclusion Partnership, with a major effort from within the community itself to tackle social and environmental concerns about the estate, and to increase opportunities for local employment. Physical regeneration of other parts of the town, such as river frontage properties north of the bridge and possibly around the railway station, also requires more detailed consideration.

The ready availability of housing and a good range of community facilities will continue to play an important role in maximising economic prospects, by attracting incoming workers or maintaining existing residents. In 1995 Thurso's housing requirements came under close scrutiny with the preparation of an Alteration to the adopted Local Plan. This indicated a requirement to accommodate a further 400 to 500 houses in the period 1996 to 2011, largely on greenfield sites around the edge of the town. Despite the allocation of additional land its availability remained limited up until early 1999 but

development is now under way at West Gill and Heathfield.

A revised Highland Structure Plan assessment of housing requirements, based on the aspirations of the Caithness Partnership anticipates house building rates will average almost 20 per year in the next 5 to 10 years. The need to identify opportunities for 250 new houses in that period includes an allowance for flexibility and choice of locations. Projecting forward a further 5 years in line with government guidance suggests a need for almost 400 houses by 2014. A large proportion of houses could be accommodated on sites already allocated. However, factors such as alternative development or amenity considerations have necessitated changes to the capacity of the land supply.

Additional opportunities are essential to avoid limiting flexibility to cater for the possibility of a sudden upsurge in demand in the medium to long term if the efforts and aspirations of the Caithness Economic Partnership are realised. This assumes that over the next 10 years decommissioning work and diversification at Dounreay will be turned to full advantage, supported by new resource and knowledge-based activities and service industries. In the longer term there is also the prospect of oil related jobs if a major landfall and oil and gas processing site can be established on the north coast. This, together with the possibility of Dounreay becoming a major science and technology business centre, would significantly increase local job opportunities and the demand for services and housing across Caithness, notably in Thurso. As such, it would be prudent to take a longer term view of potential house building requirements in setting out the future development framework for the town.

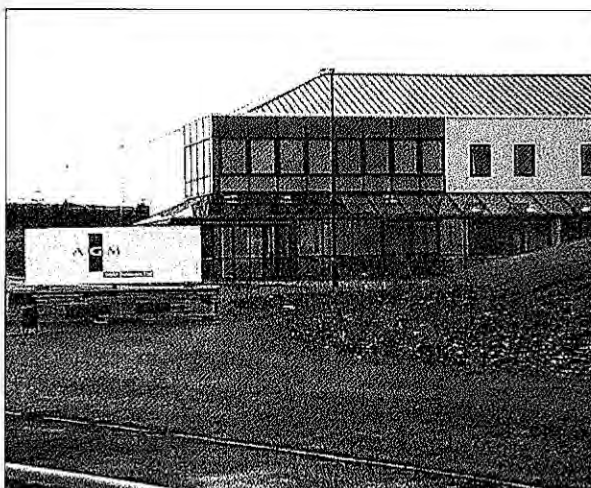


Photo: AGM Battery factory at business park

Looking 25 years ahead will allow capacity to be built in to major infrastructure improvements, the introduction of initiatives for managing the surrounding countryside and establishment of an early landscape framework for development. In this respect an assumption is made that opportunities for a further 500 houses in the period 2011 to 2024 should be indicated in and around Thurso. This produces a combined requirement of 750 over 25 years.

Thurso has a relatively good range of community facilities and services associated with a town of its size and catchment but additional provision is required to sustain population, reduce trips south out of the County and attract new residents. The College continues to expand and attract more students, a new cinema is proposed and the need for youth facilities is well known. Thurso has also been identified under national guidelines as a preferred location for a major indoor sports

centre. The town is also being considered as one of the options for locating a Caithness community/arts centre. Further consolidation of retailing within the town centre, together with development of visitor attractions and facilities would strengthen Thurso's role as a sub-regional shopping and service centre. Additional playing field and neighbourhood facilities will be required in association with longer term development.

Traffic congestion in the central area is of great concern and is compounded by the fact that there is only one road crossing of the river. Construction of a by-pass or relief road west of the town is the favoured solution but under current government policy this is not eligible for inclusion in the national Trunk Roads programme. Nevertheless its construction would aid the creation of jobs at Scrabster, the business park and at Dounreay in the longer term, as well as the proper development of the town. Progression of early phases may be feasible as a *western distributor* in association with housing and business expansion. Improvements to the treatment of the town's sewage will be required to comply with European legislation by 2005. These may also allow extension of the drainage network to Sir Archibald Road and possibly Murkle in the longer term. Water supply continues to be deficient to the south west of the town.

Planning policies must balance the needs for continuing expansion of housing, business and leisure uses, with those of containment required to protect surrounding agricultural land, natural and cultural heritage features, amenity areas and attractive countryside setting. More restrictive policies for new development in the open

countryside surrounding the town are necessary to avoid further problems associated with commuter housing pressure. The introduction of a complementary Countryside Around Towns partnership initiative could encourage farm diversification and future management of land for recreation. Within the town the attractive open spaces adjoining the river and coastal edge are major 'green wedges' meriting policies for protection and enhancement. Similarly, playing fields and local open spaces are important to the amenity of their surrounding areas.

In addition to the setting of Thurso the town's built environment is a major asset. The Outstanding Conservation Area, containing a number of important Listed buildings covers most of the town centre. This attracts more attention because of its historic background and the Council's statutory duty to protect and enhance. Additional measures are required and promoted through the Plan. Less is said of the suburban housing estates developed since the Second World War using innovative town planning and architectural methods to provide attractive residential layouts. Most of these areas, notably Mount Vernon and Pennyland, were developed by the nuclear industry in the wake of the establishment of Dounreay. At Mount Vernon, for example, the layout was organised along the lines of the 'Radburn' principles, whereby main pedestrian and vehicle movements are quite distinctly separated. Such examples are worthy of a modest protection policy to require future development to have regard to their integrity. In some cases enhancement may also be required. Improvements are also required in the industrial areas to face-lift, relocate or re-use eyesore properties.



Photo: Ormlie Moors

Community Input

The main issues put forward by the community at workshops in the Spring of 1998 were: -

Town Centre

SHOPPING - improve shopping in precinct.

HOUSING - sheltered and affordable.

LEISURE/VISITOR FACILITIES - facilities for the disabled, elderly and youth; restore and re-use the old Brewery; cinema; tourist facilities; better located public toilets.

TRAFFIC calming.

Rest of Town

HOUSING - more housing for rent or affordable to buy in various locations in and around the town; large detached and family houses at West Gill and west of hospital; better new house designs.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC - regenerate High Ormlie; small business units at Ormlie and Mount Pleasant.

COMMUNITY/SERVICES - leisure centre/sports hall; recreational use of the Moors area; improved public transport around the periphery; traffic calming in the Pennyland and Ormlie estates, and on Scrabster Road; better treatment of sewage/new works at river mouth.

ENVIRONMENT - managing land around the countryside fringe for wildlife; protect farmland, "open space" and views at Pennyland Farm, especially on north side; establish or improve footpaths at various locations around the periphery; upgrade industrial area north of Sir Archibald Road.

Countryside

HOUSING - affordable housing; more large detached houses.

INDUSTRY - landscape and promote Janetstown industrial estate for development.

COMMUNITY/SERVICES - replace golf clubhouse; traffic calming/speed limit at Glengolly.

ENVIRONMENT - protect farmland; establish coastal footpath.

Development Factors

The government is placing an increasing emphasis on recycling urban land through redevelopment, property conversions and infill schemes. Such opportunities are limited in the short term due to the need to relocate existing non-residential uses but will be important for accommodating amenity and single person housing, with higher density redevelopment closer into the town centre. The largest

proportion of house building is planned to take place on peripheral greenfield land, with priority to early development of existing land allocations.

In identifying additional land, factors indicated during the 1995 housing study are still relevant and cover all forms of development. In addition to environmental and servicing factors, land availability remains a key issue in determining the location of future development. The prospect of Pennyland Farm on the north west side of the town becoming available offers an opportunity to accommodate medium to longer term development. Parts of the farm are readily serviceable and well located in terms of proximity to major places of employment. Use of good principles in the design, layout and organisation of buildings to suit the topography and climate are important. There is still a need to safeguard the openness of land on the north side of the farm and water supply is not available to the western-most fields. Farming interests, amenity and service deficiency factors limit development at East Mains, Mount Pleasant, Oldfield, Bleachfield, Heathfield and Scrabster Mains.

Objectives

The Plan seeks to:

- improve the vitality and viability of the town centre through a joint strategy;
- identify a range and choice of sites to accommodate 750 houses over the next 25 years;
- assist the re-generation of Ormlie
- allocate additional land for business use;
- enhance the development potential of industrial estates at Ormlie and Janetstown;

- consider the scope for improvements to riverside land, including relocation of industrial uses;
- maintain and enhance existing community facilities and identify a site for a new sports centre;
- identify and promote opportunities for tourist related development, notably the establishment of a significant visitor facility in the town centre;
- identify a provisional route for a western by-pass or distributor road as the basis for discussion with land owners and other interested parties;
- safeguard the Outstanding Conservation Area and promote measures for its enhancement;
- safeguard the surrounding countryside, notably the better farm, recreational and amenity land from unplanned development;
- maintain the layout and urban design attributes of Spring Park, Pennyland and Mount Vernon and to promote good design principles in new residential areas;
- promote improved management and access to the countryside fringe for recreational purposes, including a network of footpaths/cycle ways.

Policies

In the built up area of the town, Primary Policies and Settlement Policies apply as shown on the Inset Map. Site and area specific policies, proposals and development opportunities are as indicated in paragraphs 1 to 12.



Photo: Rotterdam/High Streets pedestrian precinct

C: Town Centre

The town centre area is defined on the Central Area Inset 12A. It includes the main shopping streets of Traill Street, Rotterdam Street, High Street and Meadow Lane plus a range of commercial premises in surrounding streets. To the south west the area extends along Princes and Janet Streets stopping just short of the Miller Academy. It also includes a significant number of residential properties, particularly in the old (fisher) town surrounding Old St. Peter's Kirk, and a scattering of semi-commercial, light industrial, leisure, community uses and open space. A significant proportion of the area is covered by the Outstanding Conservation Area designation.

A draft Strategy has been prepared with the following objectives:

- To strengthen Thurso's role as a sub-regional shopping and business centre.

- To improve the physical environment so that it becomes a more attractive and safer place to visit and live in, while protecting traditional and historic attractions.
- To provide an equally high level of accessibility for all users by a range of transport modes.
- To protect the character and amenity of established residential areas and encourage additional housing to maintain a mix of activities.
- To identify and promote development opportunities and to guide and assist their implementation.
- To undertake effective management and promotion.



Photo: Town centre redevelopment

The full document is separate from the Local Plan. The main policies, proposals and recommendations are indicated as follows:

1. The Council will encourage further commercial development together with improved visitor facilities and residential development within the town centre, having due regard to the availability of parking, the amenity of residential property and the Outstanding Conservation Area. In accordance with national planning guidance and the Highland Structure Plan, potential developers will be required to justify large scale retail development and should give first preference to the town centre as a location for such development. The Thurso Project Group will seek to work with such developers to identify areas with potential for larger scale redevelopment through imaginative urban design and will investigate the feasibility of land assembly, including suitable relocation of

existing uses. Smaller scale development opportunities include:

- the former Presto store, Rotterdam Street for retail;**
- the former Job Centre, Rotterdam Street for a retail unit, Internet/Cyber cafe or restaurant;**
- the former St Andrews Church, Olig Street for retail, restaurant, visitor/cultural centre, arts/exhibition venue or Internet/Cyber cafe;**
- properties between 30 and 34 Princes Street (vacant Mackenzie store, existing newsagent and charity shop), potentially for redevelopment to provide a larger scale retail unit, incorporating the newsagent, with housing on upper floors;**
- the property north west of the old brewery in Manson's/Meadow Lane for public toilets, tourist information centre, retail and extension of public car park;**

- at the Elland Bridge car park as an option for a tourist information centre and public toilets, along with better pedestrian (priority) link to central core, better signing for visitors and expanded car park south west of footbridge approach;**
- the former shop/house/stores, 8 Wilson's Lane etc. for restaurant, office or residential use;**
- the former Marine Inn for a pub/restaurant/small hotel, self-catering flats or permanent dwellings;**
- to the rear of the Royal Hotel, to redevelop/upgrade as hotel accommodation, including coach parking and access at rear; and**
- the gap above the More Store in the Town Hall Square for office and/or residential use.**

2. It is proposed to convert the former brewery at Manson's Lane (pictured below) into a significant visitor attraction/orientation centre, including an archive with genealogy research facilities.



