

Agenda Item	6
Report No	ECI/15/20

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Economy and Infrastructure

Date: 2 September 2020

Report Title: Draft Housing in the Countryside Supplementary Guidance

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report presents a revised Draft Housing in the Countryside Supplementary Guidance (HICSG) for approval for consultation. This update to the adopted Supplementary Guidance (SG) has been prepared to reflect a number of adjustments to the policy criteria for rural housing developments, and to make the guidance clearer, more succinct and in line with national policy. Subject to approval by Committee, feedback gathered through a public consultation process will be taken into consideration in the finalised version of the Supplementary Guidance, which will be reported back to Committee for agreement before seeking adoption.
- 1.2 This Draft SG reflects the broad feedback from Members at a recent workshop.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- i. consider and agree the Draft Housing in the Countryside Supplementary Guidance at **Appendix 1** for approval for public consultation;
 - ii. note that the finalised Housing in the Countryside Supplementary Guidance will be reported back to Committee later this year, prior to seeking adoption from the Scottish Government; and
 - iii. note that, from the point of Committee approval, the Revised Housing in the Countryside Supplementary Guidance will become a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource - Resources to undertake the consultation, review of comments and complete any revisions and statutory adoption process are already allowed for within the service budget.

- 3.2 Legal - The approach set out in the revised Housing in the Countryside Supplementary Guidance (HICSG) is considered to be consistent with Scottish Government guidance on rural development and the adopted Highland-wide Local Development Plan to which this document will be 'hooked'. The draft guidance will undergo Habitats Regulations Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment screening and is now subject to scrutiny by Elected Members and then public consultation, all in compliance with the relevant legislation.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island) - The approach set out in the revised HICSG seeks to ensure that development takes places by sustainable means, in sustainable locations.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever - The revised HICSG will undergo both Habitats Regulations Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment screening. Any changes required as a result of these assessments will be incorporated into the guidance before the revised HICSG is published for consultation.
- 3.5 Risk - There are no known risks associated with this HICSG.
- 3.6 Gaelic - Gaelic headings and subheadings will be included when the HICSG is statutorily adopted.

4. Background and Context

- 4.1 The existing Development Plan policy framework for determining applications for new housing in the countryside is set out in Policy 35 (Housing in the Countryside (Hinterland Areas)) and Policy 36 (Development in the Wider Countryside) of the [Highland-wide Local Development Plan](#) (HwLDP), adopted in April 2012. In March 2013, and in accordance with the above policies, the Council adopted a single Supplementary Guidance document covering Housing in the Countryside and Siting and Design to provide further detail, advice and clarification on the acceptable locations and design for new rural housing.
- 4.2 The Council is supportive of new rural housing throughout Highland to help communities thrive and people live and work sustainably in high quality environments. There is currently a two tier approach towards rural housing developments in the countryside. In Hinterland areas around the Moray Firth and Fort William new housing is supported subject to meeting criteria set out in HwLDP Policy 35 (Housing in the Countryside). The remainder of the Highland rural area is categorised as the 'Wider Countryside', within which there is a more permissive approach to new housing, subject to siting and design.
- 4.3 Whilst the Council supports rural housing, the council will direct the majority of housing growth across the Highland area to existing urban settlement areas due to sustainability, resource efficiencies and climate change reasons.
- 4.4 The Housing in the Countryside Supplementary Guidance (HiCSG) has been reviewed for the reasons outlined below:
- opportunity to make the guidance clearer and present it in a more user friendly format;
 - to ensure consistency with Scottish Planning Policy (2014), in particular the requirement to avoid the use of occupancy restrictions;
 - incorporate the Housing in the Countryside Briefing Note 2016;

- provide additional advice on requirements for all housing in the countryside proposals following the adoption of all three area local development plans which have reduced the number of defined settlement development areas;
- take into account of the outcome of a number of housing in the countryside applications;
- and planning appeals;
- to conform with the Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency declaration; and
- reflect feedback from Members.

4.5 In preparing the revised guidance the Development Plans Team have worked closely with Development Management colleagues. Meetings have also been held with the Council's independent agricultural advisors and the Crofting Commission. Feedback from Members workshops held in February, June 2019 and July 2020 has also been taken into account.

5. Content and Key Changes

5.1 There is no opportunity to amend the current housing in the countryside or crofting policies contained in the HwLDP or the hinterland boundaries as part of this SG review. Instead it is limited to the content of the current HiCSG. Any reviews of policies would be undertaken as part of a HwLDP review and hinterland boundaries as part of area local development plan reviews.

5.2 The Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan (IMFLDP) is currently being reviewed, including its hinterland boundaries. It is anticipated that the first formal stage of the IMFLDP, known as the Main Issues Report, will be presented to relevant area committees in Q4 2020.

5.3 A number of amendments have been made to the HiCSG as a result of this review. In some circumstances housing in the hinterland exceptions have been relaxed to encourage more rural housing opportunities in the countryside, with the criteria and requirements for all proposals being made clearer.

5.4 To better highlight the importance of design in new rural housing, specific design criteria have been incorporated into the relevant sections. The content of the revised guidance, including an explanation of any key changes is provided in the sections below.

5.5 Requirements for all Proposals

In an effort to streamline the guidance document, reduce duplication and make it easier for the reader to follow, the 'Wider Countryside' section (Section 7 in the current SG) has been merged into a new 'Requirements for all Proposals' section at the start of the document. These requirements relate to all rural housing developments regardless of their individual location across Highland and it sets a generally supportive approach to rural housing on the proviso that the siting, location and design are acceptable.

5.6 Hinterland

5.6.1 Housing Groups

The definition of a housing group has been relaxed from the previous requirement of 3 detached houses with a perceptible relationship to one another, to a more permissive requirement of 3 detached buildings, two of which are required to be houses. The

guidance also provides a clearer and more concise definition of a housing group to aid their identification and thus support further housing growth within them.

