

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Agenda Item	2
Report No.	RP 130/03

**ROSS & CROMARTY PLANNING COMMITTEE
15 SEPTEMBER 2003**

**ROSS & CROMARTY EAST LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATIVE DRAFT:
REPORT ON REPRESENTATIONS**

Report by the Director of Planning & Development

Summary

This report advises Members of the response to the Consultative Draft of the Ross and Cromarty East Local Plan. A summary of the main representations and recommended changes to the Draft is contained in the main text whilst full details of all representations are set out in the Annexes to this report. The Area Planning Committee is invited to recommend to the Planning, Development, Europe and Tourism Committee that the proposed changes to the Draft Plan are incorporated in the Deposit Draft version of the Plan, which is the next stage leading to final adoption of the new Local Plan for the area.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 An interim progress report on the level of consultation, response and relative ongoing work was reported to the 11 February 2003 meeting of the Ross and Cromarty Area Planning Committee. The Consultative Draft Plan attracted some 2200 comments generated by
- 13 public meetings
 - 31 exhibitions or informal consultation sessions
 - approximately 400 written submissions
 - direct circulation of copies of the Plan for comment to 30 Community Councils and some 80 other agencies.
- 1.2 Representations have been received covering most of the provisions of the Draft Plan. Almost half the written submissions came from residents in Ardross (100) and Evanton (94), in response to housing land allocations. There were also a substantial number of representations from residents in Fortrose and Rosemarkie on housing land and from North Kessock on proposals for waste water treatment. Other local representations were lodged by the Community Councils of Maryburgh, Ferintosh and Knockbain, as well as the Black Isle Partnership, the Albyn Housing Society, Cromarty Arts Trust, Ross and Cromarty Enterprise and individuals in Strathpeffer. In addition, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) made substantial submissions.
- 1.3 Since December 2002, the team working on this Plan have thoroughly examined the issues raised in consultations with key servicing agencies and authorities, notably SEPA, Scottish Water and transport colleagues in TEC Services. Housing land allocations have also been re-appraised in many communities and studies have been commissioned by the Council into traffic issues in Dingwall and the Inner Moray Firth oil yards, sites and ports. In recent months, local Members have been consulted individually about the issues in their Division and on recommended changes to improve the Local Plan.

- 1.4 The Annexes to the report are in a four column table format indicating the relevant section and paragraph, the source and main text of each representation together with my recommendations, in the same sequence as the Draft Plan. This runs to **456** pages. However there is an index to guide Members to each section. Copies of all letters of representation and notes of public meetings are available for reference at the Council Chamber in Dingwall and in the Members' library at Council Headquarters in Inverness.

2. SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS AND MAIN ISSUES

These are listed below under headings that correspond with the main sections or Chapters of the Consultative Draft Plan. An index is attached to the front of the full report to guides Members to the relevant pages.

The Plan as a Whole/General Remarks, Chapter 1, Introduction and Chapter 2, Context

- 2.1 A number of comments were made on the Plan as a whole, most of which are complimentary. Others raise matters that the Plan excludes or lacks sufficient coverage of. There are also comments about the presentation of the Plan, the potential to improve the mapping and its availability in electronic format. There was some criticism about the consultation process being too short and undertaken at the wrong time of year.
- 2.2 There are a few comments on the Context for the Plan (Chapter 2), notably the need to explain the relationship with the Highland Structure Plan, as well as adding to the sustainability objectives, including greater reference local biodiversity issues, a commitment to monitoring and the need to recognise other community based initiatives and partnerships. In most cases, changes are recommended to improve the Plan whilst at the same time ensuring that statutory requirement to comply with the Structure Plan is retained.