3. *Within the defined commercial core area (see Inset), the Council will:*
- *give the highest priority to improving the viability of the shopping centre;*
 - *encourage the addition, renovation, modernisation or replacement of floorspace needed to accommodate changing shopping patterns;*
 - *encourage office development, particularly through the re-use of vacant upper floors;*
 - *presume against further ground floor office and other non-retail uses in the main shopping areas of Traill, Rotterdam and High Streets, where they would interrupt continuous retail frontages;*
 - *promote supplementary design guidance[#] for shop front design and signage with priority implementation to be encouraged in Traill Street, the pedestrian precinct, Town Hall Square and all other Listed commercial buildings.*

4. *The highest priority will be given to progressing an environmental improvement scheme for the Rotterdam Street/High Street/Town Hall Square pedestrian precinct. The Council has allocated £190,000 towards this in 2001 - 03, with additional funding being sought from CASE and the European Programme.*

5. *Elsewhere consideration will be given to the following:*
- (a) *Riverside improvements along the riverside, south of the harbour to Bridgend, including the Elland footbridge, building up the river*

[#] The Caithness Frontage Guidelines for Commercial and Retail Properties are separate from the Plan and available from the local Service Points.

- wall from the TIC to the bridge to lessen flood risk, landscaping from harbour to Bridgend.*
- (b) *Improving the TIC car park.*
 - (c) *The informal parking area opposite Tollemache House at High Street.*
 - (d) *Improving the car park and service area to the rear Tollemache House and the BB Hall.*

6. *Encouragement will be given to the incorporation of public art features within improvement and redevelopment schemes. For commercial development of £100,000 or more in value, a contribution will be sought from developers towards the provision of public art in the town centre. The level of contribution will not exceed 1% of the total cost of development.*

7. *It is proposed to develop the tourist potential of Old St. Peter's Kirk (pictured below) and harbour through better signing and interpretation, as well as part of a Heritage Trail.*



8. *The Council will also seek further improvements to the pedestrian environment and priority, accounting for the need for the flow of traffic on the main roads, shop deliveries and other essential users. Close examination will also be given to ways of providing safer access for cyclists, including priority routes from the edge of town and secure and convenient parking facilities in the town centre. The Council may consider these measures as part of an overall scheme for traffic management.*

9. *The Council will consult with the Trunk Roads Authority on the possibility of encouraging better access to and from long stay car parks, notably through improvements to the junction of Sir George's Street, Janet Street and Riverside Road.*

10. *At Swanson Street the Pentland Housing Association is to provide 8 flats through conversion of vacant houses and demolition and redevelopment of the former bakery.*

11. *In the residential areas of the town centre the Council will:*
- *protect and enhance their settled character and amenity;*
 - *favour refurbishment, extension or redevelopment of properties for residential purposes;*
 - *presume against the introduction of further non-residential uses, notably office development, and have regard to the impact of any such uses proposed for adjoining land; and*
 - *consider environmental enhancement, including traffic calming and further restrictions on non-residents parking.*

12. Where re-development is approved within the area of archaeological potential (Map 12C) permission will be conditioned to ensure the satisfactory excavation and recording of remains.

H: Housing

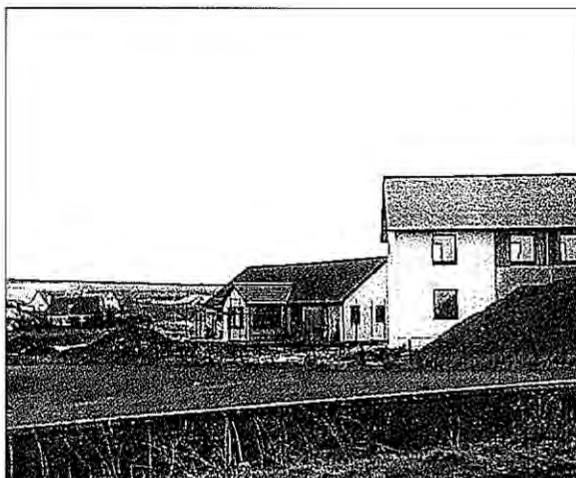


Photo: New housing at West Gill

13. The sites in tables 13.1 & 13.2 are allocated for housing. While it is possible for development to commence on all sites within the Plan period, it is anticipated that the market will dictate the later completion of some of them. Servicing requirements dictate comprehensive implementation by contractors and housing associations, possibly including serviced feus for self-build purposes with GRO grant or similar assistance.

14. The housing sites listed in Table 14 are capable of development within the Plan period.

Site	Area (ha.)	Capacity	Comments
(a) Upper Burnside (West Gill)	7.8	90	under construction
(b) Pennyland South	3.0	40-45	private plots/HA development; access via extension of Provost Cormack Drive; link to Henderson Street; upgrade Moors/Wolf Burn footpath; interpret archaeology; provide equipped play area
(c) Heathfield (upper)	5.0	41	under construction
(d) Heathfield (lower)	1.3	12	access from Heathfield (upper)
(e) Lower Ormlie	1.8	18-20	
(f) Juniper Bank (south)	1.6	16	access from south, after development of Lower Ormlie
(g) Mount Pleasant (south)	1.0	15-20	
(h) Mount Pleasant (north)	2.2	30-50	equipped play area

Site	Area (ha.)	Capacity	Comments
(i) Ormlie Allotment Gardens	1.5 (1.0)	30 (20)	excluding community centre (community centre on 0.5ha.)
(j) Pennyland Terrace /Scapa House	0.77	20-25	higher density flatted development may be appropriate
(k) Juniper Bank (north)	0.6	4-5	Existing caravan site, access from north

Site	Capacity	Comments
(a) Naver House	12	Completed at end of 2001
(b) Ormlie Farm	15-20	Guideline figure - under construction
(c) Barrock Street	20-25	Guideline figure
(d) Millbank Works	15-20	Listed building also with non-residential potential (see 33)

A higher density of development will be possible.

15. *At Pennyland Farm and north west of the Dunbar Hospital land is safeguarded for longer term development of approximately 240 to 260 houses. Development should not commence until after substantial take up of land in Tables 13.1 and 13.2 or in advance of water supply improvements (see also para. 37).*

16. *The potential for redevelopment to provide residential accommodation at Bridgend, Auction Mart and north of Sir Archibald Road will be explored with relevant land owners and occupiers in the period of the Plan.*

17. *At Ormlie the Council will lead in partnership with the local Community Association and other organisations to progress social, economic and physical regeneration of the area. The area is eligible for funding under the Government's Social Inclusion Partnership initiative. In addition to social measures, a major objective that the Council supports in principle is to physically redesign High Ormlie to:*

- improve access to and from the area via the surrounding road and footpath networks;*
- reduce traffic speeds and give priority to pedestrians through calming measures (pilot Home Zone);*
- redefine front and back entrances to houses;*
- increase garden ground; and*
- enhance provision of play areas.*

The Council will also seek to promote;

- development of the allotment gardens area for housing and possibly a community centre (see 13i);*
- improved pedestrian access to and environmental enhancement of the Ormlie industrial estate (see 25); and*
- improved paths across the Moors area, including north towards the business park and north east to Pennyland Primary School (see 35c and Framework Plan).*

18. *Proposals for development in the Spring Park, Pennyland and Mount Vernon areas should have regard to the original residential layout and urban design principles.*

19. *In accordance with policy H3 of the new Structure Plan, the Council will not permit new housing and conversions of non-traditional buildings in the hinterland around Thurso. This area, defined on Map HAT 1, extends approximately 5 km. from the Settlement Boundary, where the Council will favour rehabilitation or redevelopment of redundant traditional buildings, subject to satisfactory servicing together with innovative management of the land under a Countryside Around Towns partnership (see 36).*

B: Business

20. *At the existing business park land is available for business and light industrial uses. The Council will favour the servicing of additional land to the south east for: further business development; and a business/conference/training centre, possibly with supporting residential accommodation, as part of the proposed town expansion area.*

Development should be accessed by early phases of the western distributor/bypass road which developers will be required to provide, together with a high standard of landscaping and relevant sections of a major remote footpath/cycle way adjacent to the Wolf Burn (see 15, 35c & 37).



Photo: Pennyland and the business park from the moors – informal recreation, by-pass route and housing land potential.

21. *At Pennyland Farm 1.2 ha. of land is allocated for a hotel. Detailed proposals should retain, respect and incorporate the Listed farm house and steading in the design and layout, as well as interpretation of the historic interest, possibly in a small museum to Sir William Smith and the Boys Brigade. An opportunity exists to create a well designed quality development in this key location adjacent to the A9 Trunk road. Vehicular access is preferred from Castlegreen Road and provision should be made for associated improvements, including upgrading of the junction with the A9. Associated outdoor*

recreation uses could be provided over adjoining land to the west to retain its open character (see 35b).

22. At the railway station it is proposed to convert the former shops into youth enterprise workshops.

23. In the event of the auction mart relocating from its present site (see Landward Area, 34), the Council will prepare a development brief with the owners to explore a range of alternative uses. In planning terms re-development for business/light industrial workshops, further education facilities, a community/arts centre and residential uses would be appropriate. Non-food retail warehousing would only be considered as part of a mixed development which incorporates the other appropriate uses and benefits the wider community.



Photo: Auction Mart

24. At Naver House permission has been

granted for conversion to a business centre to offer small office type units, common support facilities and residential accommodation (See also 14a).

I: Industry

25. At Ormlie industrial estate most of the remaining undeveloped land served by Henderson Street is available for light industrial purposes. The Council will also consider undertaking landscaping and general environmental improvement, as well as providing formal footpath connections to adjacent housing areas.

26. In the area to the east of the auction mart the Council will seek to promote environmental enhancement, better use and/or redevelopment where appropriate. Land adjoining the railway will be safeguarded for freight operations and other rail related developments

27. At the Janetstown industrial estate land is available for industrial uses. The Council will consider potential for expansion into the former quarries for external storage purposes, possibly stock piling connected with the oil industry, together with substantial landscaping/screen planting around the fringes.

S: Special Uses

28. Developers are required to construct consecutive phases of the Provost Cormack Drive to A836 link road in association with development of housing and business uses over land to the west of Pennyland (see 15, 20 & 37). This should accord with a detailed framework or

master plan and developers are required to construct the road up to the boundary of each phase of development. No buildings shall be sited within 10 metres of this road. The Council will consider the scope for traffic calming measures on the existing and future sections of Provost Cormack Drive as part of a 'Safer Routes to School' initiative.

29. A route for a western distributor road has been identified linking the A836 in the north and the B874 in the south. The distributor road will serve the western expansion area as shown in the Framework Plan. However, the road will be designed to be capable of extension, and upgrading if necessary, in order to allow for the provision of a Thurso by-pass. Preliminary investigations suggest a by-pass route starting from the southern approach of the A9 and heading west across the river from opposite the entrance to Stainland Farm towards the south side of the Dunbar Hospital. Here it would meet the western distributor road and pass over the Moors on the town side of the golf course to the east side of the business park. Finally the by-pass will extend northwards from the A836 road to Scrabster. An attempt should be made to retain traditional field enclosures and undertake appropriate earth mounding and planting to help integrate the distributor road, ultimately to become the by-pass, into the landscape. The Council will require developers to construct early phases of the distributor road from the A836 south as service access for business and housing over Pennyland.

30. Within 90 metres of the existing Waste Water Treatment Works, General Policy PP4 applies a presumption against further development not associated with drainage

improvements. NOSWA are considering a site for a new head works close to the mouth of the river. Expenditure of £10 million is currently programmed for 2002 to 2005.

31. The Council supports in principle the continuing expansion of the North Highland College, particularly as part of the University of the Highlands and Islands. However, the existing Thurso campus is becoming quite intensively developed. Further detailed proposals should avoid encroachment on to open space/recreation areas and will require additional parking in accordance with the Council's standards.

