

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

ROSS & CROMARTY EAST LOCAL PLAN INQUIRY

**STATEMENT OF OBSERVATIONS by the
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING and DEVELOPMENT**

ISSUE 28: Evanton – Expansion Areas

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Highland Council (THC) has undertaken to hold a Public Local Inquiry to consider objections lodged by Angus Craik [CD30/146] in respect of policies contained in Chapter 16 of the Deposit Draft Plan which refer to Expansion areas in Evanton; and Mr A Macdonald [CD30/140] in respect of policies contained within Chapter 16 of the Deposit Draft with reference to inclusion of H7, south west of Kiltearn School including reference to access to Teandallon also objection lodged by Neil Sutherland on behalf of Ronald Munro Ferguson [CD30/158] in respect of policies contained in Chapter 16, policy 15 in reference for provision of Expansion at H4, rear of Novar Crescent. Objections received by Mr & Mrs R Forrest [CD30/24], Glenda Mackenzie [CD30/143], Elizabeth Craik [CD30/144] and Grant Mackenzie [CD30/145] in respect of policies contained in Chapter 16 of the Deposit Draft Plan which refer to Expansion areas in Evanton are understood to be the subject of further written submissions.
- 1.2 Objections lodged by Gordon Macdonald [CD30/4], Stanley & Fiona Munro [CD30/27] and Rob Gibson [CD30/301] in respect of Chapter 16 Expansion are either sustained on the basis of written submissions lodged in respect of the Deposit Draft Local Plan or not withdrawn. The Council's response in respect of these matters is contained in the report [CD27].
- 1.3 THC will call Brian MacKenzie, Planning and Development Service as planning witness.
- 1.4 THC wishes to submit the following productions: -
[CD1] The Highland Structure Plan: Approved Plan: THC: March 2001
[CD4] Easter Ross Adopted Local Plan: THC: July 1992
[CD8] Ross & Cromarty East Local Plan: Consultative Draft: THC May 2002
[CD9] Ross & Cromarty East Local Plan: Deposit Draft: The Highland Council: October 2003
[CD10] Ross & Cromarty East Local Plan: Statement of Publicity, Consultation and representations: THC October 2003
[CD11] Ross & Cromarty East Local Plan: Proposed Modifications to the Deposit Draft (Prior to Public Local Inquiry): THC February 2005
[CD14] SPP2: Economic Development: Scottish Executive: November 2002
[CD15] SPP3: Planning for Housing: Scottish Executive: February 2003

[CD25] Ross & Cromarty Area Planning Committee Item: Representations on the Consultative Draft Local Plan: The Highland Council: 15 September 2003

[CD26] Planning Development Europe & Tourism Committee Item: Representations on the Consultative Draft Local Plan: The Highland Council: 1 October 2003

[CD27] Ross & Cromarty Area Planning Committee Item: Objections and Representations on the Deposit Draft Local Plan: The Highland Council: 25 January 2005

[CD30] Letters of objection and representation to the Deposit Draft Local Plan

[CD31] Objections to the Proposed Changes to the Deposit Draft Local Plan

[THC28/1] School capacity assessment: Email communication from Education Service, 3rd May 2005.

2. Background

National Planning Guidance/Advice

- 2.1 Scottish Planning Policy 3: Planning for Housing [CD15] sets out the Scottish Executive's planning policies on housing. The following paragraphs are relevant: -

60, 63 & 64 indicate that development plans should take an informed long-term view, in conforming with the Structure Plan, on the requirement for new housing and that the local plan should convert this into effective site-specific allocations for at least 5 years from the date of adoption. Medium to long-term planning is needed to allow all parties to consider carefully how to accommodate future demand for growth where infill and brownfield opportunities cannot provide all the land necessary for new housing. Local plans should also identify further sites to meet requirements in the medium term and to monitor their effectiveness and programming through the annual housing land audit, to maintain sufficient effective land for at least the following 5 years at all times.

64 states that "*Local Plans **must** conform to the structure plan and provide sufficient effective land to meet the housing land requirement for at least 5 years from the date of adoption.*"

12 indicates that "*Energy efficiency is an important element of good design and planning authorities should indicate the potential for using energy more efficiently, for example, through siting and orientation. Better siting and orientation can complement improved insulation through Building Standards; these must be achieved in all new buildings, but the possibility of even higher standards should be considered.*"

- 2.2 Scottish Planning Policy 3: Economic Development [CD14] sets out the Scottish Executive's planning policies on economic development. The following paragraph is relevant: -

27 indicates that opportunities for small businesses should be identified in locations that do not erode residential amenity and the planning system should provide

positively for small firm development. Development plan policies should recognise the opportunities for start-up businesses, home-working, and mixed-use developments where low-impact industry, business and service uses can co-exist with housing.

Highland Structure Plan

- 2.3 The Highland Structure Plan identified the need for housing allocations for the period to 2017. Part of the housing allocations sought the implementation of a strategy aimed at removing pressure from the Inverness area, Chapter 2.2, para. 2.2.5 [CD1], *“To deflect some of the development pressure away from Inverness and to assist in supporting the sub-regional functions of Nairn and the Evanton, Alness and Invergordon corridor, allocations have been increased above the anticipated needs in Nairn and Ross & Cromarty.”*

- 2.4 General Strategic Policy, G2 Design for sustainability states that

“Proposed developments will be assessed on the extent to which they:

...