5.6.2 Garden Ground

No fundamental changes are proposed to this exception, as it is already considered to offer a good degree of flexibility and has delivered a good number of appropriate housing sites. In an effort to improve the design quality of this type of proposal, specific design criteria have been included in this section of the guidance.

5.6.3 Conversion, Reuse and Replacement of Traditional Buildings

The guidance continues to encourage the reuse and/or conversion of buildings that are of traditional form and construction or historic merit. Criteria are set out to explain the circumstances when demolition and replacement of traditional buildings may be supported. Specific design criteria have been included for each option.

5.6.4 Replacement of an Existing House

This exception has been relaxed to allow for a replacement house in most circumstances. Applicants are no longer required to provide a report that demonstrates the existing house is not economically capable of being reinstated/renovated. Design criteria information has also been included.

5.6.5 Previously Developed Land

No fundamental changes have been made to this section, over renaming it (previously called Brownfield) to bring it into line with HwLDP policy title. The text has been revised to make clearer what a Previously Developed site is and information required to support any future planning application.

5.6.6 Affordable Housing

The guidance continues to allow affordable housing in the hinterland to meet a demonstrable local affordable housing need and subject to the involvement of a Registered Social Landlord, the Council and Housing Trusts.

5.6.7 Housing to Support an Existing or New Rural Business

The Council is keen to support the growth of genuine existing and new rural businesses and following the removal of the use of legal agreements tying the house to the land/business, a balanced approach has to be adopted to ensure that new houses and business are both developed/expanded concurrently rather than a business being utilised as a justification for a new rural house plot. Consequently, an applicant will need to demonstrate that they have considered other housing options (e.g. within nearby towns and villages, expansion of existing groups and conversions of other buildings) prior to advancing a new rural greenfield house site. Applications will continue to be required to provide an Operational Needs Assessment and Business Plan to demonstrate the need for both the business and house.

This section now also makes specific reference to tourism accommodation and holiday letting homes. There is no longer support for holiday letting homes in the countryside that are capable of being used as permanent residential accommodation.

5.6.8 Retiring Land Manager

The Council is committed to supporting the succession of existing agricultural based businesses, but this needs to be carefully managed to help prevent this exception being misused. To allow a house to be developed under this exception clear requirements are outlined to evidence that the land manager is retiring, an Operational Needs Assessment required to demonstrate an ongoing full time on site

presence is also required and for a sequential approach to be followed in site selection.

5.7 **Crofting**

Given the importance of crofting to the Highland rural economy, as part of the preparation of this revised guidance the Crofting Commission were consulted and meetings and workshop held. Their feedback has resulted in a new section on Crofting being contained within the revised guidance. On balance it was agreed that there would continue to be no exception for new croft houses in the hinterland unless the housing to support an existing or new rural business exception could be met. Further guidance has been provided for new croft houses in the Wider Countryside and Settlement Development Areas, for example avoiding the loss of locally important croft land and that normally only a single house can be supported on any one croft.

5.8 **Siting & Design**

A key strand of the revised HiCSG is to seek improvements to the site selection, site layout and design of rural housing sites and the 'Siting & Design' section of the SG has been extensively revised and updated to place more emphasis on achieving high quality sustainable developments. This section has also been revised to make it more user friendly through the use of additional illustrations and photographs.

6. **Next Steps**

- 6.1 Once committee approval to commence formal consultation on the HICSG is received, the Development Plan Team will finalise the formal consultative version of the document, notices and adverts as required by the Act.
- 6.2 It is anticipated that the publication of the formal consultation will take place in Autumn/Winter 2020. In line with the Development Plan Scheme and updated Participation Statement we will be publicising an interactive document online which can be used to provide feedback through our consultation portal. We will also consider opportunities for webinars or other web based meetings and online (video) guides.
- 6.3 A report on the outcome of the consultation and the final updated version of the HICSG is planned to be presented to Committee for Members approval in early 2021, prior to undertaking the final adoption process.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

Date: 14 August 2020

Author: Matthew Hilton, Planner

Background Papers: Draft Housing in the Countryside Supplementary Guidance contained in Appendix 1

Draft Housing in the Countryside Supplementary Guidance

Dreachd Stiùireadh Leasachail mu Thaigheadas air an Dùthaich

September 2020



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Box 1

Have Your Say

The Council is seeking your views on this draft guidance during a X week consultation beginning X. Your responses will inform the finalised guidance that will be considered by the Economic and Infrastructure Committee, and adopted following clearance by Scottish Ministers.

A series of questions are set throughout the document where you will find an 'Add Comments' tab to make comments on each section.

Comments on the draft guidance must be submitted through our consultation portal consult.highland.gov.uk by X. Comments by letter or email will not be accepted unless otherwise agreed in advance with the Development Plans Team. If you have made an arrangement with the team to submit a written response, please ensure your comments specifically refer to the sections you are sharing your views on.

To contact the Development Plans Team:

Email: devplans@highland.gov.uk

Telephone: 01349 886608

Introduction

- 1.0.1** The Council is supportive of new rural housing throughout Highland to support sustainable communities thrive and people to live and work in a high quality environment. This guidance sets out detailed advice in relation to proposals for new housing in the Highland countryside. High standards of siting and design are key to achieving successful development in the countryside, this guidance has been prepared to explain and illustrate how this should be achieved.
- 1.0.2** This guidance, once adopted, will replace the existing Housing in the Countryside Supplementary Guidance adopted in 2013 and the Housing in the Countryside Briefing Note 2016. It will form part of the Council's Development Plan and be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.
- 1.0.3** This guidance relates to the area covered by the [Highland-wide Local Development Plan \(HwLDP\)](#) and the associated adopted and emerging [Area Local Development Plans \(Area LDPs\)](#) covering the Highland area should be read alongside all relevant policies within the entire Development Plan and adopted [Supplementary Guidance](#). For proposals within the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) area please refer to the CNPA Local Development Plan and their associated Planning Guidance.