32. A feasibility study being carried out for Sports Scotland for the location of a Regional Sports Centre has identified two main options with considerable potential:

- (a) the existing Dounreay facilities at Viewfirth; and
- (b) open land adjacent to the swimming pool at Millbank.

33. An investigation of optional locations for a Caithness Community and Arts Centre is under way. The town of Thurso is one general location with the possibility. Potential may exist at Millbank through renovation and sympathetic extension of the old works adjacent to the existing small theatre (see 14d). The auction mart site at Ormlie Road is another possibility in the longer term (see 22).

34. The Council will consider the following locations as longer term options for the development of playing fields:-

- (a) Pennyland (north of A9 Trunk road, see 35b)
- (b) golf driving range

(c) Mountvernon (east of cemetery)
This should be part of a wider assessment of the supply of and demand for playing fields throughout the town, taking into account their quality, accessibility and size.

A: Amenity

35. The Council will protect and enhance major open spaces and amenity land in and around the town and, where appropriate, will encourage people to use and enjoy them. More specifically the Council will explore the availability of funding, including contributions from developers/owners of associated land, to:

- (a) improve the riverside park in the vicinity of the boating pond, as well as tree management;
- (b) develop open land to the north and south of the A836 at Pennyland Farm as a public park in the longer term, incorporating playing fields and a pitch and putt course (see 34a) where possible, the siting of all ancillary buildings will be rigorously controlled to ensure that the panoramic view across this area is maintained in its entirety;
- (c) extend a remote footpath network around the west side of the town, including the provision of sections in association with development and linkages across areas such as the Moors adjacent to Ormlie; and
- (d) restore the Lady Janet's Walk east long the coast towards Castletown, including tackling erosion and allowing public access past and beyond Thurso Castle.

36. Positive enhancement, improved access and education through interpretation of the surrounding countryside will be sought through a Countryside Around Towns partnership.

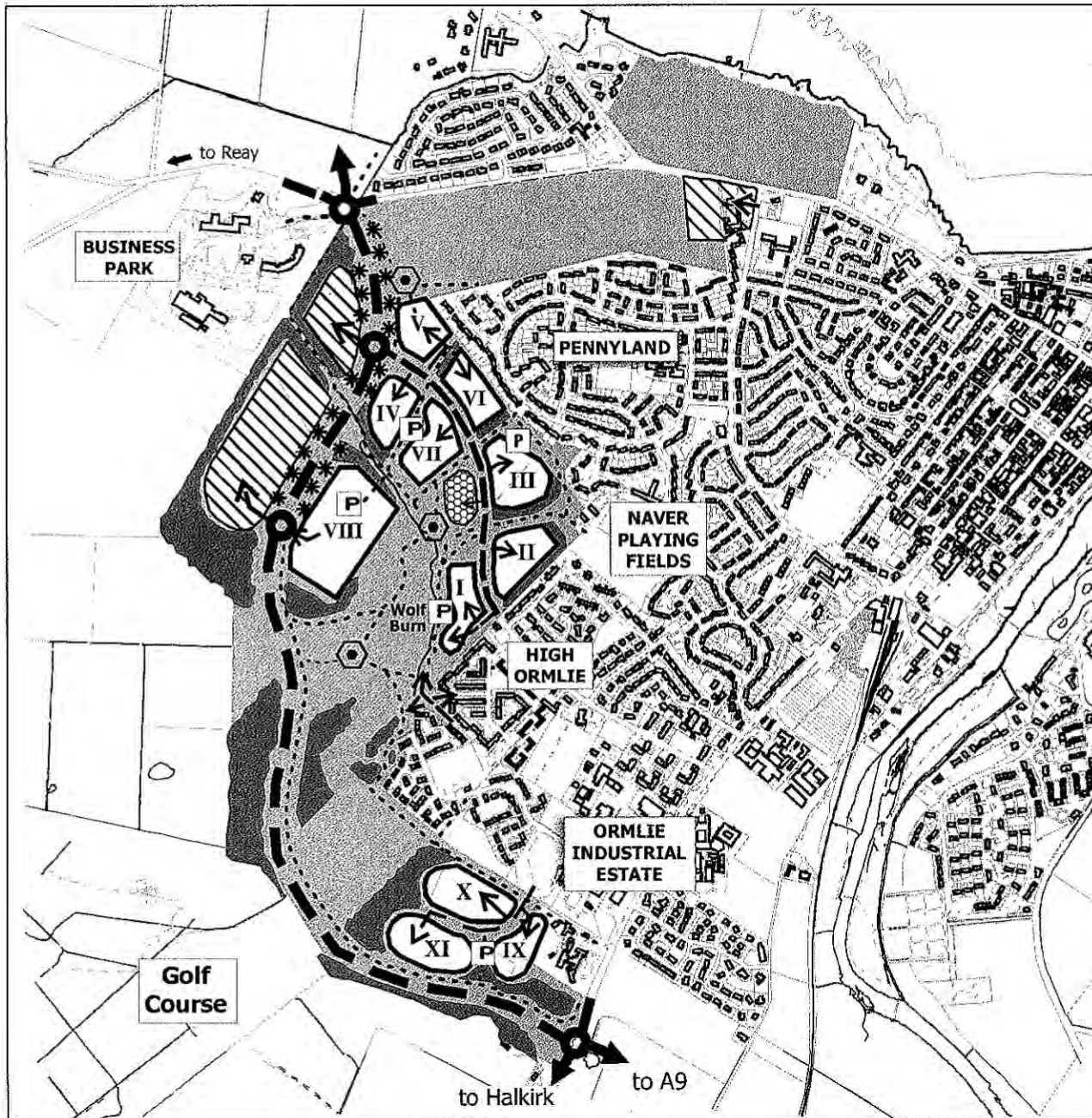


Photo: The Moors looking towards Ormlie – potential route of Western Distributor road and open space.

E: Town Expansion

37. Land is reserved for longer term housing and business development on the west side of the town. More specific reference is made under paragraphs 15 and 20. Proposals should comply with the Framework Plan. A Development Brief or Master Plan will be prepared for this area to include phasing and basic requirements. A major requirement is the construction of a link road from the A836 south through the area to Provost Cormack Drive in association with development phases. The Council will encourage substantial early structural tree planting around the fringes and between phases to help integrate the development into the landscape. A hydrological assessment will be required to determine the adequacy of any surface water drainage system.

Thurso Western Expansion Framework Plan



KEY

-  Western Distributor / By-Pass Road
-  A836 - Provost Cormack Link Road
-  Access
-  Remote Paths
-  Housing Phases
-  Business / Tourism
-  Community Facilities / Special Needs Housing
-  Open Space / Amenity / Farm Land
-  Play Area
-  Structural Tree Planting
-  Avenue / Occasional Trees
-  Viewpoint / Focal Point Interpretive Feature



0 100 200 300 400 500 metres

Developers/landowners will be expected to enter into legal Agreements to secure necessary access roads, footpaths, open space/recreation facilities and restrict development over land that should otherwise remain open. The Council will also expect that developments achieve an overall design that respects and complements the topography, characteristics and constraints of the site and its surroundings. In particular, built forms, circulation (notably via remote paths), green space and landscaping require to be integrated with each other as part of an overall concept. The detailed design and specification of individual buildings should also form part of a coherent overall design concept, including the clustering buildings. Development must be preceded by an archaeological evaluation.

Environmental Action

38. The Council's general policy for Conservation Areas will apply to the designated Area in central Thurso, which has 'Outstanding' status. It is also proposed to extend the existing Area to cover properties on the north side of Orlig Street towards the Police Station. A map of the Area (and proposed extension), the background to its designation, statutory powers and design guidance are contained in Appendix VI. Development should have regard to this and the Caithness shop front design guidance, as appropriate, and be carried out in accordance with the established character of the area. Proposals for stone cleaning, colour washing and floodlighting of buildings require prior discussion with the planning authority. The Council will seek to bring under Special Control, certain classes of development which would otherwise be 'permitted' without formal planning consent through an Article 4 Direction.

This would give scope for more specific action through a 'Town Scheme', which the Council will consider in consultation with Historic Scotland. Such a scheme could also assist efforts to encourage improvement or redevelopment, as appropriate, of buildings considered to be of poor design or otherwise inconsistent with the character of the area

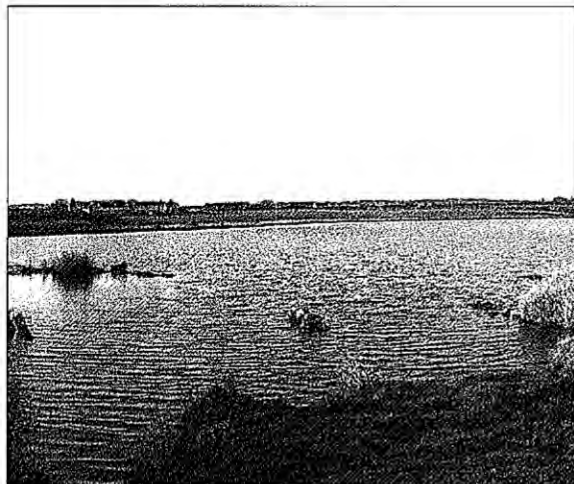
39. Redevelopment and enhancement of parts of the east bank of the river would considerably improve the appearance of this area, but it is accepted that due to industrial relocation this may take some years to achieve. In the meantime the Council will encourage the removal of river frontage dereliction and modest landscaping, as appropriate.



Photos: Above - Thurso Bay
Below - Riverside



13. WATTEN



Background

The village of Watten (pop. 320) lies on the south east shore of Loch Watten on the main A882(T) road between Wick and Thurso. With a primary school, Post Office, shop, hotel, hall and petrol station, the community acts as a local service centre to the largely agricultural population. Development has been limited in recent years, but the village is ideally located between Wick and Thurso to accommodate new housing. The Caithness Economic Partnership's strategy envisions a development corridor on the Dounreay – Thurso – Wick axis. Watten is ideally placed in this respect. However, there are servicing problems, particularly waste water treatment and low water pressure. Further expansion should await the completion of the proposed new sewage treatment works.

There has been piecemeal development along the A882 in recent years. There is a need to control this growth and direct development to more appropriate locations. Land immediately adjoining the primary school was previously allocated for development and has an existing access. Station Road offers an opportunity to use the existing road network and allow further development for limited investment, whilst the Council still has land at Bain Place.

Loch Watten immediately to the north is a key nature conservation site as well as an important recreational facility and tourist attraction. Other important amenity features are the trees around the church and manse. The trees in the village are now mature and a planting scheme for the village would be of benefit. The former garage is now something of an eyesore. Redevelopment for a new business use or housing would be appropriate.

Community Input

The main concerns of the community put forward at community workshops in the Spring of 1998 were:

- provision of sheltered housing;
- tree planting / community woodland;
- road improvements, particularly speed limits and passing places;
- demolition of the old garage; and
- a pavement at Station Road.

Development Factors

Expansion of the village is constrained by:

- the natural barriers to the north and east of Loch Watten and the Wick River;
- to the south and west by good agricultural land; and
- the need to prevent linear development beyond the current edge of the village.

Objectives

The Plan seeks to:

- identify sufficient land to accommodate 45 houses over the next 15 years;
- discourage any further linear development along the A882(T).
- identify land for a new waste water treatment works;
- safeguard the surrounding countryside notably the good agricultural land;
- maintain and enhance the trees and hedgerows in and around the village; and
- protect the setting of Loch Watten;

Policies

In the built up area of the village, Primary Policies and Settlement Policies apply as shown on the Inset Map. Site and area specific policies, proposals and development opportunities are as follows.