- *are compatible with service provision (water and sewerage, drainage, roads, schools, electricity);*
- *are accessible by public transport, cycling and walking as well as car;*
- *maximise energy efficiency in terms of location, layout and design, including the utilisation of renewable sources of energy;... ”*

Adopted Local Plan

- 2.5 The Easter Ross Local Plan [CD4] was adopted in July 1992. It allocated two areas of land were allocated at Teandallon comprising 10 ha of land to meet the medium to longer term needs of the village, paras 3.5 & 3.6(b).

Consultative Draft Plan

- 2.6 The Consultative Draft [CD8] of the Ross and Cromarty East Local Plan, was published in May 2002. It re-affirmed the allocation of development land at Teandallon (east) under Policy 12 of Chapter 16 Evanton. In addition a further site was allocated at Policy 13 Teandallon West and also at Policy 14 Rear of Novar Crescent as potential options for the longer term expansion of the village. These additional sites sought to meet not only the forecast housing need but also the requirements of THC Structure Plan, Chapter 2.2, para. 2.2.5 [CD1] strategy for deflection of development pressure from Inverness, *“... in order to support the settlement hierarchy and relate housing provision to employment opportunities, the availability of services and transport networks, housing allocations have been decentralised to some extent. To deflect some of the development pressure away from Inverness and to assist in supporting the sub regional functions of Nairn and the Evanton, Alness and Invergordon corridor, allocations have been increased above anticipated needs in both Nairn and Ross & Cromarty....”*

- 2.7 Some 94 objections were received in respect of the level of housing allocations for the village. The representations made and the changes made by THC in response are detailed in [CD10]. Representations related to the level of housing development proposed for Evanton, allocations for 450 houses were considered more than the settlement and facilities could reasonably cope with. Main concerns related to traffic impact on the village and lack of suitable infrastructure, notably drainage water supply and capacity at the primary school. Re-appraisal of the key housing land requirements suggested a reduced requirement for housing land. A revision of housing figures on the latest GRO projections reduced the requirement within Evanton to 302 houses, this resulted in a substantial reduction in the allocations at Teandallon and Novar Crescent, coupled with the introduction of considerable open space and landscaping buffers.

Deposit Draft Local Plan

- 2.8 The Deposit Draft [CD9] of the Local Plan was published in October 2003. The three expansion sites were re-affirmed within the Deposit Draft Plan with the revision of capacities for all three sites reducing their overall capacity from 515 to 255 houses. Policy 13 Teandallon East and Policy 15 Rear of Novar Crescent being allocated to meet the shorter to medium term requirements of the Plan with Policy 14 Teandallon West seeking to meet longer term needs.

Those changes made as follows: -

The areas indicated in the table below are reserved to meet more significant housing requirements over the next 10 years and beyond.

Ref.	Area (ha.)	Location	Capacity	Requirements
13.	10	Teandallon East	80	Short to medium term. Amenity strip retained adjacent River Sgitheach, set back and provision of tree planting with inclusion of footpath/cycleway. Address the need for traffic calming works at Swordale Road, Hermitage Street and Chapel Street. Allow for potential future development of Teandallon West. Further stages of development linking to Teandallon Place will similarly be required to address traffic issues. Range of housing types to satisfy local need will be required and an element of affordable housing will be expected. Investigate possible future link over River Sgitheach.
14.	11.4	Teandallon West	90	Longer term development potential. Amenity strip retained adjacent the River Sgitheach, as outlined at Teandallon East. Extend access from Teandallon East and divert the Swordale Road through the development. Range of housing types to satisfy local need will be required and an element of affordable housing will be expected.
15.	12.8	rear of Novar Crescent	85	Short to medium term potential. Significant structural planting will be required between the development and existing housing and on the eastern boundary of the site. Development of footpaths and cycleways will require to be established and improvements undertaken to

				<i>minimise the traffic flow from the allocated site and the town centre. Provision of quality amenity areas and landscaping will be expected, particularly in the area adjacent to existing housing. A range of housing types to satisfy local need will be required and an element of affordable housing will be expected.</i>
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Proposals should comply with the draft Framework Plan. A development brief or overall master plan should be agreed for these areas to guide comprehensive development, including phasing and basic requirements for servicing. The Council will encourage substantial early structural tree planting to help integrate the development into the landscape. Developers are also required to

- undertake hydrological assessments, to determine the adequacy of any surface water drainage systems*
- upgrade foul sewers in association with development*
- enter into legal Agreements with the Council and landowners, as appropriate, to secure necessary access roads, road improvements, footpaths and open space/recreation facilities.*
- construct access roads to adoption standards up to the boundary of each ownership or phase of development to avoid creating ransom strips*
- contribute towards public transport improvements*
- discuss the level of affordable housing needs provision with the Council*
- achieve an overall design that respects and complements the topography, characteristics and constraints of the site and its surroundings.*

2.9 Objections were received from Angus Craik [CD30/146], Mr & Mrs R Forrest [CD30/24], Glenda Mackenzie [CD30/143], Elizabeth Craik [CD30/144] and Grant Mackenzie [CD/30145], Gordon Macdonald [CD30/4], Stanley & Fiona Munro [CD30/27], Mr A Macdonald [CD30/140], Rob Gibson [CD30/301] Neil Sutherland on behalf of Mr Ronald Munro Ferguson [CD30/158]. The objections in the main related to the continued allocation of land at rear of Novar Crescent in relation to lack of proximity to the village, loss of agricultural land and also capacity of Kiltearn School. Specific objection from the landowners of E15, Rear of Novar Crescent seeking a small complimentary business use limited to office, craft and other small-scale businesses.