1.0.4 The Council operates a two tier approach towards rural housing development, with the areas around Inverness and Fort William being designated as the 'Hinterland' (with proposals considered against Policy 35 of the HwLDP) and elsewhere known as the wider countryside (with proposals considered against Policy 36 of the HwDLP). This document provides detailed guidance where new housing will be acceptable in each area. It also recognises that crofting is a core component of rural life in the Highlands and provides guidance for developments on crofts within settlements, the hinterland and the wider countryside.

1.0.5 This guidance has been prepared under the terms of the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 and the Town and Country Planning (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2008. During the preparation of this guidance, the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 received Royal Assent and work is currently progressing on regulations, guidance and transitional arrangements for Development Plans. This new act will bring a fundamental change, resulting in no provisions for future supplementary guidance. As such, when the new HwLDP is adopted it will supersede and replace all adopted supplementary guidance hooked to it.

Aim and Objectives

1.0.6 The aim of this guidance is to be supportive of appropriate new rural housing throughout Highland, whilst minimising the impacts on the environment, infrastructure and services. To do this it is important that the following objectives are achieved:

- Raise the quality of housing development in the countryside by addressing issues of location, siting, design and environmental impact;
- Encourage rural development that supports prosperous and sustainable communities and businesses whilst protecting and enhancing environmental quality;
- Ensure that new rural housing does not place an undue strain on public services and infrastructure;
- Maintain and grow communities through encouraging suitable development opportunities;
- In Hinterland areas:
 - Guide most new development to locations within or adjacent to settlements;
 - Protect against an unsustainable growth in car-based commuting and the suburbanisation of the countryside;
 - Provide opportunities for small scale housing development in appropriate countryside locations;
- In the wider countryside:
 - Allow the construction of single houses outwith settlements, on the proviso they are well sited, designed to fit with the local landscape character and take account of landscape protection;
- Promote and support housing opportunities in crofting communities whilst balancing environmental considerations.

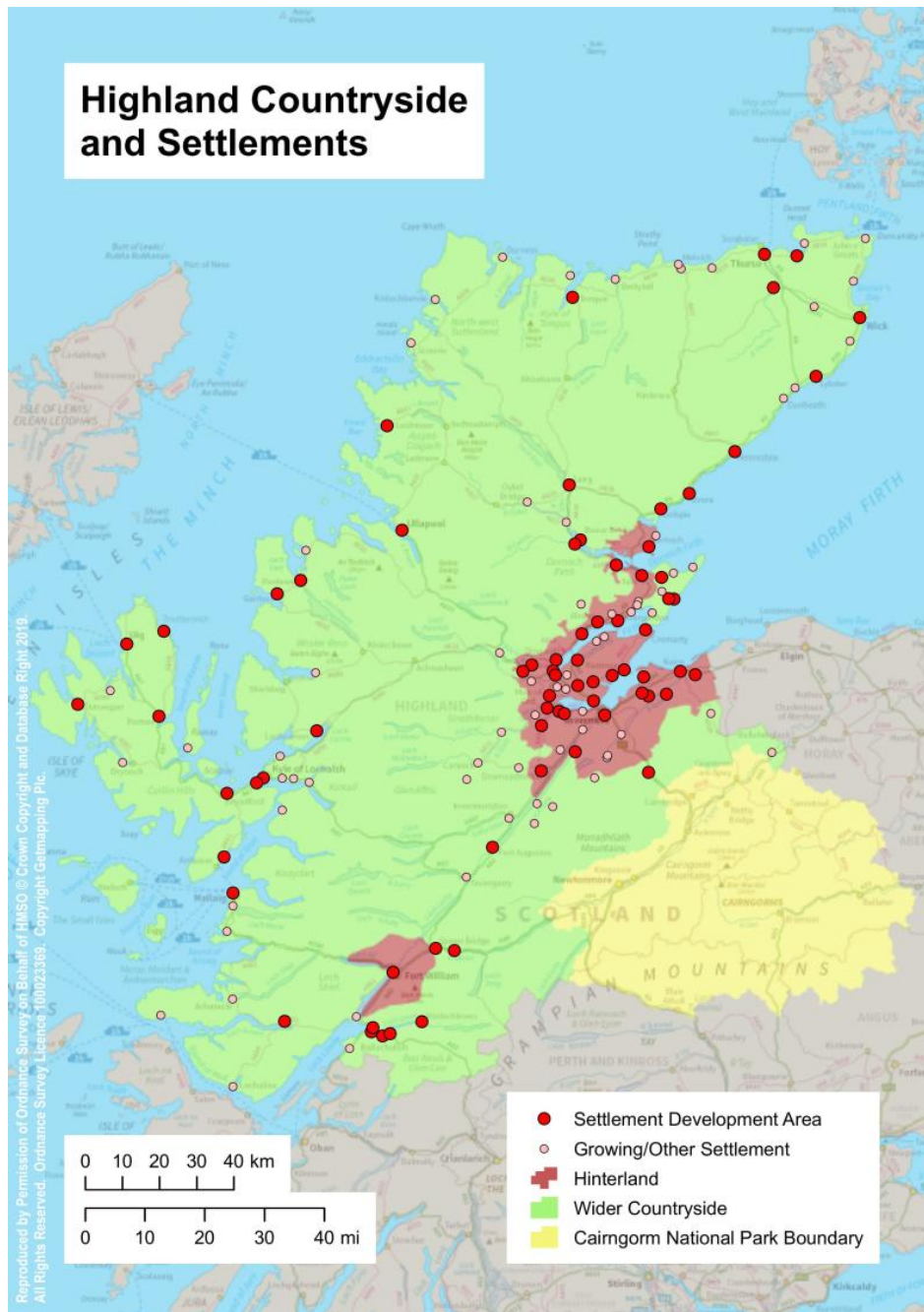
Question 1

Do you have any comments on the Aims and Objectives of this guidance? Please reference the specific Aim/Objective where appropriate.