H: Housing

1. The Council will encourage further infill housing development subject to Settlement Policy H.

2. The following sites in Table 2 are allocated for housing:

LOCATION	Area (Ha.)	COMMENTS
(a) Bain Place	0.5	<i>This site has potential for sheltered / affordable housing.</i>
(b) Station Road	1	<i>Developers/Owners will require to widen road to 5.5m and provide footpath.</i>
(c) North of the A882	0.5	<i>A further 3 plots will be allowed. An access should be retained to the backland for potential future development as shown on the Proposals Map. Access to the sites must avoid conflict with the Bain Place access.</i>

B: Business

3. *Land at the former garage is allocated for business uses. It would also have potential for infill housing.*

S: Special Uses

4. *The North of Scotland Water Authority intend to construct a new waste water treatment works just outwith the village on the Wick River opposite Henderson Square. Provision is made in their Capital Programme for this project in 2000/01 at a cost of £300,000.*

E: Village Expansion

5. *The sites in Table 5 below are allocated for the expansion of the village.*

A: Amenity

6. *The Council will protect important open spaces and amenity areas, particularly:*

- (a) *open spaces along the A882;*
- (b) *playing field / play areas;*
- (c) *important trees; and*
- (d) *open space at Henderson Square.*

LOCATION	Area (Ha.)	CAPACITY	COMMENTS
(a) North west of Primary School	1.5	15 - 25	<i>Await new foul drainage system. Phase with any necessary improvements to the water supply. Overall framework plan incorporating details of internal road layout; access as shown on the inset map, boundary tree planting and open space standards.</i>
(b) Banks Road	3	25 - 30	<i>Await new foul drainage system but separate disposal for surface water. Phase with any necessary improvements to the water supply. Overall framework plan incorporating details of internal road layout, access as shown on the inset map, path link to hall, boundary planting and open space standards.</i>



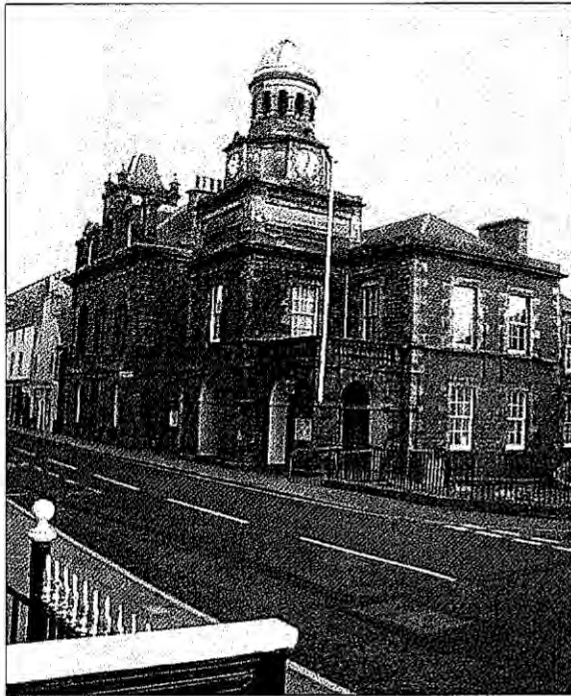
Photo: Housing land at Station Road

Environmental Action

7. *The Council will encourage tree planting within the village, particularly along the A882 (T) and the proposed new housing areas.*

8. *The Council will give consideration to traffic calming measures at the entrances to the village as resources permit.*

14. WICK



Background

The town of Wick (popn. 8500) has a long history. Declared a Royal Burgh in 1589, the basic medieval plan of the town still survives with its High Street and rear lanes. The growth of the burgh was stimulated by the construction in 1810 of a harbour and the subsequent development of Pulteneytown by the British Fisheries Society. By the mid 19th century Wick dominated the European herring trade, becoming the largest herring port in Europe. The fishing declined in the 20th century and the burgh lost a key element of its prosperity.

The town now faces several problems. Population has seen a slow decline over the last 30 years, long term and youth unemployment remain high; fishing is in decline with the exception of shellfish; oil related activity fluctuates markedly, the town centre faces difficulties and many larger businesses rely on external markets. Equally, the town has a number of strengths - a wide economic base, air links to the rest of the UK and on to Europe, plentiful industrial land, a nationally known business in Caithness Glass, well known distillery and a good labour force. Potential exists to promote business and technology expansion, the tourism sector, food processing using quality Caithness products and harbour and airport related activity. The town is also being actively promoted as a location for public sector employment. A new high quality business park is also necessary to help the town attract new jobs and remain competitive.

A sub regional service and shopping centre, providing the main administrative and medical functions for the County, Wick has all the main community facilities, including a general hospital, swimming pool and reasonable shopping facilities. Together with Thurso, the town acts as a counter to the draw of Inverness. The town centre has suffered in recent years and there is now a vital need to promote a vibrant, safe and high quality shopping experience. The Wick Project has made substantial strides in this direction since it was formed in 1993. Nevertheless further efforts are needed. A key issue is the need to guide major development to the central area to reinforce commercial activity and attract new investment. However, infill sites are small and limited. Larger scale development will only be possible through demolition and redevelopment. The main opportunity is the

Council offices at Market Place. These are in poor condition and offer potential for a variety of uses. In the meantime efforts should be concentrated on offering a greater range, quality and convenience of services, improving accessibility and upgrading the environment, including streetscape and buildings. One opportunity in this regard is the provision of a town centre manager. Such posts have been successful elsewhere in Scotland and a joint post with Thurso would help promote both centres. Once resources permit, it is intended to undertake a health check of the performance of Wick town centre and thereafter, in conjunction with the Wick Project, prepare a town centre strategy.

Major infrastructure works have been completed over the last decade, notably the town centre pedestrianisation and the new road system and swimming pool in Pulteneytown. Funds are also now in place to carry out remedial works to the harbour, with plans in hand to upgrade the sewage treatment works. Proposals for new community facilities for the County are generally being identified in Thurso, notably the new indoor sports centre and the possible community arts centre. Such facilities will serve the wider NW Sutherland area as well as Caithness. Wick itself would benefit from a new indoor sports facility on a smaller scale than the Thurso proposal since the proposal some years ago to convert the hangar fell through. Further open space / sports facilities to the north of the river would also be of benefit. Suggestions have also been made for a weir on the Wick River which would improve its appearance and allow for further recreational use. Recent investigations indicate that, in the short term, this is unlikely to be feasible. However, the potential benefits

suggest that the idea should be borne in mind for the longer term.

Lower Pulteneytown is a key part of the burgh's heritage. Conceived by Thomas Telford for the British Fisheries Society in the early 19th century, the layout is still clearly in evidence today as are many original buildings. The area is almost entirely without precedent as an early industrial estate and is of national importance. It contains a wide mix of uses from houses and shops to offices and small industrial premises. Since its boom period in the 19th century, the area has suffered considerably from neglect and the effects of economic change. Many buildings are empty. Others are derelict and a regeneration scheme is a priority. The area does offer opportunities for conversion and redevelopment to provide sites for new houses and businesses. However, a strategy is urgently needed to safeguard this unique heritage, as well as fully realising its social and economic potential.

Housing development has been slow but steady with an average of around 20 houses built each year. Most recent new houses have been developed at Broadhaven. This is nearing capacity and further land is needed. Projections suggest a need for around 450 house sites in and around Wick by 2017, including an element for choice and flexibility. A portion will be developed in the countryside, particularly within the smaller settlements and through the use of vacant and derelict property. There are options for infill development, particularly for flats, at Lower Pulteneytown and, on a more limited basis, the town centre. Recycling existing brownfield sites and rehabilitating existing houses can contribute significantly to sustainability and help promote a lively town centre. Projections

suggest that there will be a demand for such smaller homes throughout the Highlands over the next 20 years as household size continues to fall. Such development can accommodate part of the overall demand, but many people will still be looking for a larger plot on the margins of the town. Land remains at Broadhaven and Hillhead. Nevertheless, further greenfield land will be needed. There are no major servicing constraints on land on the margins of the town. Analysis of the main constraints suggest that the best opportunities lie to the south of the town at Oldwick.

The Wick river is a key element in the townscape, bringing a green wedge almost to the heart of the town. It needs to be protected and enhanced, particularly as it opens up into the bay along the North and South Heads. Both headlands offer low key walking opportunities, but the latter in particular suffers from dereliction. An environmental improvement scheme would be welcome. The river could also be improved through the construction of a weir. Only the area around Argyle Square is covered by a Conservation Area. However, Lower Pulteneytown is a major part of the town's heritage. Extending the Conservation Area in this direction would help ensure recognition of the historic layout, the mix of uses and the quality of the buildings. The town centre also contains many fine buildings, including various banks and churches and the Old Parish Church. This is also the site of the original medieval settlement and has a high archaeological potential. A Conservation Area would help safeguard this heritage. The surrounding countryside is also important to the town, providing the landscape setting. The new Structure Plan supports the introduction of a Countryside Around Towns

partnership initiative. In this area farming and other existing land uses are expected to continue for the foreseeable future. However, measures towards diversification and future management for recreation will be encouraged including



Photos: Key elements of Wick Conservation Area

Above - Argyle Square

Below - Lower Pulteneytown



extensive structural tree planting, formation or improvement of paths, and the conversion of redundant buildings.

Community Input

The main concerns of the community put forward at community workshops in the Spring of 1998 were:

- environmental improvements, particularly along the riverside and in Lower Pulteneytown;
- protection of farmland on the margins of the town;
- traffic calming, particularly along Louisburgh Street and Willowbank;
- new housing in Lower Pulteneytown and on the southern margins of the burgh, particularly affordable housing;
- small businesses and car parking in Lower Pulteneytown;
- improved sports facilities, especially indoor facilities;
- key issues in the countryside were provision of cycle routes, environmental improvements, protection of croftland and improved tourist facilities.

Development Factors

A comprehensive assessment of the burgh shows the main constraints and opportunities as follows:

North west: Large area of prime agricultural land to the south of the existing industrial estate; very open but with good views across the river; relatively close to town centre but distant from local school; direct access to the A99 and close to



Photos: Development Factors

Left Prime agricultural land at Westerseat Farm

Middle Southern entrance to the town: good agricultural land, culvert upgrade needed

Right South Head

the airport; drainage requires upgrading; southern boundary adjoins Lower Wick River SSSI.

North east: extensive area of good farmland between the industrial estate and the Staxigoe Road; access and servicing feasible but close to the industrial estate and Wick airport flight path; main views to the north; outwith the natural enclosure of the town; distant from the secondary school, leisure facilities and the town centre.

South west: Area of open agricultural ground stretching from the A99 to the Wick river and rising generally north to south; substantial area is prime land; access and drainage are both viable with the exception of the ground to the south of the hospital where a major culvert upgrade is needed; views across the town higher up but very restricted closer to the built up area; close to both primary and secondary schools

South east: Area of open agricultural land stretching from the A99 to the South Head; access

and drainage feasible with the exception of a small area adjoining the cemetery where a new culvert is required; close to local primary school but distant from town centre; some views to the south; development east of the coastguard houses outwith natural enclosure of the town; grid iron development pattern which should be preserved.

Objectives

The Plan seeks to:

- identify land for a new high quality business park convenient to the airport and road network;
- allocate other industrial land;
- support expansion and upgrading of the harbour;
- support air related developments at the airport and nearby industrial estates;
- identify land for up to 450 houses;
- promote a regeneration strategy for Lower Pulteneytown;

- promote a healthy and vibrant town centre and identify potential retail sites;
- protect and enhance recreational areas, particularly along the riverside and at North and South Head;
- promote Conservation Areas for the town centre and Lower Pulteneytown;
- promote the upgrading of the waste water treatment works; and
- protect the margins of the town from ad hoc development; and promote a Countryside Around Town project including improved management and access to the countryside fringe for recreational purposes, including a network of footpaths/cycle ways.

Policies

In the built up area of the town, Primary Policies and Settlement Policies apply as shown on the Inset Map. Site and area specific policies, proposals and development opportunities are as follows.