Deposit Draft with Modifications (Proposed Changes)

2.10 Proposed Changes to the Deposit Draft [CD11] were approved in January 2005. The proposed changes with an implication for objections and comments indicated at paras. 3.5 and 3.6 below are:

Add new sentence after first sentence of policy E15 Rear of Novar Crescent "***E15, Rear of Novar Crescent***" "***The use of sustainable design and local materials will be encouraged in the development of the site.***"

Add to existing policy 15., after first sentence, "***Allocation to provide mix of uses, housing affordable and private, homeworking units, commercial units/ craft workshops. Layout of roads serving commercial units/craft workshops If after a period the commercial units/craft workshops fail to be developed the area for this use could also be developed for housing.***"

Modifications were made to the Novar Draft Development Framework to reflect this additional use.

- 2.11 Further objections were received from Mr & Mrs R Forrest [CD30/453], Angus Craik [CD30/459], Glenda Mackenzie [CD30/456], Elizabeth Craik [CD30/457] and Grant Mackenzie [CD30/458] in respect of policies contained in Chapter 16 of the Deposit Draft Plan which refer to changes to Expansion areas in Evanton. These relate to the continued inclusion of housing land at Novar Crescent and also to the inclusion of an area for small scale business development at Novar Crescent.

3. The Council's Observations

The Objections

3.1 **Mr A Macdonald [CD30/140]**

A safeguard should be maintained through this area as a possible access into Teandallon using the existing road west of the Police Station.

The potential river crossing point east of the school indicated on the page 65 map would pass through the proposed informal play/waiting area, & would place a road between the school and the main village housing areas.

It is really a good idea to propose a twelve house development west of the school in view of the difficult traffic situation at the school? I think not until the road issue is resolved. There is a real need to divert traffic to the south of the school.

3.2 **Mr & Mrs R Forrest [CD30/24]**

1) OVERDEVELOPMENT - GENERAL

Projections suggest a requirement for around 230 to 270 houses in the next 15 years. Although this figure has been revised downward from the 450 houses in the original Consultative Draft, this remains an excessive number of new houses for a community of the size and character of Evanton. Statistics from the 2001 Census (SCROL website) give the total figure of 7910 existing households in the five main settlements in this area of Ross-shire - Alness, Dingwall, Evanton, Invergordon & Tain - of which 439 (6%) are in Evanton. Development on the scale envisaged would mean growth of between 52% - 62% in the size of the village. This is in contrast to an average projected rate of expansion of only 23% - 28% for the four towns (Alness, Dingwall, Invergordon & Tain). Assuming a consistent development rate over the life of the Plan, the village would expand by some 34% - 41% in the space of ten years, in contrast to the Plan's own guidelines for other E.Ross villages that expansion will not exceed 25% of the existing scale of settlements for any 10 year period. (4.20)

The Deposit Draft fails to distinguish between need and demand in determining these figures, and offers no cogent justification in planning terms for such disproportionate expansion of Evanton relative to other locations. Data from the settlement zone profiles on Highland Council's own website show that while the population of Evanton substantially increased between the 1991 and 2001 Census,

and that of Dingwall and Invergordon has remained fairly stable, the towns of Tain and – particularly – Alness have suffered statistically significant population decline. It is therefore inconsistent with the stated aim of the Plan – “to engender...strong and distinct local communities” (1.4); and “...to spread growth to the...areas...which have lost population since 1991 (3.1) -to favour disproportionate growth of an already thriving community to the detriment of nearby towns where expansion and investment is badly needed to support social and economic viability.

2) Access to services - though described in the Plan as a "town", by virtue of population, character and -importantly -the range of services provided, it is more accurate to describe Evanton as a village. (The Scottish Household Survey classifies Evanton as "rural" whereas Alness, Dingwall, Invergordon & Tain, with the benefit of a much greater range of services in addition to their larger population are classed as "towns".) Services available in Evanton comprise: post office, convenience store, hairdressers, village hall, sports hall, small branch library, primary school and two hotels. In the past 10 -12 years a petrol station, butcher shop, tearoom, garage, kitchen showroom, newsagent/general store and part-time bank have all ceased trading. There is no secondary school, doctor's surgery, swimming pool, leisure centre or golf course.

This situation is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future ("Expansion has not halted the decline in services... "Ch.16), particularly so in retailing with the recent development of large supermarkets in Alness and Dingwall, which means existing and future residents will still have to travel several miles to access all but the most basic services. Most such travel is likely to continue to be by car (see 3.3 below). Further expansion on the scale proposed would therefore be inconsistent with the Plan's aims that "reasonable access to a range of social and community facilities is vital," (3.7), that "Essential daily needs ... should be within easy reach " (3.7), and with the Highland Structure Plan's principle of maximisation of accessibility to community facilities and services,

3) Transport -travel in Evanton is heavily car dependent. Census figures (SCROL website) show an average of 1.2 cars per household for Evanton compared with an average of 0.89 for the four towns (Alness, Dingwall, Invergordon & Tain). In addition, Evanton has the lowest proportion of households with no access to a car at 13% (ave. for the four towns 32%), and the largest proportion of households with 2 or more cars at 38% (ave. for the four towns 20%).