Chapter 3. Key Issues

- 2.3 A number of representations question population growth and housing requirements. Most are in relation to concerns about further commuter related housing development pressures on the main settlements of the Black Isle in terms of traffic, landscape and social impact. These concerns are expanded in relation to specific housing land allocations in the settlements. Some changes are required to Chapter 3 of the Plan to account for the 2001 Census results and the latest Highland Council Area level population and household projections, which are based on the General Registrars Office (GRO) Highland level projections. These projections are considerably lower than the information used in preparing the Structure Plan. From 1991 to 2001, the population of Ross and Cromarty East increased by 650 persons or 1.5%, to 43,985. In that period, some settlements in the Black Isle experienced some of the highest population growth in Highland, up 25 %. Household growth was also significant across the whole Plan area (up by 2,050) and is projected to continue, up 2,700 by 2017. The corresponding requirement for new houses is down from the original 7,000 to 4,156, which includes an allowance for non-effective stock, 25% flexibility for choice and location and the dispersal of 480 houses from the Inverness area to Alness, Evanton and Invergordon. However, it is projected that the Plan area population could decrease by around 1,800 persons by 2017. This is based on the expected decline in fertility rates and in-migration. There is a recommendation to provide a table of more detailed population and housing information, and to apportion the revised housing requirements to sub-areas of the Plan. This has a knock on effect for some of the housing allocations. A full report on the projections for the Highlands and the Areas and their implications in terms of land allocations will be made to the Planning Development, Europe and Tourism Committee on 1 October 2003.

- 2.4 The need for affordable housing has proved to be an important issue. There are comments from the key social housing providers in the area, including concern that the figure of 25% of new houses for affordable purposes is insufficient to meet local needs. There is greater elaboration of the representations in relation to the General Policy in Chapter 5 and the Development Plan Policy Guideline appended to the Local Plan (see paras. 2.16 and 2.51 below).
- 2.5 Ross and Cromarty Enterprise has made a constructive contribution to the Plan in respect of advice on investment priorities in Fragile Areas, economic prospects, new technology and skills. It is recommended that these comments be largely reflected in the relevant issues, together with the need to give greater prominence to forestry/timber industry. A few changes in response to comments on natural heritage and tourism issues are also recommended.
- 2.6 The most significant number of comments on this Chapter were made on Infrastructure issues, particularly on roads and drainage. These include further elaboration of the concerns about the impact of commuter traffic generated by further house building on the Black Isle. Along with local concerns, the most notable representation in this regard is from the Scottish Executive who point out the need to either reduce housing land allocations, encourage more in the way of employment related development in the Black Isle or seek contributions from developers towards public transport improvements, including rail services. In response, attention is drawn to the Council addressing such matters through its Integrated Local Transport Strategy, which includes the need for more significant public investment in road infrastructure and sustainable transport. The Plan should also include policies covering the prospect of securing developer contributions towards improved bus services, localised traffic calming and Safer Routes to School proposals. There is more widespread support for more rail halts, sidings and links to major industrial allocations to encourage greater use of the rail network by Easter and Mid Ross commuters and for freight movements. A report to the Transport, Environment and Community Services Committee on 21 August sought Scottish Executive funding for a more frequent rail service between Inverness and Tain whilst the PDET Committee has granted planning permission for new rail freight facilities at Highland Deephaven.
- 2.7 Potential pollution from the disposal of waste water (sewage) is a key concern of SEPA and dominates their lengthy response to the Plan. Against a background of a range of European Directives, more general comments are made on this Chapter about the inadequacy of drainage systems or the lack of public drainage to accommodate further development in the Plan area. References to specific areas or settlements are indicated throughout the attached Annexes. SEPA's fundamental view is that the Plan should not be allocating land for development where there is currently no capacity in the public drainage system or in smaller rural communities where no such system exists. This is despite the fact that most of the land has been allocated in an adopted Plan for many years. However, land allocations are not based exclusively on spare capacity in services. The purpose of the Plan is to give direction to growth and enable the necessary infrastructure commitments to be made or planned, and to provide a basis for partnership with the private sector towards resolving deficiencies. As the Plan is fundamental to achieving a sustainable future for communities and the environment, it is recommended that SEPA's premise that land without a public sewage treatment system should not be allocated, is rejected.
- 2.8 Scottish Water intends to address the main problem areas, which will feature as priorities in the new Investment Programme due shortly. However, this is expected to indicate an overall reduction in overall funding allocations and, disappointingly, the concentration on upgrading drainage systems to comply with discharge standards required by European Directives by the end of 2005 for existing levels of effluent. There is no guarantee, therefore, that new or upgraded facilities will provide a measure of additional capacity without developer contributions. This in turn could severely hinder growth and development prospects across the