C: Town Centre

1. *The Council intends to work with the Wick Project to prepare a Town Centre Strategy that will aim to:*

- *maintain and strengthen the town's role as a sub-regional shopping and business centre;*
- *maintain and improve the physical environment;*
- *provide a high level of accessibility for all users by a range of transport modes.*
- *protect established residential areas and encourage additional housing;*
- *identify and promote development*

opportunities; and

- *undertake effective management and promotion.*



Photos: Town centre uses
Above - Council offices, pedestrian priority
Below - Car parking / rehabilitation



2. *Within the defined commercial core area (see Inset), the Council will:*

- *give the highest priority to improving the viability of the shopping centre;*
- *encourage the addition, renovation, modernisation or replacement of floorspace needed to accommodate changing shopping patterns;*
- *encourage office development, particularly through the re-use of vacant upper floors;*
- *presume against further ground floor office and other non-retail uses in the main shopping areas of Bridge Street and High Streets, where they would interrupt continuous retail frontages; and*
- *promote supplementary design guidance[#] for shop front design and signage with priority implementation to be encouraged in High Street, the pedestrian precinct, Town Hall Square and all other Listed commercial buildings.*

3. *An opportunity exists to redevelop the site of the Highland Council offices at Market Place. Although the buildings are not listed, Market Place is a key part of the townscape. It is a high profile site and any development must be compatible with the scale and massing of the surrounding buildings, some of which are listed. The Council will therefore expect a high quality development, which must take account of the following:*

- *a mix of uses including retail, office and housing;*
- *3 storey building;*

[#] The Caithness Frontage Guidelines for Commercial and Retail Properties are separate from the Plan and available from the local Service Points.

- *natural stone / slate finishes;*
- *maintenance of the existing street pattern – developers should give careful consideration to retaining the existing curved façade;*
- *take advantage of the riverside prospect; and*
- *parking to the rear in a courtyard or underground.*

4. *The Post Office building is currently empty. The premises are listed and the Council will strongly resist proposals for demolition. The building has potential for conversion to a variety of uses subject to maintaining the character and integrity of the building. Possible uses include flats, offices, community or commercial uses.*

5. *Safeway intend to extend their existing store subject to agreement with the Council on parking facilities.*

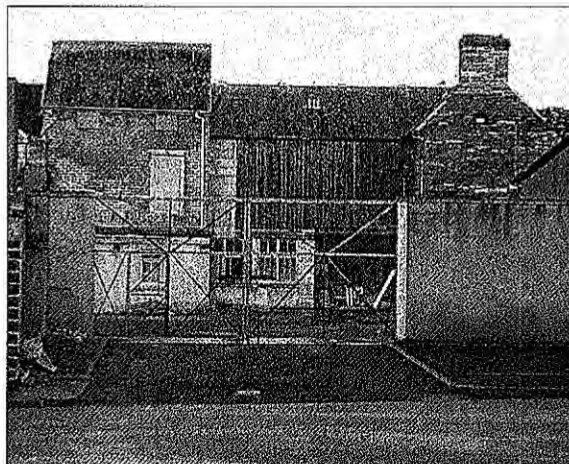
6. *Land is allocated at Scalesburn for the development of a hotel complex for which planning permission has been granted.*

7. *The bulk of the environmental and road improvements to the town centre have been completed. Opportunities for further work remain, although no funds have been allocated. These include:*

- *widening of Shore Lane;*
- *upgrading the lanes which lead onto High Street;*
- *improvements to the landscaped areas at Market Street and MacLeay Lane; and*
- *examining ways of improving rear elevations, particularly those facing the river.*



Photos: Infill housing opportunities in Lower Pulteneytown
Above: former North Eastern Farmers depot.
Below: former NOSWA depot



8. *An area of archaeological interest covers an extensive area around the town centre. Development or redevelopment proposals must allow for archaeological assessment, preservation or excavation of remains, as appropriate.*

9. *The Council has prepared design guidance for shop front design and signage throughout the County. Developers will be expected to take account of these when considering their proposals.*

10. *In the residential areas of the town centre the Council will:*

- *protect and enhance their settled character and amenity;*
- *favour refurbishment, extension or redevelopment of properties for residential purposes;*
- *presume against the introduction of further non-residential uses, notably office development, and have regard to the impact of any such uses proposed for adjoining land; and*
- *consider environmental enhancement, including traffic calming and further restrictions on non-residents parking.*

H: **Housing**

11. *There are a number of "brownfield" sites within the town with potential for conversion / redevelopment for housing particularly flats. These are listed in Table 11. Capacity is for guidance only and may be altered depending on the individual proposal. There are also opportunities for rehabilitation / modernisation of houses, especially in Lower Pulteneytown.*

12. *Greenfield land allocated for new housing is shown on Table 12.*

Site	Capacity	Comments
(a) Former NE Farmers	9 - 12	<i>Pilot Project for the Empty Homes Initiative. Proposals should accord with the design guidance in Annex VII.</i>
(b) Former NOSWA yard and offices	30	<i>Mix of flats and community uses, including play area. Element of retail / offices would be acceptable. See Framework Plan.</i>
(c) Burn Street / Harbour Quay	30	<i>Planning permission for 24 flats. Potential to extend into Fountain Forestry depot and offices, subject to relocation. Proposals should accord with the design guidance in Annex VII.</i>
(d) Bank Row	8	<i>Proposals should accord with the design guidance in Annex VII.</i>
(e) Bank Row – Celtic Waters	25	<i>Depends on relocation to more suitable site. Also has potential for other uses including extension of Heritage Centre. Proposals should accord with the design guidance in Annex VII.</i>
(f) Former Laundry	10 - 12	<i>Part of original site now as High School car park. Could combine with redevelopment of radio station site (m).</i>
(g) Auction Mart	15	
(h) W.A. Geddes yard, buildings & telephone exchange		<i>Depends upon relocation of existing uses. Potential for flats in conjunction with other business / small scale retail/ commercial / tourist developments. Potential may exist for a call centre in the telephone exchange, subject to redesign in keeping with its location within the Conservation Area. Proposals should accord with the design guidance in Annex VII.</i>
(i) Rear of the Abattoir	3 - 4	
(j) Abattoir	3 - 4	<i>Depends upon relocation.</i>
(k) Former Caithness Glass site	10	
(l) D.M. Steven's depot	25	<i>Depends upon relocation of existing uses. Potential for flats in conjunction with other business / commercial / tourist uses. Opportunities for business/retail use also exist. Proposals should accord with the design guidance in Annex VII.</i>
(m) Radio Station buildings	15 – 20	<i>Assumes smaller houses on 0.6 ha.. Could also combine with remainder of former laundry site (f). Alternative potential for business /office or sports barn (see 28). Foul sewage from existing and new properties to the Wick main system and separate surface water arrangements. If family housing, proposals must incorporate a play area.</i>

Site	Area (ha.)	Capacity	Comments
(a) Broadhaven	1.25	10	
(b) Broadhaven East	4	40	<i>Proposals must incorporate an area 0.5ha for a kickabout pitch/play space which could be sited within the adjacent waste water treatment plant safeguarding area (see 25)</i>
(c) Hillhead	5	50	<i>Proposals must accord with the Development Brief prepared in 1991</i>
(d) South Road	1.2	12 - 15	<i>No development will be allowed until such times as the culvert in the A99 is improved.</i>
(e) south west of Mowat Pl., Papigoe	0.75	7 – 8	<i>Connect to Wick drainage system and widen Mowat Place for access.</i>

13. In accordance with policy H3 of the Structure Plan, the Council will not permit new housing and conversions of non-traditional buildings in the hinterland around Wick. This area, defined on Map HAT 2, extends at least 5 km. from the Settlement Boundary. The Council will favour rehabilitation or redevelopment of redundant traditional buildings, subject to satisfactory servicing together with innovative management of the land under a Countryside Around Towns partnership.

B: Business

14. 14ha. is allocated at Lochshell for a high quality Business Park. In August 2000 planning permission was granted for the first phase layout and servicing. Proposals must:

- take access from the A99;
- provide a high quality landscape setting with a strong element of tree planting;
- emphasise the site's "gateway" setting at the entrance to the burgh;
- provide for a green wedge to mark the entrance to the site; and
- ensure buildings are of a quality design.

15. The former bus depot is safeguarded for business uses compatible with adjoining dairy business. Alternatively it may offer a redevelopment opportunity for flats.

16. The site at South Road also has potential for use for a small hotel subject to surface water drainage improvements.

17. Land to the north of Wellington Avenue would be suitable for a high quality single user office development incorporating extensive open

space and landscaping.

I: Industry

18. The remaining land at Wick Industrial Estate is allocated for industrial uses including 14ha. to the east of the airport access road. This would be suitable for a Food Park concentrating on quality products from Caithness.

19. The Council will support the expansion of development directly related to the provision of passenger and freight services from Wick airport and to the movement and maintenance of aircraft where these do not significantly affect the amenity of adjoining residents. The retention and improvement of existing facilities is important in this regard.

20. The Council will promote development and facilities related to the business use of the airport, including air related business uses, where these do not significantly affect the amenity of adjoining residents.

21. Land adjoining the railway will be safeguarded for freight operations and other rail related developments.

S: Special Uses

22. The Council is undertaking harbour stabilisation/protection work in conjunction with the Harbour Trust at a cost of £3m.

23. The previous Local Plan supported significant extension to the harbour, including improvement of the fish market, provision of new breakwaters and additional back up land through reclamation. Although such works are

not likely to be carried out within the timescale of the Plan, the Council will encourage and support the expansion of the harbour. Shorter term opportunities include:

- provision of pontoons;
- upgrading of slipway; and
- improvements to the Camps slipway.

In the longer term there may be scope for the provision of further back up land encompassing the harbours fishing, oil supply, fabrication, boat repairs and general transport functions.

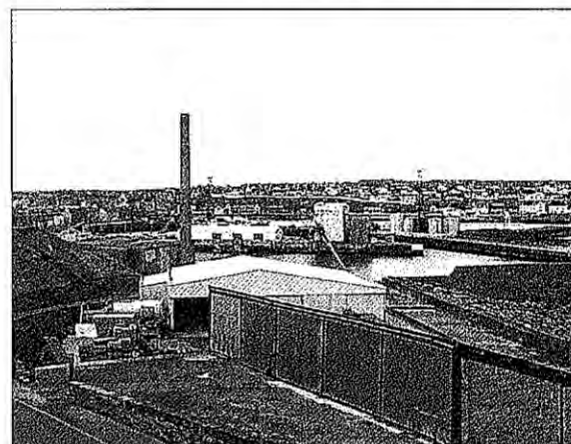


Photo: Wick Harbour

24. The Council intends to carry out remedial works to Wick Harbour Bridge at a cost of £275,000 in 2002/2003.

25. The North of Scotland Water Authority intends to upgrade the Sewage treatment works at North Head at a cost of £2.6 million in 2001 to 2003. Development will be restricted within 90 metres of the works.

26. Suggestions have been made in the past to create a more direct link to the harbour via the road to the west of the cemetery. Although there are no funds available at present, the Council will investigate the potential as resources permit.

27. The Council intend to create an all weather pitch in Wick. No decision has been taken on whether this will be upgrading of an existing pitch or provision of a new facility.

28. The council supports the provision of a "sports barn" facility in Wick subject to completion of a feasibility study, identification of a suitable site and the necessary financial resources. Potential sites are on the industrial land to the east of the airport road and adjoining Wick High School.

E: Town Expansion

29. The following sites are allocated for the expansion of the Burgh. Proposals should generally seek to maintain the existing grid layout pattern. The Council will encourage substantial early structural tree planting to help integrate the sites into the landscape. Built forms, circulation, green space and landscaping require to be integrated with each other as part of an overall concept. The design of built form and selection of materials should take account of the traditional architecture of the Burgh. Where appropriate, developers will be responsible for completing the public road, water distribution and sewerage systems to the limits of their respective boundaries in the interest of the proper servicing of the area. Play space / open space should meet the standards set out in the Policy Annex.

Site	Area (Ha.)	Capacity	Comments
(a) South Head	8.7	100	Consider scope for relocating or retaining the BMX track prior to the site being required for development.
(b) Roxburgh Road	4	15 – 20	Proposals should protect and incorporate the burn into the development as a feature; the archaeological site on the western boundary will require further investigation.
(c) Oldwick	8.8	80	
(d) Roxburgh Road East	8	80	Long term allocation. Development will not be allowed until the above sites have been substantially completed or if insurmountable difficulties arise with development of the brownfield sites at Lower Pulteneytown.
(e) Oldwick East	8	80	Longer term development following sites (a) to (d). Some pumping of foul drainage may be required.

30. The Council will restrict further expansion of the town outwith its natural setting in the following areas:

- (a) to the east of the coastguard houses; and
- (b) north and east of Hillhead Farm.