Census figures also show that of the five settlements Evanton has the largest proportion of people travelling to work by car at 75% (ave. for the four towns 63%), and the lowest proportion walking! Cycling at 11% (ave. for the four towns 26%), highlighting the fact that the village is and is likely to remain "a commuting settlement, with the majority of the population working elsewhere in Easter Ross or Inverness. "(Ch.16 -Background).

Public transport provision is the poorest of all the main communities in the area: Evanton has fewer than 20 return bus services to and from Inverness most

weekdays (compare: Alness 32, Dingwall 28 & Invergordon 30). Express bus services to and from Inverness via Tain, Alness and Invergordon bypass the village completely. Evanton is the only one of these settlements without access to a railway service. The Plan makes reference to the desirability of providing a railway halt for Evanton (4.19), but acknowledges that "The cost of provision of a rail halt is likely to be outwith the possible expected contribution from future development in Evanton." -(Annex 3- Report on Representations). In other words the prospect of a rail halt is purely conjectural and can therefore be discounted in planning terms, there being no realistic prospect of the situation improving over the life of the Plan.

Given the above factors, we believe expansion of Evanton on the scale proposed does not accord with the Council's Integrated Local Transport Strategy and the Plan's aim of "reducing car-based journeys" (4.19) and " [reducing] the need to travel and dependence on the car. " (3.7) It also contradicts the Highland Structure Plan's criteria for reducing dependence on car use.

Against the above background, (1.1 -1.3) we object to the Plan as it stands for the reason that it is self-contradictory on several points, and that the proposals for the expansion of Evanton constitute unacceptable overdevelopment to the detriment of the stated intention of its own aims. New housing allocation should be reduced at least to a figure consistent with the average growth of the other four settlements (Alness, Dingwall, Invergordon & Tain) -i.e. 23% to 28% giving a revised figure of 101 to 123 new units over the life of the Plan.

4) HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AT NOVAR CRESCENT

Access to services - the Plan identifies an area of 12.8 ha. Of agricultural land to the rear of Novar Crescent for a phased development of up to 85 houses. Of the three sites identified for major expansion (the others being Teandallon East and Teandallon West) this one is the most isolated relative to such services as Evanton provides; in fact none of the retail or other facilities -most notably the school -are located convenient to the area of the village north and east of the River Glass. Homes in the proposed development would lie between 0.6km and 1km distant from the village centre. Children walking or cycling to school from this development would have to travel up to 1.5 km (nearly a mile) almost all of which would take them along the main B817 through the village, crossing three of the main streets feeding traffic into this road (Glenglass Rd., Chapel St. and Drummond Rd.). Therefore large-scale expansion of this part of the village would be to the detriment of the Plan's overall objective that developments should have " reasonable access to a range of social and community facilities" and that "essential daily needs ...should be within easy reach of all " (3.7). Development at Teandallon, by contrast, would be more conveniently situated relative to village centre amenities and, most importantly, to Kiltearn Primary School.

Chapter 16: Pol X-G Agricultural context -the land to the rear of Novar Cres. Is prime quality agricultural land, a designation attested to by the fact it is under continuous arable cultivation, in contrast to other farmland nearby which is subject to set-aside agreements. While it is true to say that national guidance on protection of agricultural land has lessened as of late, the Scottish Executive still requires

consultation on developments on such sites with a land take over 10 ha. As the land take at Novar would be in excess of this figure there can be no guarantee development will be allowed to proceed in future, as the Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department has already indicated (Annex 3 -Report on Representations).

Chapter 16: Pol A-G Landscape character -the arable land at Novar Crescent forms an important part of the open and attractive approach to Evanton from the north, a landscape setting appropriate to an established village in a diverse rural environment comprising farmland, commercial and amenity woodland, heather moor (Cnoc Fyrish), and with distant views to the high ground of Ben Wyvis. The Plan should recognise that the various landscape elements, including farmland, make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the local environment and thus to the quality of life enjoyed by the community. In planning terms this amenity is worthy of conservation in its own right.

Development pressures - this part of the village has already come under undue pressure for development with the recent proposal to site a rail transshipment facility on farmland between Novar Cres.and the A9. A subsequent and less intrusive proposal, heavily amended due to pressure from the local community, was approved by Highland Council. Though we commend the intention to "safeguard land between the A9 ...and Far North railway line for amenity purposes II (A: 17), we remain concerned that a large scale housing development would breach the natural limits of the village and add to pressure for further expansion, perhaps leading to eventual coalescence with the industrial site at Highland Deephaven. The Novar Cres. Site is bordered by open country on two sides, in contrast to Teandallon East and Teandallon West which is already enclosed on three sides by existing development, and could be developed with less of an impact on the landscape setting of the village.

Given the above background, (2.1 - 2.4) we object to this aspect of the Plan for the reason that the Novar Crescent site is unsuitable by virtue of poor access to services, agricultural considerations, detrimental effect on landscape and visual amenity, and the potential to increase development pressure.

The proposal is contrary to the Plan's own stated intention to "consolidate the community and examine the potential of land closer to the centre. " (Ch 16 - Background) and to "safeguard ...and minimise the loss of farmland." (Ch 16 - Development Factors). It also conflicts with the Highland Structure Plan's criteria of preserving locally important prime agricultural land and maintaining landscape character.

If future housing allocation was reduced to the more sustainable level suggested at 1. above, future needs could be more than adequately met by developing the two sites at Teandallon (joint capacity 170 units) along with such opportunities for infill development as exists elsewhere in the village, .