Section 2 Is this Guidance relevant to my proposal?

2.0.1 This guidance applies to proposals for housing developments in the Wider Countryside and Hinterland areas. If a proposal falls within a Settlement Development Area or a Growing/Other Settlement as defined in the Area Local Development Plans this Guidance does not apply.

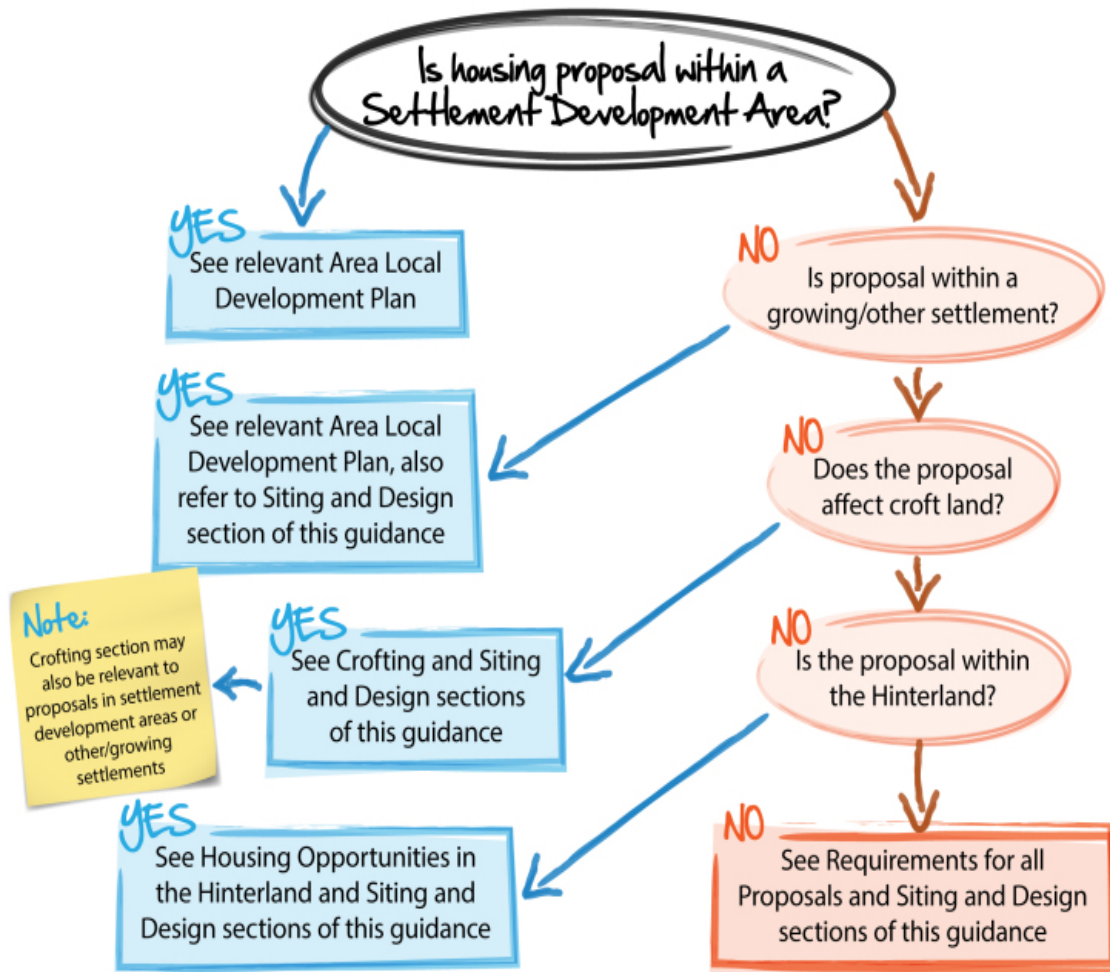
Map 1 below and the [online interactive version](#) allows readers to determine if a proposal is in the countryside and therefore whether this guidance is relevant.



Map 1

2.0.2 The flow chart below provides further advice as to the relevance of this guidance and in particular the relevant section/s which may be relevant to the determination of a planning application.

Section 2 Is this Guidance relevant to my proposal?



2.0.3 The Council strongly encourages the opportunity to provide pre-application advice before a formal application is submitted. Information about how to submit a pre-application request can be found on the Council's website [website](#).

Question 2

This section is intended to make it easier for prospective applicants to find out how the policies / guidance could affect proposals, is this clear and helpful?

Section 3 Requirements for all Proposals

3.0.1 Choosing the right site is the most important consideration and makes the difference between a new house being acceptable or not. New houses are expected to be carefully located to minimise their impact on the environment throughout their lifetime. Consideration should be given to the natural constraints of the site, including topography, shelter and solar gain, as well as the proximity to local services and employment opportunities.

All new houses in the Highland countryside are expected to meet the following criteria:

- Proposals should have a positive impact on the setting of any settlement;
- The local character, scenic quality, and wider landscape characteristics of the area are respected;
- Be compatible with the existing pattern of development, adjacent land uses (including working farms or other rural industries) and does not undermine the coordinated approach to the strategic future expansion of any settlement;
- Sensitively addresses site constraints including topography; natural, built and cultural heritage features; flood risk; trees and woodland;
- Be compatible with existing servicing and utilities. Development in very remote/inaccessible areas will be resisted to avoid placing unacceptable pressure on limited infrastructure and services, including school bus provision and refuse collection;
- Protects public views over open water;
- Demonstrates sustainable design principles including siting, layout and building design, as set out in Section 6 'Siting and Design'; and
- Provides a safe and secure access to the public road network in accordance with the Council's [Access to Single Houses and Small Housing Developments Supplementary Guidance](#); any required road and junction improvements must be achievable by the applicant.

Where rural areas of the Highlands come under significant pressure from the cumulative impact of housing development, the Council will prepare a capacity assessment to determine any potential for further rural housing growth within that area.