Environmental Action

31. In May 2000 the Council extended Wick Conservation Area to cover Pulteneytown and the harbour. An Article 4 Direction is proposed over the whole area. The Council also recommends that Historic Scotland consider designating the Conservation Area as "Outstanding" and thereafter introduce a "Town Scheme" to promote enhancement with grant assistance. Development should have regard to the Design Guidance set out in Annex VIII.

32. The Council proposes to designate a Conservation Area in Wick Town Centre and place an Article 4 Direction over the whole area.

33. The Council supports the strategy prepared by the Wick Project for Lower Pulteneytown which provides guidance on land use and design principles for new development, together with potential conversion / redevelopment sites. Development opportunities are identified in the Lower Pulteneytown Heritage Strategy* Framework Plan. Some are dependent on the relocation of existing uses. Within Lower Pulteneytown, the Council will:

- retain the existing street pattern and hard frontage;
- encourage the restoration of existing buildings in preference to demolition or redevelopment;
- support proposals which contribute to the regeneration of Lower Pulteneytown;

* Copies available from the Wick Project Office, 34A High Street, Wick

- *encourage proposals for tourist related / commercial developments along Harbour Quay;*
- *encourage the repair and upgrading of older housing stock;*
- *support the conversion of existing buildings to residential use where appropriate;*
- *support the provision of new housing under the Empty Homes Initiative;*
- *discourage large scale commercial developments which are not compatible with the grid iron layout;*
- *encourage the relocation of non-conforming uses to more suitable premises on designated industrial estates; and*
- *encourage a scheme of environmental improvements*

34. *The Council will encourage the preparation of a Management / Action Plan for the Wick River corridor, including North and South Head to improve public access, recreation and amenity. This should link through Lower Pulteneytown and the harbour and examine the potential for environmental improvements and upgrading of existing facilities, including the footpaths, provision of a boating pond and removal of dereliction. In the longer term, if funds become available, provision of a carefully located and designed weir, accounting for the potential environmental impact on the river, would be of benefit to the town.*



*Above: Wick Heritage Centre, Lower Pulteneytown
Below: Wick River*





APPENDICES

1870

1870

1870

APPENDIX III

Castlehill/Shelly Hill, Castletown: Development Guidelines For New Housing

In order to achieve the layout and design embodied in the Framework Plan, the Council will apply the following principles to its development:

- Supporting Policies and Standards for residential development and open space indicated in the Local Plans General Policies Annex; and
- more specific development guidelines indicated below.

Overall

The development should aim to incorporate the use of flagstone in different ways. There is an opportunity for demonstration of the use of this locally available material in a modern housing development. This could help boost the local market, which would be more sustainable in the longer term and help to create more jobs in the industry. It should include a gateway/entrance feature showing the use of the stone in the construction of a low wall, pillars and a traffic calming measure. Within the development the construction of houses of traditional appearance is encouraged although this does not rule out adapted timber frame buildings. The construction of buildings entirely from stone is not advocated, therefore. Occasional use in wall features and boundary enclosures would be welcomed. Low walls along the frontage boundaries should be consistent in their appearance from plot to plot.

The use of flagstone in driveways and paths is also preferred.

Density: should not exceed 10 dwellings per hectare.

Plot Ratio

A maximum plot ratio of 30% (expressed as total building floorspace divided by plot area) will be permitted.

Building Lines

- 10 metres minimum from rear of house to rear boundary.
- 10 metres minimum from front of house to front boundary (after accounting for public footpath provision).
- 1 metre minimum at the sides, but 2 metres minimum if windows are proposed on these elevations

Form

- Buildings should have a rectangular plan.
- Underbuilding should be kept to a minimum.
- Single and 1½ storeys should predominate with 2 storey maximum.
- A southerly orientation should be sought.
- Storm porches/extensions should have similar proportions/finishes to the houses.

Gable, Roof Pitches & Roof Design Features

- The overall width of a gable should not be more than 2.5 times the height of wall from ground to eaves level and not less than the height of wall from ground to eaves level.
- A strong 45° pitch is preferred, with all properties achieving 40 - 55°.
- Slate is preferred but artificial slate or small tiles of smooth blue/grey/black finish are

acceptable.

- Large overhanging eaves are unacceptable.
- Ridge vents should be used.
- Box dormers are not acceptable.
- Chimney stacks should be located on gable walls central to the roof ridge line.

Walls

- Stone and/or wet dash harling are preferred.
- Feature panels of artificial stone or other ornamental materials are not acceptable.
- Windows and door openings should have a vertical emphasis.
- Windows should be small and set back from the face of the wall.
- Colour should be in the range of white/grey/buff.

Boundaries

- In front garden areas where boundary enclosures are proposed they should be constructed from flagstone and not exceed 1 metre in height. Alternatively the gardens be grassed and not enclosed.
- Screen and link walls should be of stone or harled with a stone coping.
- Post and wire fencing or hedging is acceptable on minor boundaries.
- Modern ranch panelling and chain link fences should be avoided.

Ancillary Facilities

Outbuildings, sheds, bin storage, bunkers and drying greens should be provided to the rear and screened as appropriate from adjacent development.

The Council will impose appropriate planning conditions and, if required, enter into a Section 75 Agreement, to ensure that these standards are adhered to.

APPENDIX IV

Halkirk Development Guidelines

The Council will require all development proposals, including extensions, to make a sympathetic contribution to maintaining character of the village by conforming to:

- Supporting Policies and Standards for residential development and open space indicated in the Local Plans General Policies Annex; and
- more specific development guidelines indicated below.

1. All Housing Areas

Density: should not exceed 10 dwellings per hectare. For guidance, the number of houses per 3 hectare grid square should be in the range of 25-30. This is equivalent to 4-5 per 0.5 hectare block.

Plot Ratio

A maximum plot ratio of 30% (expressed as total building floorspace divided by plot area) will be permitted.

Form

- Buildings should have a rectangular plan.
- Underbuilding should be kept to a minimum.
- Single and 1½ storeys should predominate.
- Storm porches/extensions should have similar proportions/finishes to the houses.

Gable, Roof Pitches & Design Features

- The overall width of a gable should not be more than 2.5 times the height of wall from ground to eaves level and not less than the height of wall from ground to eaves level.
- The roof pitch should be in the range 35° - 55° and ideally be between 40° and 45°. Large overhanging eaves should be avoided. As such the roof will be more effective against wind and rain and should require less maintenance, as well as provide additional usable space.
- Slate is preferred but artificial slate or small tiles of smooth blue/grey/black finish are acceptable.
- Box dormers are not acceptable.
- Where chimney stacks are proposed their location on gable walls central to the roof ridge line is preferred.

Walls

- Facing materials should be chosen for their durability and weather resistant qualities.
- The use of natural stone and/or harling is encouraged.
- Use of garish colours to be avoided and should generally be in the range of white/grey/buff.
- Feature panels of artificial stone or other ornamental materials are not acceptable.
- Windows and door openings on the existing street and lane frontages should have a vertical emphasis.

Boundaries

- The conservation and reconstruction of traditional local boundary materials is encouraged.

- Retain existing stone walls or rebuild if set back as appropriate.
- Co-ordinated frontage and boundary treatment, particularly along existing road frontages is preferred.
- Fences and walls should not exceed 1m in front gardens and 2m in rear gardens.
- Modern ranch panelling and chain link fences are not appropriate.

Ancillary Facilities

Outbuildings, sheds, bin storage, bunkers and drying greens should be provided to the rear and screened as appropriate from adjacent development.

Access:

Standards to be advised by the Area Roads and Transport Service. These will vary across the village depending upon:

- the width of existing lanes;
- the number of existing accesses; and
- the standard or nature of existing footpath provision.

Developers will also be expected to enter into formal Agreements to contribute towards minor road/pedestrian safety improvements, including traffic calming measures (see policies 3, 4 & 16 in Halkirk Statement).

Public Open Space & Minor Road Improvements

In accordance with policies 3,4 and 17 in the Halkirk Statement, developers will be expected to enter into formal Agreements to contribute towards the provision of open space, recreational facilities and minor road/pedestrian safety improvements. Developer contributions are on the basis of the following: -

- up to 2 apartment - £200 per house
- 3/4 apartments - £400 per house
- 5/6 apartments - £600 per house
- 7 + apartments - £800 per house

[Definition of apartment – living room/lounge, dining room, family room, bedroom or study]

Services

- Developers will be responsible for consulting the North of Scotland Water Authority for specific water and drainage requirements.
- Developers will be responsible for consulting with the electricity and telephone companies for the provision of these services.
- Remaining overhead services will be undergrounded as development proceeds.

2. Gap Sites in Crescent, Sinclair, Church, George, Camilla & Bridge Streets

The scale, details and materials of new houses and extensions in gap sites on the frontages of these streets should harmonise with existing traditional properties and accord with the guidance outlined under 1 above. In addition, **new houses** should:

- maintain as far as possible the original or established street frontage line;
- in appropriate cases, maintain the traditional streetscape relationship of footpath,

- grass/landscape strip, house and rear garden;
- preferably have off street parking behind the building line;
- in Camilla Street and other locations where lay-bys are required along the frontage, these should be a minimum of 2.5 metres in width with a further 1.5 metres for pedestrians.

3. Development on Backland and Lane Frontages

In addition to the guidelines indicated in 1. above the following will apply to development on the backland areas and frontages of Church and Sinclair Lanes, as identified in the Framework Plan: -

Building Lines

- 10 metres minimum from rear of house to rear boundary.
- 6 metres minimum from front of house to front boundary (after accounting for any widening of lanes and public footpath provision).
- 1metre minimum at the sides, but 2 metres minimum if windows are proposed on these elevations

Access will be subject to availability of adequate visibility at junctions.

- Single accesses serving more than four dwellings should be provided to adoption standards.
- Shared access points onto Bridge Street, Church Lane, and Sinclair Lane will be required wherever possible.
- Indicative points of access and preferred road layouts are shown on the Framework Plan.

These should be provided to adoption standards (an absolute minimum of 3.3m wide and 3.7m wide if the access exceeds 40 metres in length) incorporating a footpath, 1.5 m. wide minimum, and suitable turning area.

- Application of management techniques that reduce the volume and speed of traffic, including use of shared surface culs-de-sac will be advised in appropriate cases.

Street Lighting within internal layouts will be provided by the developer to adoption standards.

The Council will impose appropriate planning conditions and, where appropriate, enter into a Section 75 Agreement, to ensure that these standards are adhered to.

APPENDIX V

Draft Design Guidelines for Lybster Conservation Area

General

The Council will seek to maintain and enhance the historic qualities of Lybster Conservation Area. It will seek to avoid unnecessary demolition or unsympathetic alterations to historic property. It will encourage the continued active and appropriate use of buildings and their setting.

Original Building Features

Renovation and reconstruction must seek to retain original building features. Existing stone walls and traditional pointing should be retained and maintained. Where repairs are necessary, they should be carried out in natural stonework to match.

Harmonisation

Where new construction is involved profile sheet cladding; artificial stone cladding; UPVC windows or similar artificial materials should not be used.

New Buildings

New development must be integrated sympathetically into the area in terms of scale, design and materials and must respect and contribute to the character of the area.

Extensions and Alterations

These must also aim to harmonise with the existing buildings in terms of scale, design and materials and should respect the pattern and form of the original layout of buildings and their the relationship between existing buildings.

Details

The original **roof pitches, ridge lines and skew** should be retained. Roof pitches should range between 45° and 55°. The traditional roofing material is likely to be West Highland slate, Welsh slate or local Caithness slate. Second hand slate, used with re-used slate of the best of the original slate, will be sought. New slate must be from a natural source and as close a match as possible to the original in terms of texture, thickness and grading.

Chimneys are important visual features and should be retained, repaired or re-instated to match if missing or required to be rebuilt.

Traditional cast iron **guttering** is recommended but an acceptable alternative is cast aluminium.

Existing **windows and door openings** should not be enlarged. The proportions of traditional openings should be vertical in emphasis. Traditional multi pane glazing and traditional timber doors should be used. Modern replacements are not generally acceptable.