3) CONSULTATION PROCESS

Chapter 16 Pol H-G plus Chapter 16 Pol X-H plus Chapter 16: Pol G-G
Community response -the Council's procedure for developing the Plan provided for, in relation to Evanton, an exhibition at the Jubilee Hall, a public meeting, and the opportunity to make individual written submissions on the content of the Consultative Draft. Residents responded to these initiatives in substantial numbers. As even a cursory examination of the responses to the consultation exercise demonstrates (Annex 3 - Report on Representations), the community is almost universally opposed to large-scale expansion of the village. We have yet to meet any other residents who support this level of development.

Novar Crescent -with the sole exception of the landowner, those respondents who made reference to the Novar Crescent proposals were unanimous in rejecting the proposals as unnecessary and undesirable.

Community empowerment -Scottish Executive guidance on planning states that " the local plan process should provide significant opportunities for individuals, local groups and organisations to generate a shared vision ...and to influence the direction and policy of change ". This can only take place if the Council is willing to pay due attention to community feedback and amend the Plan accordingly. Although a number of detail changes have been made between the Consultative Draft and the current Deposit Draft versions of the Plan, the Council has signally failed to address the key issue of overexpansion which was and remains the main concern of the community. Clearly the Highland Structure Plan's criteria of "community empowerment and decision making" (1.4.4) has not been met in this instance.

Given the above background (3.1-3.3) we object to the Plan on the grounds that insufficient weight has been given to the firm and clearly expressed views of the village community. While recognising that Highland Council is under no statutory obligation to amend the Plan in response to public opinion, if the Council undertakes to consult with local communities, good practice dictates that due attention must be given to the outcome of the consultation process if the Plan is to enjoy the public confidence necessary for it to succeed.

3.3 Angus Craik [CD30/146], Glenda Mackenzie [CD30/143],
Elizabeth Craik [CD30/144] and Grant Mackenzie [CD30/145]

I am not satisfied with the Council's response/decision in response and wish my representation to be continued.

While some concession has been made I have to query the requirement for Housing as the population is still forecast to reduce over the period in question.

Urgent consideration should be given to the access to Teandallon West and East where land, already owned by Council, should be exploited before giving consideration to other areas.

There is ample scope for all the needs to be accommodated within this area which

has been set aside for the purpose for some 30 years. The time has come to grasp the nettle, so to speak and insist that any major development be allowed only in this area, and subject to the developer providing a new access from the south side by crossing the river.

This would have many advantages for the village in that an easy connection could be made with Swordale Road and as something has to be done about that anyway it would seem opportune to do this now.

If developers are allowed to think they can get development behind Novar Crescent there will be no incentive to access Teandallon West or East and Swordale. There exists at present a presumption against development at the Novar site and this should be maintained.

3.4 Neil Sutherland on behalf of Mr Ronald Munro Ferguson [CD30/158]

We are writing with an objection on behalf of our client Mr Ronald Munro Ferguson. Our client owns and controls the land indicated as E15, and covered by diagram - Novar Draft Development Framework. The area indicated should be considered for mixed-use development to include housing as indicated, together with an element of commercial accommodation as an option in the Plan.

Grounds for objection:

An opportunity exists for an innovative sustainable development, which provides local housing, employment and rural development opportunities;

In order to off set the tendency of an increase in commuter miles associated with housing development and allow home and on-site working opportunities for house occupiers and others in the community.

Additional Information:

An element of commercial accommodation would be included as an option during the development of a Planning Brief for the site. This use would be included in addition to the proposed housing density indicated for the site and not in complete or in part replacement of it. This component would be limited and of suitable form and scale to compliment the predominant housing use. This use would be contained to the east of the site, adjacent to the access from the public road. Use would be limited to office, craft and other small-scale businesses. A carefully prepared landscaping design would be implemented to allow further integration with existing and proposed housing use.

Objections to the Deposit Draft with Modifications (Proposed Changes)

3.5 Angus Craik [CD30/449], Glenda Mackenzie [CD30/456],
Elizabeth Craik [CD30/457] and Grant Mackenzie [CD30/458]

I am not satisfied with The Council's response to the comments made and wish to have these considered by an independent Reporter at a Public Local Inquiry.

It has been noticed that changes have been made and I wish also to object to these and protest that these have not been highlighted or brought to the attention of people who had

raised objections previously. It would seem that these are now inserted in such a manner as not to be obvious and not to arouse further objections.

*I enclose copies of the drawings previously page 65 and the most recent page 68 which shows a modification by way of inclusion of a **Business Zone** at the eastern end of the site at the rear of Novar Crescent.*

*Objection is also made to the changes made to the written statement :-Exception is taken to the description "sustainable" and "local materials" - given that the developer may use some locally grown timber - it is misleading to call this local content if it has to be sent 200/300 miles round the country for processing and then returned to the site. From the appearance of one locally built example it seems that the local content may consist of only the " divots " on the roof!!! The conditions conclude - "Allocation to provide mix of uses, housing affordable and private, home -working units, **commercial units/craft workshops**. Layout of roads serving **commercial units/craft workshops**. **If after a period the commercial units/craft workshops fail to be developed the area for this use could also be developed for housing.***

These changes are not acceptable.

A further inconsistency is that whereas the Plan elsewhere calls for developments as close as possible to the Village this area and the phasing means starting with the area furthest from the Village centre and more especially the school.