Question 3

Do you agree with the 'Requirements for all Proposals'? Please tell us why, or suggest any alternatives.

Section 4 Housing Opportunities in Hinterland Areas

4.0.1 Scottish Planning Policy and the HwLDP both recognise the importance of protecting rural areas against unsustainable growth in car based commuting and suburbansiation of the countryside. The Moray Firth and wider Fort William areas experience the greatest pressure for rural housing growth due to the areas being easily accessible, to address and control this pressure, Hinterland boundaries were established around these areas as part of the Inner Moray Firth LDP and West Highland and Islands LDP respectively. Any amendment to the hinterland boundaries will form part of the relevant LDP review and are not part of this guidance.

4.0.2 To control the level of demand experienced in the Hinterland areas a more managed approach to housing development is required to prevent the suburbanisation of the countryside and the breaching of service network capacities. The approach does however acknowledge that there is still potential for small scale housing development in the Hinterland areas, based around existing housing groups, renovation and redevelopment of existing buildings and housing linked to rural businesses.

4.1 Housing Groups

4.1.1 The Council supports new houses within existing housing groups provided proposals are consistent with Section 3 'Requirements for all Proposals', the guidance below, and the general policies of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan.

4.1.2 "Housing group" is defined as:

- at least 3 buildings (2 of which must already be houses) that are physically detached from each other but that have a perceptible relationship with each other and share a well-defined, cohesive character.

4.1.3 "Building" means:

- a house;
- a non-residential building (of a scale no smaller than a traditional rural house) granted permission before April 2012 and defined as being above ground, with the majority of the original walls to wallhead height and with a roof or had a roof in the past.

4.1.4 "Building" **does not** include:

- an agricultural or forestry building permitted under prior notification/prior approval;
- a building whose use is restricted to holiday accommodation by planning condition/obligation or by design;
- a self-contained annex or "granny" flat (even if physically separate from the "parent" house);
- a domestic outbuilding or garage;
- a non-residential building granted permission after April 2012.

Section 4 Housing Opportunities in Hinterland Areas

4.1.5 If you are unsure whether your proposal is within a housing group, the Council strongly encourages the opportunity to provide pre-application advice. Information about how to submit a pre-application request can be found on the Council's website [website](#).

4.1.6 If your proposal is within a housing group, the Council will assess the capacity and suitability for new housing development within the group. To do this the Council will consider the existing form, character and cohesiveness of the group and the level of containment provided by natural or established man-made boundaries (e.g. watercourses, trees, roads, plantations etc).

The Council's criteria for the acceptable expansion of a housing group are:

The proposed new house **will**:

- constitute in-fill or rounding-off of the group into a readily definable development site; **and**
- enhance the cohesiveness and perceptible relationship of the buildings in the group and reflects the character, spacing, scale and amenity of the buildings in the group (i.e. the new house will appear as if it was always part of the group).

The proposed new house **will not**:

- create ribbon or linear development; or
- create an intrusion into a previously undeveloped field or open land; or
- overwhelm the landscape setting.

No housing group will be permitted to increase in size by more than 100% of the number of houses built, under construction or with an extant planning permission as at 3 August 2011.

Question 4

The definition of a housing group has been relaxed to allow for two houses and a non-residential building to form a housing group (the current guidance defines that three houses constitute a housing group). The criteria for expanding a housing group has also been edited to be less prescriptive. Do you support these changes?

Design advice for housing groups

Ribbon and Linear Development

An existing feature of the countryside is small groups of houses built along road frontages. These are generally well established and consist of no more than two or three houses.

Adding to this linear form, becomes an issue when these small groups are extended along a road or landscape feature, with the result being an accumulation of houses dominating otherwise rural views and leading to sub-urbanisation and an erosion of the rural character.

Unplanned development of this type, with no natural finish point and unrelated to land use or to a traditional township pattern will not be supported.

There are areas where this form of development does represent the traditional development pattern. For example crofting townships often exhibit linear forms of settlement pattern that are traditional to the area. Over-development and coalescence of adjacent townships will not generally be supported.

Infill Housing Sites

Within a housing group the layout of the existing buildings often creates sites which may be appropriate for infill development. This will generally be supported, providing the wider siting and design criteria is adopted in the layout and design.

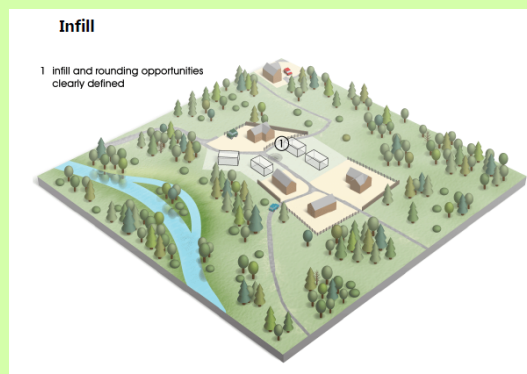
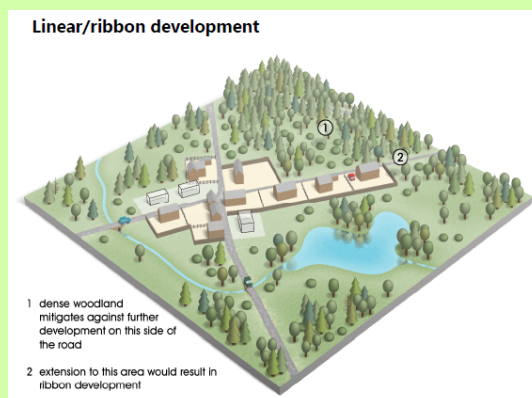


Table 1

4.2 Garden Ground

4.2.1 The Council supports new houses within existing garden ground provided proposals are consistent with Section 3 'Requirements for all Proposals', the guidance below, and the general policies of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan.