Plan area, adding to the difficulties of stimulating economic activity and providing affordable housing just as similar representations have arisen with respect to the Draft Inverness Local Plan. There are few locations in Ross and Cromarty East where more intensive development pressures might provide sufficient developer contributions to allow Scottish Water's Investment Programme to be accelerated or extended. There is also a danger that significant expansion of some communities would be detrimental to their social structure or landscape setting, or place pressure on other services (see Marybank, para. 2.35 below). Some modifications to Chapter 3 are recommended to reflect the general drainage requirements facing prospective developers. A new General Supporting Policy on Waste Water Treatment is also recommended for inclusion in Chapter 5. The Plan continues to promote development subject to satisfactory servicing and should be used to make the strongest representations to Scottish Ministers to increase investment levels in waste water treatment.

- 2.9 SEPA also make comment, mostly in the form of advice, on surface water drainage, flooding and waste management issues. Changes are recommended mainly to update the Plan, notably in relation to aligning with the draft national planning guidance on flooding (SPP7). Similarly, the Highland Waste Strategy and Waste Plan has progressed since the Consultative Draft Plan was published and the latest position needs to be reflected. Accordingly, changes are required to Chapter 3 and the General Policies in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4. Strategy

- 2.10 There are various comments covering most of the Strategic Themes in this chapter. Some suggest improvement in line with the Structure Plan and are recommended as changes.
- 2.11 With regard to the Spatial Elements of the Strategy, the local Member questions the location of the Achnasheen–Garve corridor in the Natural Heritage Area. The inclusion of Strath Rusdale and the intervening area west of Ardrross also drew representations from local residents. The redefinition of these areas is recommended, most significantly the Achnasheen-Garve corridor becoming a Rural Development Area. The term 'Natural Heritage Area' is also recommended for change to 'Heritage/Natural Zone', in response to a representation from SNH about confusing it with natural heritage designations.
- 2.12 There are a number of comments on the Hinterland Around Towns area, including questions about the Black Isle infrastructure being able to service further development in the Main Settlements of that area. This theme is expanded upon in relation to the specific housing allocations in the chapters on Avoch, Fortrose, Rosemarkie and Munloch. A few changes to the Hinterland Around Towns (HAT) map are suggested, the most significant being removing the need for a separate map. Alternatively, the intention is to include the HAT area as a separate feature rather than as part of the Background Policy (BP) 3 area on the Proposals Map. This would improve the interpretation of the policy, which only refers to housing. In particular, it would be less confusing when considering proposals for non-residential development in relation to the Proposals Map.

Chapter 5. General/Supporting Policies

- 2.13 A number of requests for additional General Supporting Policies are made. SNH seek more than a dozen such policies to cover natural heritage issues, but existing Structure Plan policies largely cover these. It is not the function of the Local Plan to duplicate these when both documents taken together form the Development Plan. However, more in the way of cross-referencing to relevant Structure Plan policies is recommended.
- 2.14 Representations also include British Telecom requests for inclusion of general policies on telecommunications, surplus property and housing on brownfield land. Since rapid

modernisation of telecommunications equipment and rationalisation of related property holdings the mid 1990's, BT, through their agents RPS Consultants, has submitted similar representations and objections to successive Local Plans. These usually go as far as a Public Local Inquiry causing the Council additional relevant expenditure. Each time the Reporters have rejected these mainly on the grounds that the Highland Structure Plan provides adequate general policy coverage. As such, changes are not necessary.

- 2.15 Some comments are made on the developing policy on Design and Sustainable Construction, although there will be an opportunity for comments on the full guidelines through wider consultation early in 2004. The importance of improving design quality came up at many of the public meetings and it is of course a key component of the Scottish Executive's policies on planning and architecture. As mentioned above under Chapter 3, there were comments on surface water drainage and flooding, which merit changes to the relevant General Policies, the most significant being a substantial revision to account for the provisions of new national planning policy guidelines in the wake of flood incidents last year.
- 2.16 There are several comments on the affordable housing policy from key housing development organisations and public meetings (see also para. 2.51 below). This includes reference to use of Section 75 agreements, quotas and subsidies to secure affordable housing with a link to the more explicit Development Plan Policy Guideline.