Shop fronts

(see also the separate guidelines)

Shop fronts should be designed in sympathy with their historic and architectural street setting. Designs should also relate to the building of which it is part, rather than to achieve uniformity of design with adjoining shops. Signs and signboards should not dominate a facade but should be in scale with and designed as an integral part of the individual shop. The use of internally illuminated signs and signs with coloured plastic backing and lettering will be discouraged. Alternatively, the use of spotlighting may be considered acceptable on premises open to the public during the hours of darkness, such as restaurants and public houses.

APPENDIX VI

Design Guidelines for Thurso Conservation Area

1. Introduction

1.1 The Highland Council, as local planning authority, has a duty to protect and enhance the special character of the Conservation Areas within its area. This can be achieved through sensitive control of development, as well as positive improvement schemes such as:

- the implementation of appropriate traffic management schemes;
- the rationalisation of direction signs;
- the removal of overhead supply lines and other eyesores;
- the selection of street furniture of good design;
- the retention of mature trees; and
- the planting of new trees where appropriate.

1.2 The following sections are intended to give advice and guidance on the repair, maintenance, alteration or new development within Thurso Conservation Area. This is in order to establish standards for evaluating development proposals and to ensure that proposals will harmonise with the existing character and scale of the Area by avoiding designs which are unrelated and unsympathetic.

2. Background

2.1 The Conservation Area of Thurso, designated in 1970 and classified by the Secretary

of State in 1985 as outstanding, covers the early phases of the town's growth from mediaeval times until the development of the New Town. The earliest known part, known later as the Fishertown was clustered around Old St. Peter's Kirk. Few of the original cottages from the Fishertown remain, but the inter war replacement housing adheres to the original layout and due regard has been given to providing shelter. The next phase of development focuses on the 17th and 18th century houses in the streets near the harbour, Rotterdam Street and the Town Hall Square. The development of the New Town followed in 1799 to a severe grid plan by Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster (1745-1835).

2.2 There are some 90 listed properties in the Conservation Area. Only one, Old St. Peter's Church and Burial Ground, Wilson Lane is at Category A. The list also contains a number of buildings which feature as key elements in the structure of Sir John Sinclair's classical New Town. There are also some fine early 17th century residential groups.

2.3 The 1987 Local Plan refers to the proposal to extend the boundary of the Conservation Area to include properties on the north side of Olrig Street, St. Andrew's Church and the Bank of Scotland. The policies contained in the following section and the outstanding classification would also apply to this extension.

3. Statutory Powers

3.1 Under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 the Council, as local planning authority, has statutory powers to ensure the maintenance of the character of the Conservation Area.

3.2 Powers are available for the control of the demolition and the alteration of listed buildings within the Conservation Area. Proposals for works that materially affect the appearance and character of these buildings must be the subject of an application for listed building consent to the Council. There are also powers for the control of the demolition of unlisted buildings in the Conservation Area. As with listed buildings, these cannot be demolished without, first of all, obtaining the necessary consent from the Council.

3.3 Other powers exist as follows:

- (a) To bring under Special Control, certain classes of development which would otherwise be 'permitted' without formal planning consent through a Direction Under Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992.
- (b) To define the Conservation Area as an Area of Special Advertisement Control. This will have the effect of strengthening the controls over advertisement that may otherwise detract from the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area. It should be noted that all advertisements on listed buildings require Listed Building Consent.
- (c) To control tree felling, lopping, topping, etc. As a consequence, no trees within the Conservation Area may be felled, topped, lopped or trimmed without six weeks notification of intent to the Council. Pollarding of trees will be strictly controlled.

4. Design Guidelines

General

4.1 The following guidelines will apply generally throughout the Conservation Area. It is essential that the character of the Area should be maintained and enhanced by the proper layout and design of new buildings and extensions. Any new development will require careful consideration and each will be considered on its merits. An architect should draw up plans and, in all cases, advice may be sought from the Director of Planning and Development. Where a site is considered to be of significant importance, the Council will produce a site brief setting out the form of development considered suitable for the site.

Roofs

4.2 Particular attention should be paid to retaining original roof pitches, ridge lines and skews. All existing chimney stacks and pots should also be retained and maintained in a good state of repair. Wires, aerials, satellite dishes and vent pipes should not be allowed to clutter the roofline. Where proposals involve new development or extensions, roofs should preferably be pitched, ideally at an angle of 45 degrees, but within the limits of 35 to 55 degrees and should be covered with natural slate, particularly where a listed building is concerned.

Dormer windows

4.3 Dormer windows should reflect the traditional styles and should not dominate the roof but be of a scale appropriate to the building and slated to match the rest of the roof. It is also

desirable that they collectively do not occupy more than 50% of the roof elevation and that they are below the ridge of the roof.

Walls

4.4 Existing stone walls and traditional pointing should be retained and maintained. Where repairs are necessary, they should be carried out in natural stonework to match. Where new walls are proposed, they should preferably be constructed to match the existing dwellinghouse. Multicoloured artificial stone, cedar or other timber and PVC facing materials are unacceptable and should not be used. Feature panels associated with windows and doors are also discouraged. Colour washing or painting of expansive areas is generally discouraged, although colours should match traditional local stone work or be white or off white. Features such as door frames, window margins and corner stones could be picked out in other colours agreed by the Director of Planning and Development.

Windows

4.5 Existing window openings should not be enlarged and proposed wall openings should be vertical in emphasis, with the ratio of solid to void being in favour of the solid. Traditional multi-pane glazing will be encouraged and where these are original features of listed buildings they should be retained or replicated. Replacement with modern glazing will require the approval of the local planning authority.

Doors

4.6 Existing door openings and doors should be retained or replicated, especially on front

elevations. New doors should be of traditional and simple design, panelled or vertical timbered.

Outbuildings

4.7 Such structures should complement the main building, and adopt a similar roof pitch, external wall finish and roof slates. Greenhouses and garden sheds should be sited unobtrusively. The latter will be acceptable if clad in timber lining.

Shop Fronts

(See also the separate Guidelines)

4.8 While recognising the needs of the commercial sector, the Council would wish to see shop fronts designed in sympathy with their historic and architectural street setting. Designs should also relate to the building of which it is part, rather than to achieve uniformity of design with adjoining shops. Signs and signboards should not dominate a facade but should be in scale with and designed as an integral part of the individual shop. The use of internally illuminated signs and signs with coloured plastic backing and lettering will be discouraged as they detract from the architectural quality of the Area. Alternatively, the use of spotlighting may be considered acceptable on premises open to the public during the hours of darkness, such as restaurants and public houses.

APPENDIX VII

Design Guidelines for Wick Pulteneytown and Harbour Area

General

The Council will seek to maintain and enhance the historic qualities of Lower Pulteneytown. It will seek to avoid unnecessary demolition or unsympathetic alterations to historic property. It will encourage the continued active and appropriate use of buildings and their setting.

The Lower Pulteneytown Grid Iron (the area bounded by Harbour Quay; Martha Terrace; Miller, Street; and Bank Row)

The building line must be retained at the heel of the pavement and at the street corner and not set back for visibility splays or turning splays.

Original Building Features

Renovation and reconstruction must seek to retain original building features such as the traditional doorway arches; granite kerbstones; flagstone courtyards and pavements and Caithness stone walls.

Harmonisation

Where new construction is involved profile sheet cladding; artificial stone cladding; UPVC windows or similar artificial materials should not be used.

New Buildings

New development must be integrated sympathetically into the area in terms of scale, design and materials and must respect and contribute to the character of the area.

Extensions and Alterations

These must also aim to harmonise with the existing buildings in terms of scale, design and materials and should respect the pattern and form of the grid iron layout of buildings and streets and the relationship between existing buildings.

Details

- **Chimneys** are important visual features and should be retained, repaired or re-instated to match if missing or required to be rebuilt.
- Traditional features such as **stone arches, corbelling and bands** are vital to the character and appearance of old buildings and should be retained, repaired or reinstated as above.
- Traditional **cast iron guttering** is recommended but an acceptable alternative is cast aluminium.
- The traditional **roofing material** is likely to be West Highland slate, Welsh slate or local Caithness slate. Second hand slate used with re-used slate of the best of the original slate will be sought. New slate must be from a natural source and as close a match as possible to the original in terms of texture, thickness and grading. Roof pitches should

match the existing which generally range between 43° and 47°.

- The proportions of traditional openings should be vertical in emphasis. **Windows** should be of traditional styles which can range from sliding sash and case to side hung casements, usually in a multi-glazed arrangement.
- **Doors** tend to be lined or panelled and new doors should seek to emulate this style.
- Where **harl** is appropriate a wet harl should be used.

Shop Fronts

(see also the separate Guidelines)

Shop fronts should be designed in sympathy with their historic and architectural street setting. Designed should also relate to the building of which it is part, rather than to achieve uniformity of design with adjoining shops. Signs and signboards should not dominate a facade but should be in scale with and designed as an integral part of the individual shop. The use of internally illuminated signs and signs with coloured plastic backing and lettering will be discouraged. Alternatively, the use of spotlighting may be considered acceptable on premises open to the public during the hours of darkness, such as restaurants and public houses.

APPENDIX VIII

Design Guidelines for Argyle Square in Wick

General

The Council will seek to maintain and enhance the historic qualities of Argyle Square. It will seek to avoid unnecessary demolition or unsympathetic alterations to historic property. It will encourage the continued active and appropriate use of buildings and their setting.

Original Building Features

Renovation and reconstruction must seek to retain original building features.

Harmonisation

Where new construction is involved profile sheet cladding; artificial stone cladding; UPVC windows or similar artificial materials should not be used.

New Buildings

New development must be integrated sympathetically into the area in terms of scale, design and materials and must respect and contribute to the character of the area.

Extensions and Alterations

These must also aim to harmonise with the existing buildings in terms of scale, design and materials and should respect the relationship between existing buildings.

Details

- Chimneys are important visual features and should be retained, repaired or re-instated to match if missing or required to be rebuilt.
- Traditional cast iron guttering is recommended but an acceptable alternative is cast aluminium.
- The traditional roofing material is likely to be West Highland slate, Welsh slate or local Caithness slate. Second hand slate used with re-used slate of the best of the original slate will be sought. New slate must be from a natural source and as close a match as possible to the original in terms of texture, thickness and grading. Roof pitches should match the existing which generally range between 40° and 55°.
- Dormer windows must reflect the traditional styles and should be of a scale appropriate to the building. They should not occupy more than 50% of the roof elevation and should be below the ridge line.
- Existing stone walls and traditional pointing should be retained and maintained. Where repairs are necessary, they should be carried out in natural stonework to match. Multicoloured artificial stone, cedar or other timber and PVC facing materials are not acceptable.
- Existing windows should not be enlarged. Windows should be of traditional styles which can range from sliding sash and case

to side hung casements, usually in a multi-glazed arrangement.

- Doors tend to be lined or panelled and new doors should seek to emulate this style.

Shop Fronts

(see also the separate Guidelines)

Shop fronts should be designed in sympathy with their historic and architectural street setting. Designs should also relate to the building of which it is part, rather than to achieve uniformity of design with adjoining shops. Signs and signboards should not dominate a facade but should be in scale with and designed as an integral part of the individual shop. The use of internally illuminated signs and signs with coloured plastic backing and lettering will be discouraged. Alternatively, the use of spotlighting may be considered acceptable on premises open to the public during the hours of darkness, such as restaurants and public houses.