*This land was in its entirety previously protected with a presumption in favour of agricultural use. It is considered locally as good quality agricultural land giving good crop yields and **the land should remain so protected.***

Perhaps when this plan was first conceived the School was capable of absorbing a further 31 pupils, but this is no longer the case. The Chairman of the Kiltarn Community Council visited the school very recently and reported evidence of overcrowding, insufficient teaching, treatment and storage areas and consideration will need to be given for the relocation of the School within the term of this Plan. A rethink of this aspect combined with the use of East & West Teandallon together with the most unsatisfactory circumstances in regard to Swordale Road and the now proposed Timber extraction necessitates urgent provision of plans to provide access across the river to the North side and if the will was present the way could be found. With contributions from the agencies involved combined with the fact that the Council owns this land the cost need not be prohibitive - price is what you pay -Value is what you get.

3.6 Mr & Mrs R Forrest [CD30/453]

We object to the proposed change for the following reasons:

1.) Zoning of additional land adjacent to the village is superfluous as there is already an abundant supply of undeveloped land zoned for industrial/ commercial purposes at the nearby Highland Deephaven industrial estate. The vacant land at H. Deephaven has been zoned as such for many years. Given this background it is

unnecessary -indeed perverse - to so designate a greenfield site adjacent to established residential areas.

2.) Commercial activities in this location would be seriously detrimental to the standards of amenity existing and future residents could reasonably expect to enjoy. The likely increase in traffic volumes associated with servicing small business units using the B817 through the village would be particularly unwelcome.

3.) An element of our objection made at the draft deposit stage was that zoning the land behind Novar Cres. for development would increase development pressures on this side of the village, risking eventual coalescence with existing and planned development at Highland Deephaven. The proposed change vindicates this view. Consent for major industrial development (viz. construction of a Highland Deephaven rail link and associated earthworks) to the East of Fyrish crescent is already in place. Allowing commercial development as proposed means residents of Fyrish and Novar Crescents would effectively be sandwiched between two industrial sites in close proximity to their houses. This is contrary to good planning practice.

4.) At all stages of the public consultation process from the initial "Planning for Real" exercise to comment on the Deposit Draft the community has firmly and consistently rejected the idea of any development on this site as unnecessary and undesirable. It appears from the proposal to designate this area as a new business zone Highland Council is continuing to favour the commercial benefit of certain landowning interests at the expense of the amenity of the community as a whole. If the consultation process is to retain credibility and the Local Plan is to enjoy the public confidence necessary for it to succeed the council must amend its proposals in accord with the majority view. Against the above background we believe the proposed change should be deleted from the adopted plan.

The Council's Response

3.7 **Mr A Macdonald [CD30/140]**

The Council is currently involved in an assessment on the suitability and viability of various potential options for access to the Teandallon site. One of these options involves the indicative access to the site shown on the framework within the written statement of the Plan. The indicative access would have to provide an adequate and safe access to the school, the measures to secure this will form part of any brief prepared for the site. Alternative access options include other crossing points to the west of the school and also having a more limited development of the Teandallon land which would not involve a new river crossing.

- 3.8 A technical analysis of the varying options will lead to a decision on the best way forward for development of the site. The economic viability of these options will ultimately dictate whether the allocations at Teandallon will be capable of meeting the longer term needs of the settlement. The provision of an access to the south and west of the school may be beyond the economic viability of the site but a full

assessment of the engineering options and costing will be required to come to a final conclusion.

- 3.9 The development of site H7, South west of Kiltearn School will require the provision of traffic calming measures and road widening to address any concerns.
- 3.10 Mr & Mrs R Forrest [CD31/453] Angus Craik [CD30/146], Glenda Mackenzie [CD30/143], Elizabeth Craik [CD30/144] & Grant Mackenzie [CD/30145]
In order to accord with the Structure Plan's objectives and strategic themes, housing allocations require to steer demand to appropriate locations within existing settlements. In order to support the settlement hierarchy and relate housing provision to employment opportunities, the availability of services and transport networks, housing allocations have been decentralised to some extent. To deflect some of the development pressure away from Inverness and to assist in supporting the sub regional functions of Nairn and the Evanton, Alness and Invergordon corridor, allocations have been increased above anticipated needs in both Nairn and Ross & Cromarty.
- 3.11 These increases have been reflected in the allocations of the review of the Local Plan. The revised figure contained within the Deposit Draft of the Local Plan reflects the latest projection information both in terms of population and household formation. The anticipated slow down in household formation is accounted for in the allocations for the area. Additional allocations made, in respect of the Structure Plan strategy, for the Evanton, Alness and Invergordon have also been reduced in line with the latest forecasts. The need element of the allocation for Evanton ranges from 130 to 170, dependant on the method applied, lower range reflects historic completion rates whereas the upper figure takes account of the projected increase in household formation, this figure also includes a flexibility allowance to allow for choice within the market place. The strategy element from the Structure Plan requires the allocation for a further 100 houses, several small established allocations account for the remainder of the overall allocation of 302.
- 3.12 The need to address the Structure Plan allocations is outlined within the Strategy section of the Plan. This is associated with the need to consolidate the settlement hierarchy and strengthen the appeal of the Evanton-Alness-Invergordon corridor in terms of meeting housing and employment requirements. Alness and Invergordon have also had housing allocations increased, in relation to their existing capacity and growth, to accommodate this element of the Structure Plan.
- 3.13 Policies and allocations relating to the development of employment opportunities at Highland Deephaven and also Alness and Invergordon allow for the future development of locally based employment opportunities within the locality of Evanton.
- 3.14 The level of objections to the proposals for housing allocations within Evanton have been significantly reduced between the various drafts of the Plan. Changes to the drafts have reduced the housing requirement from 450 to 270 between the Consultative Draft and Deposit Draft Plans. The future development of Evanton