Chapter 6. Landward Area

HOUSING

- 2.17 The potential for housing development in defined Small Rural Settlements, housing groups and in the open countryside general is challenged by SEPA on the grounds of lack of adequate foul drainage systems. The main concerns relate to poor ground conditions for further septic tank drainage. SEPA generally do not favour the alternative use of 'package' treatment plants and reed bed systems for groups of houses, preferring connections to public drainage systems, which may need to be provided for the first time or are located some distance away in larger settlements. In most cases the potential for development is maintained in the Plan, subject to adequate drainage. This applies to some settlements where expansion of communities such as Barbaraville, Blairnich, Killen and Windhill is requested and recommended for inclusion in the Plan.
- 2.18 Almost 100 representations were made in response to the concentration and scale of housing provisions on land adjacent to the primary school and public hall at Ardress. Subject to suitable servicing, opportunities exist to divide the development potential between this and three other locations in the Ardress area and this is recommended in Annex to this report.
- 2.19 The local community seeks greater prominence to be given to the Nigg area and ideally indicate the whole area on the one map. This includes showing the relationship with the major industrial allocations, commercial interests and environmental features. This is linked to submissions covering the extent and development potential of the fabrication yard, oil terminal and the land reserved as a strategic petrochemicals site. Minor mapping and text changes are recommended.
- 2.20 The application of the Structure Plan Housing in the Countryside policies outwith the settlements attracted representations, indicating general support and suggesting some changes. Minor changes are recommended to the policy and the Hinterland Around Towns area. There are also comments in respect of the housing groups policy, including requests to indicate several more groups, which are covered in relation to Appendix III. Most of the groups suggested do not meet the policy or general guidelines on various grounds.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- 2.21 There are several representations on the Highland Deephaven strategic industrial and business development allocations, some in favour, but some against the promotion of highly sensitive foreshore areas for marine related development. It is recommended that these areas be excluded from the Plan, in line with the original master plan for the area. It is also recommended that the recently approved rail link, marshalling area and jetty expansion be indicated on the Inset Map. The latter will improve marine access to the developable land. Another key change recommended is the inclusion of the Inset Map for this area and the industrial estate on the same sheet as the Evanton village Inset. This will better illustrate the juxtaposition of all three areas with each other, which will be more informative for local interests. The policies for Highland Deephaven, the Nigg Yard and oil terminal also require to be adjusted to account for the potential indicated in the initial findings of the *Inner Moray Firth Sites and Ports* study.
- 2.22 There are various comments covering rural business, industrial and tourism sites across the whole local Plan area, such as at Fearn and Fendom airfields, Ardross, Kilcoy, Gateside (Munlochy), Tarvie, Brahan Estate, Delny Industrial Estate and Balmuchy (Fearn). In most cases minor changes are recommended.

SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE

- 2.23 Several issues are raised, notably on the cumulative traffic impact from further housing development in settlements on the road network across the southern part of the Black Isle, traffic on the A9, cycling, paths and access, rail freight and links to Highland Deephaven and Nigg. The indicative line of the potential rail link to Nigg has attracted “objections” on the grounds that it runs through a designated SSSI/Special Protection Area/Ramsar site and Nature Reserve. However, this line is indicated in the adopted Easter Ross Local Plan, it is linked to a strategic oil related development site reserved in the national interest and the environmental impact of any detailed proposal would have to be carefully considered. As these factors are already indicated in the Plan, no changes are recommended.

ENVIRONMENT

- 2.24 The vast majority of the remaining comments on the landward area cover **natural and cultural heritage designations**. These include detailed comments from SNH, RSPB, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Historic Scotland and the Council’s Archaeologist with requests for changes to policies and the Proposals Map. Some amendments to the policies that safeguard more local features and areas are recommended, together with the need to account for new information on Areas of Great Landscape Value and the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes.