INDEX

A

A836, 12, 15, 21, 23, 26, 29, 31, 33, 50, 54, 63, 64, 88
A9, 9, 11, 15, 16, 21, 23, 25, 26, 37, 45, 47, 54
A99, 15, 16, 23, 25, 26, 45, 46, 71, 75
Achastle, 88
Achavar, 19
Achavrole, 19
Achies, Harpsdale, 88
Achnavast, 88
Achow, 19
Achscrabster Farm, 88
Achvarasdall, 19
Ackergill, 25, 88
Ackergillshore, 18
affordable housing, 7, 15, 30, 37, 45, 53, 57, 71
Air Services, 12
airport, 6, 12, 16, 69, 71, 75, 76
Almster, Buckies Hill, 88
Alternative Energy, 13
Altnabreac, 18, 88
Amenity Areas, 17
Appat Hill, Scotsdale, 88
archaeological, 6, 14, 16, 20, 23, 31, 37, 50, 61, 66, 70, 73, 92
Atlantic Frontier, 10, 23, 53, 54, 55
Auckengill, 18
Aurora Project, 10

B

Balnabruich, 19, 37, 88
Banniskirk, Georgemas, 88
Bardnaclavan Cotts, Westfield, 88
Bardnahaugh Farm, Shebster, 88
Barnaclavan Place, Janetstown, 88
Bilbster, 88
Bilbster Mains, 88
biodiversity, 14, 16
Borgie Mains, Castletown, 88
Borgue – Ramsacraigs, 19
Borrowston, 88
Bower, 19
Brabsterdorran, 88

Bridge of Forss, 21, 88
Bridge of Isauld, Reay, 88
Bridge of Lyth, 88
Brims Road, Forss, 88
Broubster, 26, 88
Broubster Village (Ruins), 88
Buckies, Buckies Hill, 88
Buldoe Cottages, Dounreay, 88
Buloney, Harpsdale, 88
Burn of Houstry, 25
Burnside House, 88
Burnside, Durran, 88
Bus Services, 11
Business, 17, 18, 20, 32, 43, 46, 48, 51, 55, 62, 68, 75
Bypass, 22

C

Caithness Economic Partnership, 7, 15, 21, 22, 56, 67
Calder Bridge, Loch Calder, 88
Calder Mains Farm, 88
Camster, 9, 23
Canisbay, 11, 18
Carsgoe, Weydale, 88
Castle of Mey, 9
Castlehill, 29, 30, 31, 32, 36, 80
Castletown, 6, 9, 13, 16, 18, 26, 29, 30, 32, 33, 36, 80, 88, 89
Causewaymire, 9
Church View, 88
Clyth, 18, 19, 88
Community Facilities, 10, 16
Community Input, 30, 37, 40, 45, 47, 50, 53, 57, 67, 71
Conservation Areas, 16, 66, 72, 84, 90, 91
Cottages /Old School, Weydale, 88
Countryside Around Town, 14, 16, 25, 30, 36, 44, 57, 62, 64, 70, 72, 75
crofting, 6, 16, 45
Crosskirk Bay, 20
Crown Square, Murkle, 88
Cycling, 12

D

Dale Farm Cottages, Westerdale, 88
decommissioning, 6, 10, 15, 21, 22, 50, 55, 56

derelict, 4, 8, 15, 16, 20, 25, 55, 70, 79, 90, 92
Development Factors, 30, 37, 40, 45, 47, 51, 53, 57, 67, 71
Development Plan, 3, 4, 79
Dirlot, 23, 26
Dirlot Gorge, 26
Dispersed Townships, 18, 19
diversification, 8, 15, 21, 22, 55, 56, 57, 70
Dixonfield/Duncanshill, 20
Dorrery Lodge, 88
Dounreay, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 21, 22, 23, 29, 39, 50, 51, 52, 55, 56, 57, 64, 67, 88, 89
Dounreay Post Office, 88
Drainage, 13, 20, 24
Dunbeath, 11, 15, 18, 23, 37, 38
Duncansby, 18, 26
Duncansby Head, 26
Dunnet, 9, 18, 19, 20, 23, 25, 26, 29, 33, 36, 89
Dunnet - Dwarwick Pier Road, 20
Dunnet Bay, 9, 23, 26, 29, 33
Dunnet Head, 20, 23, 25, 26
Dwarwick Pier, 18, 20

E

East Clyth, 18, 88
East Mey, 18
East of Bilbster, 88
East of Swiney Mains, 88
Economy, 8, 15
Elzy Farm, 88
Empty Homes Initiative, 18, 77
Environment, 13, 16, 25, 36, 48
Environmental Impact Assessment, 23
European Commission Directives, 4
Expansion, 17, 38, 40, 48, 64, 67, 68, 76

F

Farming, 8, 58
Fishing, 8, 91
flagstone, 5, 9, 14, 15, 23, 29, 33, 36, 55, 80, 86
Flow Country, 14, 15
Flows of Leanas, 25
Forss, 7, 15, 19, 20, 21, 23, 25, 55, 88, 89
Forss Mains, 88
Forss Water, 25

Fragile Areas, 11
Fragile Countryside Areas, 18
Freswick, 18
Freswick South, 18

G

Gaelic, 6
Garston Farm Road, by Halkirk, 20
Gaustiquoy, 88
Geise Houses, Geise, 88
General Countryside Areas, 18
General Policies, 3, 4, 5, 17, 18, 19, 80, 81
General Policies Annex, 3, 4, 5, 17, 18, 19, 80, 81
Georgemas, 15, 24, 39, 88
Gillock, 20
Gills, 9, 18, 24
Girnigoe, 25
Glenburn, 88
Glengolly, 18, 57, 88, 89
Glengolly Farm, Thurso, 88
Green Hill, 19

H

Haimer, East Duncan's Hill, 88
Halkirk, 6, 11, 16, 18, 20, 24, 39, 43, 81, 82, 89
Harbours, 9, 12
Harland Road, 31, 36
Harpsdale, 88
Harpsdale Mains, 88
Haster, 24, 88
Health and Safety Executive, 21, 22, 51, 52
Heathfield Farm, Thurso, 88, 89
Highland Rail Partnership, 24
Highland Small Communities Housing Trust, 18
Highland Structure Plan, 4, 5, 56, 59, 79, 90
Hill of Calder, 88
Hill of Clindraig, Murkle, 88
Hill of Forss, 20, 25, 88
Hill of Warehouse, 23
Hillhead, 70, 76, 88
HMS Vulcan, 7, 21, 55
Holburn Head, 20, 26
Housing, 3, 7, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 30, 32, 37, 41, 45, 48, 51, 53, 60, 61, 67, 70, 73, 80, 81, 88

Houstry, 19, 25
Howe Cottages, 88
Huna, 18

I

including National Scenic Areas, 16
Industry, 17, 20, 43, 54, 63, 75, 91
Infrastructure, 11, 16, 22
Inset Map, 3, 4, 31, 37, 40, 41, 45, 48, 51, 53, 58, 67, 72
Inset Maps, 3, 4
Inverness, 6, 11, 12, 69
Isauld Farm Cottages, Reay, 88

J

John O'Groats, 9, 10, 18, 21, 25, 29, 50

K

Keiss, 18, 19, 24, 25, 45, 46, 89
Keiss and Ackergill Links, 25
Killimster, 88
Knockdoo, 23

L

landfill, 13, 31, 32, 36
Landward Area, 18, 20, 36, 44, 63
Latheron, 11, 18, 19, 21
Latheronwheel, 19, 88
Lieurary Mains, Lieurary, 88
Listed Buildings, 14, 16, 38, 91
Local Agenda 21, 4, 91
Loch Calder, 26, 40, 88
Loch More, 26
Loch Olginney, 25
Loch Watenan, 25
Longhill, Hill of Forss, 88
Longland Quarries, Hill of Forss, 88
Lybster, 3, 6, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 24, 37, 47, 49, 83, 88
Lybster Holdings, Forss, 88
Lythmore Cottages, 88

M

Mains of Forss, 19
Mains of Orlig, Castletown, 88
Mains of Watten, 88
Manufacturing, 9
Market Hill, 88
Markethill, 88
Mayfield, SE of Dixonfield, 88
Mey, 9, 18, 20, 24
Mid Clyth, 19
Mill Lade, 88
Milton, 39, 41, 88
Morven, 6
Murkle, 13, 15, 23, 25, 56, 88, 89
Murkle, South of A836, 88
Mybster, 19

N

N Calder Farm, Hill of Sour, 88
National Planning Policy Guidelines, 3, 4
NE of Clayhusbandry, Murtle, 88
Newport, 19, 88
Newton of Swiney, 88
Newtonhill, 11, 13, 20
Norfrost, 9, 29, 30, 33
North of Newport, 88
North of Smithy Cottage, 88
Noss Head, 25
Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, 21, 22, 51, 52

O

Objectives, 15, 31, 37, 40, 45, 48, 51, 53, 58, 67, 71
Occumster, 19
Old School, Bridge of Murkle, 88
Oldhall House, 88
Ord, 16
Oust Cottages, 88

P

Papigoe, 88
Parkside, 88

peatland, 6
Pennyland, 3, 57, 58, 62, 63, 64
Peripherality, 8, 91
Planning Act, 3, 79
Policies, 3, 4, 5, 12, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 30, 31, 36, 37, 40, 45, 48, 50, 51, 53, 58, 67, 72, 80, 81
Policy Annex, 3, 76, 91
Population, 6, 7, 69
Primary Policies, 4, 17, 23, 31, 37, 40, 45, 48, 51, 53, 58, 67, 72
projections, 7
Proposals, 3, 4, 8, 14, 17, 18, 19, 25, 36, 38, 48, 62, 64, 66, 69, 75, 76, 84, 91
Proposals Maps, 3, 4, 17

Q

Quarryside, Castletown, 88

R

Raggra, 18
rail, 6, 21, 24, 63, 75
Rail Network, 12
Reay, 7, 18, 50, 51, 52, 88
Recommendations, 3
redevelopment, 15, 19, 25, 31, 40, 57, 59, 60, 62, 63, 66, 69, 70, 73, 75, 76, 90
Regional Scenic Coasts, 26
rehabilitation, 15, 18, 62, 73, 75
Reiss Lodge, 88
Review of Old Mineral Permissions, 23
Rights of Way, 16
Roads, 11, 20, 40, 56, 60, 81
Roadside Cottage, 88
Roadside, Georgemas, 88
Rockhill, 88

S

S.Strathcoul, Harpsdale, 88
Sandside Bay, 26, 50
Sandside Harbour, Reay, 88
Sandside House, Reay, 88
Sarclat, 18, 24
Scaraben, 6
Scarben Cottages, 88
Scarfskerry, 13, 20, 24

School Place, Forss, 89
Scottish Executive Rural Affairs Department, 18
Scottish Homes, 18
Scottish Natural Heritage, 14, 79, 91, 92
Scrabster, 9, 12, 16, 18, 22, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 89
Scrabster Mains Farm Cottages, 89
SE of Millhill Bridge, Castletown, 89
Seater, 13
Sensitive Areas, 19
Settlement Policies, 4, 17, 31, 37, 40, 45, 48, 51, 53, 58, 67, 72
Shebster, 19, 21, 88
Sinclair, 25, 39, 40, 41, 44, 45, 47, 55, 82, 84
Skiall Farm, Achreamic, 89
Skinnet, Halkirk, 89
Smerral, 19
Special Uses, 17, 23, 33, 38, 43, 46, 48, 52, 54, 63, 68, 75
Spittal, 19
Square of Keiss, 89
St. Johns Loch, 25
Stain, 89
Stangergill Burn, 33, 36
Staxigoe, 18, 71, 89
Stemster, 24, 89
Stemster Mains, 89
Strategic Objectives, 15
Strathmore, 23, 89
Strathmore Lodge, Westerdale, 89
sustainability, 4, 13, 70
Sustainable Development, 4
SW of Bridge of Westfield, 89
SW of Heathfield Farm, Thurso, 89
Swinney, 20, 89
Swinney Hill, 20
Swinney Mains, 89

T

Thrumster, 18, 20, 24
Thurdistoft Farm, Castletown, 89
Thurso, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 29, 36, 39, 44, 50, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 62, 64, 66, 67, 69, 84, 88, 92
Thuster Mains, 89
Town/Village Centre, 17

U

Ulster, 39, 41, 84
University of the Highlands and Islands, 10, 55, 64
Upper Dounreay Cottages, 89
Upper Geise, Glengolly, 89
Upper Lybster, 19

V

Victoria Villa, 89
Viking, 6

W

Waste Management, 13
Water Supply, 13, 24, 91

Watten, 7, 16, 18, 24, 67, 88
West Dunnet, 19, 89
West Murkle, 25, 89
West of Lybster, 20
West of Reiss, 89
Westend, John O'Groats, 18
Wester Olig, Castletown, 89
Westerdale, 19, 25, 88, 89
Westfield Lodge, 89
Whaligoe, 25, 26, 89
Wick, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 37, 45, 47, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71,
72, 75, 76, 77, 86, 87, 92
Written Statement, 3, 4, 90, 91

Y

Yarrows, 23