- does require the identification of a significant land allocation in addition to the projected household growth has been the obligation to allocate land as part of the Structure Plan strategy to deflect development, both economic and housing, away from Inverness. Whilst this has not delivered significant employment growth at this point, potential for major employment growth exists with proposals for a major wood processing plant at Invergordon and also speculation of development at Nigg that may see the need for the strategic housing requirement.
- 3.15 The development potential of the Council owned site at Teandallon has not been fully established. The Council has commissioned consultants to undertake an assessment of the costs required to provide an adequate access across the River Sgitheach to release the full allocations at Teandallon East and West. Should the river crossing not be economically achievable the level of development at Teandallon would be significantly less and incapable of meeting the longer term requirements. It is in this context, both of the requirements of the approved Structure Plan and the possible restrictions on development at Teandallon, that the need exists for a site to provide for the medium to longer term development of the village at Novar.
- 3.16 2) Outwith the main settlements there is less chance for the provision of a full range of services. Decline of locally provided services has followed national trends in retailing with small locally based shops being unable to compete with larger retailers whose catchment areas covers large geographical areas. The scale of development reflects current development trends with the incorporation of the Structure Plan policy allocation, as mentioned in 1) above. The Structure Plan policy is aimed at reinforcing the role of small communities and growth of both housing and employment opportunities in Easter Ross.
- 3.17 3) Being the smallest of the communities mentioned it is to be expected that car ownership would be more prevalent than in larger communities, which support a greater range in facilities and therefore reduce the need for car usage.
- 3.18 There is a currently an hourly bus service to Dingwall providing a regular connection between Evanton and Dingwall. This service runs from before 7am until after 10 pm. In association with further development, the Council will consider the need for contributions from developers towards public transport improvements.
- 3.19 Investment is being made available through central government to assist in the provision of rail halts throughout Scotland. This may become available within the Plan period for settlements such as Evanton, which do produce an opportunity to develop this type of facility.
- 3.20 As explained in response to 1) above, the level of provision of housing land reflects current development trends and strategic policy. The full development of these sites would only be brought forward in association with the provision of locally based employment opportunities. The expansion of Evanton would be linked to potential development of employment opportunities within the Evanton - Alness - Invergordon corridor. Allocations within the Plan seek to address the projected

household growth figure for the settlement whilst accommodating further the Strategy Element of the Structure Plan.

- 3.21 4) The site at Novar Crescent is situated no further from the school than existing housing at Novar and Fyrish Crescent. Any development will be required to provide a plan to accord with Safer routes to School with the safety of school pupils paramount. The distances involved are not excessive and indeed guidance suggests that if a child walks for 30 minutes to get to school then that is half of the recommended daily exercise allowance.
- 3.22 The Scottish Executive has indicated a desire to be consulted on the take up of prime agricultural land, but have not indicated any opposition to the inclusion of the allocation for housing land.
- 3.23 The extension of the village would not be of such a scale or density as to fundamentally affect the landscape setting of the village. Requirements contained within the policy seek structural planting to provide an attractive environment for the development and the setting of the village.
- 3.24 The allocation at Novar Crescent does not expand the extent of the village towards the rail siding proposal. The final approval of the siding application is awaiting the signing of a legal agreement (S.75) in respect of the works to be carried out on the A9(T) and the provision of traffic calming measures for Evanton. The area of land on which the proposal is to take place is allocated to remain in agricultural use within the Local Plan. The approval of the development, when finalised, is also subject to a condition and S75 retaining the agricultural use of the land surrounding the sidings.
- 3.25 The land at Teandallon is constrained by several factors, the not least of these being the provision of an adequate access to service the site. The most satisfactory arrangement would be the provision of a crossing to the River Sgitheach, this can only be provided at considerable expense and the Council are currently investigating options for the provision of this. In addition to this contributions may be required to upgrade the waste treatment works serving the village.
- 3.26 The "large" scale expansion referred to, relates to Structure Plan strategy with the main allocation relating to current growth trends within the village itself. See response to 1) above.
- 3.27 The Council has considered the views of the public but has a duty to provide an effective supply of housing land to meet projected demand. Given the constraints present at Teandallon there is a need to provide a realistic alternative to meet projected need and demand.
- 3.28 Neil Sutherland on behalf of Mr Ronald Munro Ferguson [CD30/158]
In order to support the settlement hierarchy there is a need to relate housing provision to employment opportunities. Within the Plan policies and allocations relating to the development of employment opportunities at Highland Deephaven

and also Alness and Invergordon allow for the future development of locally based employment opportunities within the locality of Evanton. Whilst the announcement of plans for a large scale wood processing operation at Delny will provide employment opportunities and benefit the local economy

- 3.29 The potential to develop businesses and truly local employment opportunities should be embraced. This, as stated within your objection, exists within the site for the provision of integration of employment workspace within the curtilage of housing units to encourage home working in addition to the provision of commercial units/craft workshops accommodating uses that can operate in a residential setting.
- 3.30 Additions to existing policy 15 were incorporated with the insertion after first sentence, "Allocation to provide mix of uses, housing affordable and private, homeworking units, commercial units/ craft workshops. Layout of roads serving commercial units/craft workshops. If after a period the commercial units/craft workshops fail to be developed the area for this use could also be developed for housing." Modifications were also made to the Novar Draft Development Framework to reflect this additional use.