Chapters 7. to 34. Main Settlements

ALNESS

- 2.25 A number of representations are made in respect of potential housing allocations, with the most significant being a request to allocate most of the land lying between Achnagarron and Milnafua for an expansion of the town. This is considered to be excessive in view of the amount of land already allocated on the east side of the town and closer to the central core. As such, it is premature and there are concerns about the traffic impact upon Achnagarron and intensification of use of that A9 junction.
- 2.26 There is a request to reinstate a previous business allocation on the A9 side of the Teaninich

Business Park. Its inclusion still retains a significant buffer between it and the A9 Trunk road. This is important in terms of visual amenity, traffic noise and a precedent for further development. These factors are a feature of the adopted Easter Ross Plan and equally apply to a request from the owners of Dalmore Distillery to allocate the open land between the A9 and the wooded slope below Dalmore House for expansion of the distillery. The formation of a new direct access from the A9 may not be permitted. In the circumstances, it is recommended that this land remains safeguarded as an Amenity area.

AVOCH

- 2.27 Representations focus on the scale, location and impact of housing land allocations. There are particular concerns about the cumulative impact of additional traffic from development in Fortrose, Rosemarkie and Avoch. The housing expansion area at Knockmuir East also drew adverse representations in respect of visual impact, access and steep gradient. There are also concerns that expansion at Muiralehouse, west of the Memorial Field housing allocation, would have a severe impact upon the working of this productive dairy farm. Land allocations have been re-appraised following the review of housing requirements across the Local Plan area and the expectation that the release of land in Munloch and Fortrose will reduce the demand in Avoch. As such, it is recommended that the area at Knockmuir East is reduced and the Muiralehouse allocation is deleted. A key requirement is the provision of affordable housing up to 25% of the overall development potential on sites of 10 or more houses. Other amendments are required to account for confirmation of smaller scale development opportunities elsewhere in the village.

CONON BRIDGE

- 2.28 Key concerns are the need for community facilities to keep pace with housing development, the provision of an enhanced village centre focal point around the car park and playing field, the future use of the vacant fish processing factory and the need to agree a framework to guide further development at Braes of Conon. Modifications are recommended in respect of all of these. In the centre of the village, it is recommended that the Council explore the possibility of allocating the playing field and adjoining farm land towards the railway for a mix of uses and facilities. These might include upgraded football and kick pitches, a play area, surgery, additional car parking, public toilets, housing or business development and rail halt with associated parking.

CROMARTY

- 2.29 There are various representations on housing development on vacant gap sites that are continued as allocations from in the adopted Local Plan. The most significant are those opposing the allocation of a large area of land bounded by High Street, Church Street, the 'Kirky' Brae and the playing field. This area was the subject of one of the issues heard at the 1994 Public Local Inquiry into objections to the Black Isle Local Plan Housing Alteration. This land offers a prime location for recently confirmed local housing needs, a new surgery/health centre and a modest public car park with links to the restoration of the adjacent Victoria Hall and Townlands Barn. A revised development framework is recommended with a strong emphasis on quality design and community involvement in progressing proposals within this Outstanding Conservation Area.

CULBOKIE

- 2.30 Most of the representations raise concerns about the high level of housing land allocations in relation to the current size of the village, the potential rapid growth rate and the lack of a modern school, sewage works capacity and other community facilities to support development.

Other representations seek the allocation of additional land for housing in the face of the above concerns. The main change recommended is the deferment of development of some of the land to the longer term in line with the General Policy in Chapter 5, aimed at controlling expansion of communities in a short period of time (25% in any 10 years). This is considered to be a reasonable approach in view of the fact that around 90 houses are currently under construction or have detailed planning consent in a village of 200 houses. A new primary school is to be built as part of the latest Public Private Partnership (PPP2), with an estimated completion date of summer 2006.