4.2.2 "Garden ground" is defined as:

- Land maintained as a domestic garden associated with an existing dwelling house. The land will have a boundary treatment (e.g. hedge, fence, wall etc) clearly defining the extent of the land and ground management of the land must be evident. The land may have domestic structures (e.g. sheds, summer houses, decked seating areas), with paths or well-trodden routes to these structures indicating use of the land ancillary to the dwelling house.

4.2.3 "Garden ground" **does not** include:

- land physically separate from a dwelling house;
- ground accommodating horses/non-domestic livestock/associated animal housing;
- ground accommodating polytunnels;
- fields (whether in use for agricultural purposes or not);
- woodlands/felled woodland;
- land occupied by temporary structures (e.g. moveable play equipment, pegged out gazebos etc) unless it meets the definition above.

The Council's criteria for development within garden ground are:

- the existing garden ground must be of an adequate size to accommodate the parent property and the proposed new house (NB the garden to house ratio in a rural location is generally more generous than in an urban location);
- the proposed new house must respect the scale, proportions, building line and amenity of the parent property and relate to the pattern of existing development in the surrounding area;
- existing mature landscaping that has a positive amenity impact must be capable of being retained;
- all infrastructure/services (e.g. foul drainage/surface water soakaways) must be contained within the plot associated with the proposed new house

4.3 Conversion, Reuse and Replacement of Traditional Buildings

4.3.1 The Council supports the conversion, reuse and replacement of existing traditional buildings provided proposals are consistent with Section 3 'Requirements for all Proposals', the guidance below, and the general policies of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan.

Section 4 Housing Opportunities in Hinterland Areas

4.3.2 Where buildings are of traditional form and construction and/or are of architectural or historic merit, the Council will seek their reuse and/or conversion before consideration will be given to replacement.

The Council's criteria for conversion and reuse

Proposals for the conversion and reuse of traditional buildings shall be supported where:

- The building being substantially complete and meeting one of Section 7 'Appendix 1 - Stages of Rural Building Dereliction' and adherence with the design advice listed below
- The building is of a scale that is commensurate with a habitable building without requiring substantial external alterations.
- Where new extension(s) are proposed they should reflect the character and proportions of the original building; and
- The character of the building is not altered by the development to an unacceptable degree.

Design advice for conversion and reuse:

1. Retain the original character of the building
2. Make use of existing openings whenever possible.
3. Retain existing roof form.
4. Keep new structural openings to a minimum
5. Extensions or enlargement should only be contemplated where they reinforce the architectural integrity of the building.
6. Normally extensions should not exceed the height of the original structure.
7. New doors and windows should be sensitively added and unnecessary projections avoided.
8. Special care should be taken with buildings of obvious architectural distinction (churches, mills, steadings, schools and listed buildings).
9. Existing features such as lades, water wheels, louvered windows, ventilator shots, architectural details should be retained where possible.
10. The proposal complies with the detailed guidance within the 'Siting & Design' Section of this document.

Temporary buildings such as Dutch Barns and modern buildings less than 5 year old are not considered suitable for reuse or replacement.

A site Analysis should also be undertaken to establish boundaries, existing landscape shelter belts and areas used to store or dispose of waste/machinery.



Steading Conversion ©Highland Council

The Council's criteria for demolition and replacement

Where a traditional building has deteriorated to such an extent that it is incapable of conversion or renovation, the Council will support its replacement where:

1. The traditional building/s meets one of Section 7 'Appendix 1 - Stages of Rural Building Dereliction'
2. A Structural Report from a suitably qualified professional is submitted to the Council to demonstrate that conversion or rehabilitation cannot be achieved and the reasons why;
3. The replacement respects the form and scale of the original building;
4. Existing site contours, features, boundaries and access points are utilised where appropriate;
5. The new house is within the same curtilage of the original building and only re-sited where benefit to the landscape and setting can be achieved;
6. Re-use of duntakings from the original building, especially natural stone and slate, in the new building or elsewhere on site; and
7. Listed Buildings and other statutory protected buildings and structures will normally have to be retained rather than demolished.

Design advice for demolition and replacement:

Where an existing building has deteriorated to a degree that it is incapable of renovation or conversion in line with the above policy criteria, its replacement may be acceptable. It should not however, be assumed that a dwelling of a size significantly larger than the original building it is replacing would automatically be accepted, nor a replacement house on a site located away from the footprint of the former building will be readily accepted. The following basic siting rules should be followed:

1. The replacement should be of a form and scale relative to the original building.
2. The replacement should not be excessive when compared to the original building.
3. The use of existing site features, boundaries and access points should be adopted..
4. Reuse of derelict building materials on site where possible.
5. The new house should be sited to maximise solar gains and protection from the prevalent weather.
6. The use of contemporary design, construction methods and materials is encouraged.
7. Remaining structures and walls could be incorporated into the new design.
8. The proposal should also comply with the detailed guidance within 'Section 6 'Siting and Design' of this document.

Given the level of detail and information required for a conversion or a replacement house to be acceptable, applicants are encouraged to submit detailed planning applications.



4.4 Replacement of an Existing House

4.4.1 The Council supports the replacement of houses that do not meet modern standards provided proposals are consistent with Section 3 'Requirements for all Proposals', the guidance below; and the general policies of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan.

The Council's criteria for the replacement of an existing house:

- The building is not of architectural or historic merit, or listed or within a conservation area;
- The existing house is a self-contained building either currently or previously used as permanent residential accommodation;
- The house is substantially complete and meets Section 7 'Appendix 1 - Stages of Rural Building Dereliction'
- Modern building styles or standards result in improved living conditions and energy performance, particularly through the use of sustainable design principles;
- The new house must be within the same curtilage of the original house, and only re-sited within the site where benefits to the landscape and setting can be achieved;
- The resultant footprint does not result in an excessive increase to that of the original house detrimental to the wider landscape setting; and
- The existing house is proposed to be demolished.

4.4.2 Where a habitable house is destroyed by a natural occurrence (for example a flood) or accident, planning permission may be granted for a replacement. The replacement house would usually be expected to be developed on the same site unless there are benefits to re-siting in landscaping terms or due to the presence of constraints such as flood risk.