The Councils response to objections to the Deposit Draft with Modifications (Proposed Changes)

- 3.31 Angus Craik [CD30/449], Glenda Mackenzie [CD30/456], Elizabeth Craik [CD30/457] and Grant Mackenzie [CD30/458]
Modifications to the Deposit Draft Plan were placed on deposit, with objectors being notified of locations where the documents could be examined for a six week period ending 18 March 2005. This was to allow scrutiny of all proposed changes to the Plan, these being highlighted in the document, "Proposed Changes to Written Statement".
- 3.32 The intention of the developer is to utilise locally sourced materials wherever feasible and practical, timber extracted from Novar Estate may require to be sent outwith the immediate locale for processing but the distances involved are significantly less than using Scandinavian timber. The reference to sustainable refers also to construction methods used, high levels of insulation, use of solar gain and other forms of energy reduction complying with national policy in relation to energy efficient housing and also to GSP1 – Design and Sustainable Construction of the Deposit Draft Local Plan. The development would seek to provide local employment within the context of the village and of a nature that can be carried in a residential area.
- 3.33 The access point to the site means that construction at least of the access would require to be started at this point the provision of an overall masterplan should guide comprehensive development, to include basic requirements for servicing. Early development of a path network to cement links with the community would form part of a landscaping design to allow further integration with existing and proposed housing use.

- 3.34 In relation to the capacity of Kiltearn Primary, this has reduced as a result of one classroom being used as the nursery and as a result the capacity figure has reduced from 198 to 171. The school roll currently stands at 158, projections indicate that the roll is likely to increase to 160 in 06/07 and decline to 148 in the years 09/10, in line with national trends. The Council's Education Service has made projections on the basis of increased levels of house building providing additional schoolchildren numbers of 3 and 5[THC28/1], equating to between 12 and 20 additional houses per annum. This indicates that the school can accept an increase of an additional 12 houses per annum without exceeding the capacity of the school. Current house construction within Evanton have averaged 8 per annum over the past 5 years, an additional 12 or 20 houses per annum would mean a considerable increase in demand for housing in the area. The higher level of development is unlikely to occur even if the Structure Plan strategic element were implemented. General Supporting Policy GSP7 – Settlement Expansion seeks to ensure that development does not exceed 25% of existing dwellings within a settlement and as such would seek to control phasing of development.
- 3.35 Relocation of the nursery to a free standing nursery building to care commission standards would return the capacity of the school to 198, although the cost of this may be prohibitive, at approximately £350,000. The Education services currently views the school accommodation as adequate and do not consider there is a requirement for a potential replacement school at this time.
- 3.36 Mr & Mrs R Forrest [CD30/453]
1) & 2)The allocation at Highland Deephaven is generally for a larger scale of industrial uses although potential exists for smaller business type uses. The proposed uses intended for the small allocation at E15, rear of Novar Crescent would be of a type and nature that can co-exist in a residential environment such as homeworking units related to the residential development, commercial units and craft workshops. The integration of small scale business opportunities and housing is in keeping with national policy guidance. These businesses are not likely to generate excessively high volumes of traffic; these may be countered by a reduction in the number of commuting journeys to other employment locations.
- 3.37 3) The development of a rail siding to serve Highland Deephaven is subject to planning condition retaining an agricultural use on land not used for the formation of the rail link. As such the land outwith the route of the rail link will remain undeveloped.
- 3.38 4) Throughout the consultation of the various stages of the Plan the Council has sought to address the concerns of the community in relation to levels of allocation for Evanton. There is a need to comply with the approved Structure Plan and also deliver an adequate land supply for the longer term requirements of the village. In this respect Structure Plan policy seeks to provide the prospect for development of the Evanton-Alness-Invergordon through provision of employment and housing opportunities. In addition questions in regard to the potential of the full development of Teandallon brought about the requirement to identify an effective

housing allocation.

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 There is a requirement from the planning system to provide an effective supply of housing land to meet projected requirements to conform to the Structure Plan.(para 2.1above)
- 4.2 The dispersal strategy of the approved Highland Structure Plan, (para 2.3 above) places a requirement on the Local Plan to make additional allocations in Evanton, Alness and Invergordon to accord with the policy.
- 4.3 Questions existing in regard to the full effectiveness of the land allocations at Teandallon bring a further requirement to provide a deliverable alternative.
- 4.4 Levels of development within the village will be the subject of monitoring and preparation of an annual Housing Land Audit, to ensure that the rate of development within the settlement does not breach General Supporting Policy GSP7 – Settlement Expansion.
- 4.5 Impact of development on existing services - the Council will seek the provision of necessary works or contribution to their upgrading or provision as stated in development factors section of the Evanton chapter, *“Where development proposals will impact on facilities or require the upgrading of services or infrastructure the Council shall seek provision of necessary works or contribution towards the upgrading of services and infrastructure.”*
- 4.6 **Accordingly, The Council would ask that the Reporter recommends no change to the content of the Deposit Draft with Modifications, in respect of these matters.**