DINGWALL

- 2.31 The theme common to most representations is the allocation and development of housing land. Most significantly, a number of requests have been made to allocate more land for housing, and there is local opposition to development at Ferry Road. Due to the severe infrastructure constraints, there are difficulties over developing sites that would deliver affordable housing. This is an issue that the Ross and Cromarty Local Housing Development Forum is continuing to work on and came to a head in considering proposals for 68 houses at Tulloch. In further consultation, TEC Services raised major concerns about lack of capacity in the existing road and surface water drainage networks and advised of the need for developers to make contributions towards improvements. As a result, a traffic study is under way and a surface water/flood impact study is required to determine the full extent of the problems, the cost of improvements and how development should be phased. Once available, this information will support the policies of the Draft Local Plan in advising prospective developers. Recommendations include additional land for housing north of the business park. Requests to allocate more land between Craig Road and the Far North rail line and at Ferry Road are not appropriate, mainly in terms of flood risk. The former land is considered to have potential to offer great benefit to the community as a major amenity area with water features and public access.

EVANTON

- 2.32 There is considerable opposition to the large scale expansion of the village, both to the east and west. This was raised at the public meeting and in 94 letters. A major concern is that Evanton might become a larger dormitory settlement to accommodate overspill from Inverness. Related grounds for concern are traffic impact on the historic core of the village and the lack of suitable infrastructure and community services, notably drainage, water supply and capacity at the primary school. Re-appraisal of the key housing land requirements suggests a reduced requirement for housing land. In this regard, it is recommended that allocations at Teandallon and Novar Crescent be substantially reduced, coupled with the introduction of considerable open space and landscaping buffers.
- 2.33 Inclusion of a small area of additional housing land to the west of the primary school at Drummond Farm is recommended. The revised Plan will also clarify that development potential in the village is severely restricted until the sewage works are upgraded. Also, as mentioned in paragraph 2.21 above, it is recommended that the village Inset Map be placed on the same sheet as Highland Deehaven and the adjoining industrial estate.

FORTROSE & ROSEMARKIE

- 2.34 There is considerable opposition to the level of housing allocations indicated in the Draft Plan across both communities. This was raised at the public meeting, in more than 30 letters and in a petition with 125 signatures. These relate to the three main expansion areas of the Wards (Fortrose), the Ness-Fortrose Gap and Greenside Farm (Rosemarkie). There are strong representations against development on the grounds of landscape impact, potential

encroachment between the two communities, impact on the Conservation Areas, lack of infrastructure and community facilities to support further housing, traffic impact, loss of agricultural land and lack of justification for the level of development indicated. However, there are no other options for accommodating the projected housing requirements for these communities over the next 10 years and beyond. The lack of significant housing development opportunities will also severely affect the prospect of meeting existing affordable housing needs and drive up house prices. The re-appraisal of overall housing requirements suggests a reduction in the allocations, substantially at the Wards and Rosemarkie, addressing most of the grounds of concern. Reduction of the developable area of land between the Ness and Fortrose is also recommended to provide more in the way of separation from the town and set back from the Easter Greengates and salmon fishers' paths. Additional allocations of land for community use are also recommended.

INVERGORDON

- 2.35 For a community the size of Invergordon, the level of response was surprisingly low. The main issue raised, by Ross and Cromarty Enterprise, is the need to progress redevelopment of the Seabank tank farm. The Draft Plan already states that this requires a joint approach by public agencies and the owners, guided by master plan or development brief. Initial funding is required to assess the potential extent of contamination.
- 2.36 The Inner Moray Firth Ports and Sites Study appraised the current role and future prospects for Invergordon harbour. Initial findings suggest that the emphasis of port activities shifts towards the handling of clean cargo, cruise and marina facilities, coupled with waterfront regeneration. It is recommended that this be reflected in the relevant section of the Written Statement.

MARYBANK

- 2.37 A large area of land is identified for large scale expansion of the village to the east. However, the owner of land on the west side now seeks inclusion of an equally large expansion area. A key infrastructure deficiency is the lack of capacity in the sewage works with no proposals by Scottish Water for improvement. However, Scottish Water advise that if developers are prepared to pay for the necessary upgrading then development could be served. This raises concerns about the level of development required to cover the cost of improvements and the prospect of an overly large expansion of this small community. Together the sites would contribute of the order of 100 houses and this would overwhelm current social structure and ambience. The Community Council is rightly concerned about Marybank becoming a dormitory settlement for Inverness commuters. As such, it is recommended that a more modest development carefully planned and phased across two smaller areas be integrated into the landscape and provide planning gain in the form of community/recreation facilities and affordable housing.