Design advice for replacement of an existing house:

It should not be assumed that a dwelling of a size significantly larger than the one it is replacing would automatically be accepted, nor a replacement house on a site located away from the footprint of the former house will be readily accepted. The following basic siting rules should be followed:

1. The replacement house should be of a form and scale relative to its original;
2. The use of existing site features, boundaries and access points should be reused where appropriate;
3. The new house should be sited to maximise solar gain and protection from the prevalent weather; and
4. The use of contemporary design, construction methods and materials is encouraged.

Question 5

This exception has been relaxed to allow for the replacement of a non-traditional house in most circumstances, do you agree with this approach? If not, please tell us why.

4.5 Previously Developed Land

4.5.1 The Council supports the redevelopment of vacant and derelict land where a return to a natural state is not readily achievable and where a net environmental benefit can be achieved through redevelopment. Any redevelopment must be consistent with Section 3 'Requirements for all Proposals', the guidance below; and the general policies of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan.

4.5.2 A number of vacant and derelict sites have little or no impact on the visual or environmental amenity of the area and can be left to return to a natural state over time; such sites are unlikely to be supported for development.

4.5.3 "Previously Developed Land" means;

- vacant or derelict land;
- land occupied by redundant or unused buildings.

The Council's criteria for the redevelopment of Previously Developed Land:

- The former use(s) have ceased and the land/building is no longer required for their original purpose;
- The land has been significantly degraded by a former activity to the point where it cannot be left to naturalise without significant investment and remediation or the land can no longer be used productively without significant investment and remediation;
- Reuse or demolition of any traditional buildings on the site meet the requirements of 4.3 'Conversion, Reuse and Replacement of Traditional Buildings' of this guidance.
- Where the site includes redundant or unused non-traditional buildings these must warrant redevelopment by virtue of their construction. Buildings intended to have a limited lifespan (modern agricultural sheds, wooden buildings and bale stores) are unlikely to be considered as brownfield sites suitable for redevelopment;
- The nature, scale and appearance of the proposal is compatible with the site, wider landscape and any adjacent land uses;
- Net environmental benefits through high quality redevelopment consistent with Section 6 'Siting and Design' of this guidance are achieved;
- Redevelopment is confined to the immediate curtilage of the site; and
- Where appropriate provision of a contaminated land investigation and remediation plan;

Section 4 Housing Opportunities in Hinterland Areas

4.6 Affordable Housing

4.6.1 The Council supports the provision of rural affordable housing to encourage the retention and regrowth of rural communities with local inhabitants and workers providing it is consistent with Section 3 'Requirements for all Proposals', the guidance below; and the general policies of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan.

4.6.2 "Affordable Housing" is defined as housing provided by;

- A Registered Social Landlord;
- Approved private rented accommodation, managed and maintained to standards and cost equivalent to a Registered Social Landlord;
- Low Cost Owner Occupation delivered by shared ownership, shared equity, subsidised home ownership, discounted serviced plots or house sales, or unsubsidised low cost home ownership or serviced plots.

The Council's criteria for supporting new rural affordable housing :

- It meets a demonstrable local affordable housing need, as identified by the Council or one of our partner agencies; and
- The Site Selection Sequential Approach has been followed and has not identified opportunities for affordable housing development within nearby settlements.

4.6.3 Any proposals justified under this part of the guidance must be for entirely affordable housing. Any element of open market housing is unlikely to be supported.

4.7 Housing to Support an Existing or New Rural Business

4.7.1 The Council supports housing related to new and expanding rural businesses providing it is consistent with Section 3 'Requirements for all Proposals', the guidance below; and the general policies of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan.

The Council's criteria for supporting housing related to an existing or new rural business are:

- An *Operational Needs Assessment* demonstrates there is a genuine need for the business to be located in a rural area **and** that a house on-site is necessary;
- A *Business Plan* demonstrates how the business is to be funded and how the business is to be financially viable and sustainable for a period of at least 5 years; **and**
- A Site Selection Report (incorporating a plan of the applicant's land holding) demonstrates that the house site has been selected in accordance with the *Site Selection Sequential Approach*.

The Operational Needs Assessment, Business Plans & Site Selection Report will be reviewed by the Council and/or the Council's appointed consultants. Further information may be sought as a result of this review.

4.7.2 The *Operational Needs Assessment* shall include:

1. Description of the **current** business (where applicable) including:
 - a. Operations - a description of the current operations (e.g. quantity/type of livestock at pasture; fields with crops/fallow);
 - b. Size of landholding⁽¹⁾ - a map identifying the extent of the land holding and tenure/s of the land;
 - c. Infrastructure - a description of infrastructure that supports the business (e.g. steadings/sheds and equipment); and
 - d. Labour requirement - the number of current workers/where they reside (e.g. on-site, rural off-site, urban off-site).⁽²⁾
2. Description of the **new** business/changes to the existing business including:
 - i. Operations - a description of the proposed operations;
 - ii. Size of landholding - as above. Identify any additional land required and whether this has been acquired/let⁽³⁾
 - iii. Infrastructure - a description of any additional infrastructure required; and

1 To be included in the labour calculation evidence must be provided that the landholding is owned by the applicant or, if let, a formal tenancy agreement is in place for minimum period of five years.

2 The latest edition of the SAC Farm Management Handbook should be referenced to calculate labour requirements for livestock and/or crops that are existing and/or proposed and to demonstrate that the rural activity is commensurate with the size and capability of the land available. A significant proportion of the labour requirement must necessitate a full-time on-site presence. If the labour calculations fall short of one annual labour unit then justification must be provided as to why a full-time on-site presence is essential.