MARYBURGH

- 2.38 The Community Council made a major submission that largely supports the provisions of the Plan for their area. The exception is the specific siting of the proposed new primary school with community facilities and the potential re-use or redevelopment of the existing school and Amenities Centre for housing. This issue and detailed comments listing what the community would like to see included in the new building have been referred to Education officials. The issue will be the subject of further debate with the community as proposals for the new school are progressed under the 21st Century Schools programme. Housing as part of the redevelopment package for the area will help fund new community facilities. This is also a good location for specialist housing. No changes to the Plan are recommended in this regard.

MUIR OF ORD

- 2.39 There are several requests to include more land for housing. However, there is doubt about the ability of infrastructure and other village services having sufficient capacity to accommodate their development, particularly in relation to the capacities of the primary school and new foul drainage works to accommodate projected pupils arising from the full development of land already allocated. There is also a need for localised road improvements and the A832 road bridge over the railway is a major constraint. No further additions to the housing land supply are therefore recommended.
- 2.40 The allocation for industry of part of the field used for public parking for the Black Isle Show attracted representations. The concerns relate to the closing down of options for more intensive use of the showground, beyond the actual show days. A modification is recommended which shifts the allocation to adjoining land that is largely planted out with conifer trees at present.

MUNLOCHY

- 2.41 There are a number of representations about the increased traffic arising from the cumulative impact of further housing development in Fortrose, Rosemarkie and Avoch. Imminent traffic calming measures will help to reduce the impact of current traffic levels and it is hoped that more traffic can be diverted via Tore.
- 2.42 The allocation of land around the garage for business light industrial and tourist related development also raised representations. In terms of development timescale, RACE/HIE investment priorities currently suggest that this is likely to be more long term. However the creation of employment opportunities in the Black Isle could help reduce the proportion of address concerns about commuter traffic to an from Inverness. Further discussions are required with RACE, land owners and the community before this allocation can be confirmed. It is recommended that this allocation is retained, but with some modifications to reflect the mainly longer term development prospects and the need for a significant landscape framework to be established in the interim.
- 2.43 The issue of developing a replacement primary school in the village attracted a number of representations, most of which support the indication of a site north of Brae Park. However, the land owner claims that this has some housing development potential and that the remainder of the land is not suitable even for a playing field. While the Council has no immediate plans to replace the existing school, the educational provision will be kept under review. No change is recommended to the relevant policy.

NORTH KESSOCK

- 2.44 Prior to publishing the Consultative Draft Plan, Scottish Water sought local views on a potential site for a new waste water treatment plant at Craigton. This resulted in many representations being made on the relevant statement in the Local Plan. Many residents would prefer the sewage to be piped across to the Inverness system for treatment at Allanfean. Scottish Water explored alternatives and a new preferred site identified to the north of the village appears to address representations head on. It is recommended that this change be made to the Plan.
- 2.45 A few representations are made about the extent of land at Bellfield identified for expansion of the village. The main concern in this regard is the allocation of land west of a major tree belt for housing, which goes beyond the provisions of the previous Local Plan. However, an existing outline consent covers this land and effectively represents the Council's view how North Kessock should develop. No changes are recommended.

STRATHPEFFER

- 2.46 Several representations were made about the principle of future housing development in the village, despite most of the allocated land being identified in the last two Local Plans. Representations also relate to the need to protect the setting of the Outstanding Conservation Area and woodland. The Council and its housing agency partners are seeking to progress the development of sloping land above the school, which will include a significant proportion of much needed affordable housing. Only minor changes are recommended to the Draft Plan to clarify specific requirements for developing allocated housing land.

TAIN

- 2.47 There are several comments on some of the major housing and business land allocations. This includes land at Knockbreck and concerns about access from Hartfield Gardens. Requests have also been made to allocate substantial additional areas of land for housing mostly on the outside of the A9 by-pass. The combined area of this additional land almost equates to the entire existing built up area of the town. Advice from servicing authorities indicates that early development of this land would prejudice the proper development of the town. More than sufficient land is already allocated for the next 10 to 15 years, including the long established allocation in Council ownership at Jubilee Drive/Scotsburn Road. This is to be serviced in the near future to include a high proportion of affordable plots. No changes are recommended.
- 2.48 There is a need to clarify development opportunities Blairliath, adjacent to the garden centre on the west side of the town. It is recommended that in addition to a business park, the Plan indicates potential for tourist/visitor facilities linked to servicing traffic using the A9, possibly including a budget hotel with restaurant.
- 2.49 The need for a sports ‘barn’ or centre at Knockbreck has also been questioned, particularly as the Council is to concentrate sports facilities at the Royal Academy. The re-allocation of the land at Knockbreck for longer term housing is recommended.

TORE

- 2.50 There are representations made both for and against existing housing allocations, the most significant being from SEPA in relation to the lack of adequate drainage. There are also concerns about the potential traffic impact from the industrial site allocation in the woodland south of the coal yard. A request is also made to allocate an area east of the garage for a large agriculture machinery sales and servicing depot. However, this site is considered to be inappropriate for this use. Only minor changes are recommended.

Draft Development Plan Policy Guidelines

- 2.51 These guidelines are intended to apply across the whole of Highland. They follow on from the Structure Plan and are appended to the Draft Local Plan. Several comments were made on the Housing in the Countryside and Affordable Housing Guidelines. There is a measure of support for the Housing in the Countryside Guidelines although a number of queries are made and clarification is sought on detailed matters. A number of key housing organisations make comments on the Affordable Housing Guidelines, including the fundamental issue of seeking developer contributions. In April 2003, in response to representations on both the Inverness and Ross and Cromarty East Local Plans, the Council agreed changes to this guideline.

3. PROCEDURE

- 3.1 Under the Council's Scheme of Delegation the Deposit Draft of the Local Plan requires the agreement of the Planning, Development, Europe and Tourism (PDET) Committee. However, the Area Planning Committee has a major role to play in the recommended content through consideration of detailed responses to the representations and drafting changes. It is intended that the Area Planning Committee's recommendations in this respect will be presented in full to the PDET Committee on 1 October 2003. Thereafter it is hoped that the Deposit Draft Plan can be published on 31 October with a 6 weeks period for submission of formal Objections. In this respect, it is anticipated that the earliest timescale for a report on the Objections to both the Area Planning and PDET Committees will be in the spring of 2004. Modifications arising are required to be the subject of further statutory consultation prior to a Public Local Inquiry.

4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Staff time is already committed to taking this Plan through the remaining stages towards adoption. The Council has previously agreed financial contributions to the Inner Moray Firth Sites and Ports Study and the Dingwall traffic study.

Recommendations

That this Committee:

- (i) agrees the changes to the Consultative Draft of the Ross and Cromarty East Local Plan as recommended in the Appendix;
- (ii) recommends to the Planning, Development, Europe and Tourism Committee that these changes be incorporated as part of the Deposit Draft of the Local Plan; and
- (iii) requests the Planning, Development, Europe and Tourism Committee to seek an early meeting with Scottish Water and SEPA to explore further the potential constraint on development that would result from accepting the consultation response with regard to the capacity of /lack of investment in the public sewage systems both in the Ross and Cromarty East and Inverness Local Plans.

Signature:

Designation: Director of Planning & Development

Date: 29 August 2003

Author: Alan Ogilvie, 702262

Background Papers

1. Ross & Cromarty East Local Plan Consultative Draft – June 2003.
2. HC File RC/LP/6.5: Representations on the Ross & Cromarty East Local Plan Consultative Draft.
3. Notes of public meetings and of comments made at the exhibitions held across the Ross and Cromarty East Local Plan area from 4 June to 3 July 2002.
4. The Review of Inner Moray Firth Ports and Site; HIE/DTI - July 2003