3 As per 1 above.

Section 4 Housing Opportunities in Hinterland Areas

- iv. Labour requirement a calculation of the labour requirement for the expanded/new business.⁽⁴⁾
 - v. A justification in support of the new house being in a rural location.
3. Information regarding who will reside in the house, where they reside currently (on-site, rural off-site, urban off-site) and why their current accommodation is unsuitable.
 4. Reason(s) supporting the new house being required in the rural location chosen.

4.7.3 The Business Plan shall include:

1. A detailed financial report outlining the costs associated with establishing/developing the business and the predicted profit and loss forecasts for operating the business for 5 years.
2. Confirmation as to how the business shall be funded (including evidence as to how it will be financially viable and sustainable for a period of at least 5 years. If secured lending for the business is proposed, evidence should be provided to demonstrate that this has been approved, will be sufficient to establish the business and can be repaid.

4.7.4 If the Council is not satisfied with the viability of the business set out in the Business Plan for the period of 5 years, a new house may not be supported. In this instance, the Council will indicate whether it would support an application for a non-permanent form of housing for a limited period (up to a maximum of five years).

4.7.5 Operational Needs Assessments and Business Plans and any other associated information will be treated as confidential and will not be made publicly available. However, the Council may be obliged to disclose information, including where it is subject to a request under the Freedom of Information legislation (FOI) or Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations (EIR).

4.7.6 Site Selection Sequential Approach means:

1. Existing accommodation in the area (including nearby settlements or housing groups) has been discounted as unsuitable or unavailable;
2. Details of any historic and extant planning approvals for housing on the applicant land holding;
3. There are no buildings or brownfield sites on the land holding which lend themselves to conversion or redevelopment;
4. There are no opportunities for infill or rounding off of existing housing groups and/or farm buildings;
5. A suitable site is selected based on limiting landscape and visual impact and taking into account amenity considerations.

4 As per 2 above.

Section 4 Housing Opportunities in Hinterland Areas

4.7.7 If the Council considers a sequentially preferable site is available or if there are historic approvals for new housing (including on the grounds of a rural business justification) on the land holding any new application is unlikely to be supported.

Tourism Accommodation in the Countryside

4.7.8 The Council recognises the significant contribution that the tourism sector makes to the Highland economy and is supportive of proposals which result in increased length of visitor stay/spend and promotes a wider spread of visitors, provided it is consistent with Section 3 'Requirements for all Proposals' the guidance below; and the general policies of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan including siting and design considerations.

4.7.9 The forms of tourism accommodation listed below are considered appropriate for a countryside location:

- New or expanded caravan, campervan and camping sites, including camping pods; and
- Chalets or lodges where it is clear these cannot be used as permanent residences.

The Council's criteria to support small scale tourist accommodation developments in the countryside are:

- A *Business Plan* demonstrating how the business is to be funded and how the business is to be financially viable and sustainable for a period of at least 5 years; and
- A Site Selection Report (incorporating a plan of the applicant's land holding) demonstrates that the house site has been selected in accordance with the *Site Selection Sequential Approach*.

The Council's criteria to support Manager/staff accommodation related to larger scale tourist accommodation developments are:

- An *Operational Needs Assessment* and *Business Plan* demonstrates that the entire development is financially viable and sustainable for a period of at least 5 years;
- the house is located on-site or in very close proximity to the tourist accommodation;
- A Site Selection Report demonstrates that the *Site Selection Sequential Approach* has been followed.
- The *Operational Needs Assessment*, the *Business Plan* and the Site Selection Report will be assessed by the Council as part of the application process.

4.7.10 Where tourism accommodation is supported, planning conditions will be used to ensure it is not used as a permanent dwelling and/or the associated tourism accommodation is completed prior to the manager/staff accommodation house being occupied.

Section 4 Housing Opportunities in Hinterland Areas

Question 6

The approach for new housing to support an existing or new rural business has been strengthened with intention of supporting only genuine cases. Do you agree with this approach? If not please tell us why.

4.8 Housing to Support a Retiring Land Manager

4.8.1 The Council supports housing to support a retiring Land Manager providing it is consistent with Section 3 'Requirements for all Proposals', the guidance below; and the general policies of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan.

The Council's criteria for supporting a new house for a retiring Land Manager are:

- A signed statement is received from a Chartered Accountant or Solicitor confirming that the Land Manager has managed the land for at least ten years and intends to retire;
- Information is received confirming the future management of the landholding and details of the new occupant of the Land Manager's existing accommodation;
- An *Operational Needs Assessment* demonstrates that an ongoing full time on site presence is required to continue to support the existing business; and
- A Site Selection Report demonstrates that the *Site Selection Sequential Approach* has been followed.

4.8.2 The Council will only support one application for a house for a retiring Land Manager on a land holding within the Local Development Plan period. Given the reason for the house, it is expected that a detailed application shall be submitted.

Question 7

Additional requirements for evidence to support applications for a house for a retiring land manager have been introduced. Do you agree that this approach is reasonable? If not please tell us why.

- 5.0.1** Crofting is an integral part of life and the landscape of Highland. It can deliver a wealth of benefits to crofters and wider communities. For these reasons the Council recognises that there is a genuine need to promote and support crofting communities and activities (including the creation of Woodland Crofts). However, we must also ensure that crofting-related development does not conflict with the Council's other policies and objectives or result in unsustainable development, particularly in our hinterland areas.
- 5.0.2** The identification of an appropriate location for a new croft house must examine traditional crofting related buildings across the wider landscape setting. Infill development may not be appropriate where this detracts from the traditional dispersed nature of development. Some crofting settlements are characteristically linear in pattern and a linear extension may be appropriate to support the continuance of this form of development. Proposals should however maintain the local traditional pattern of croft development.
- 5.0.3** The potential for new housing related to crofting must also meet the criteria set out in HwLDP Policy 47: Safeguarding Inbye/AppORTioned Croftland and where appropriate Policy 48: New/Extended Crofting Townships.

Within Settlement Development Areas

- 5.0.4** We appreciate that many of our more rural settlements may contain crofts and crofting land within their boundaries which form a key part of the settlement pattern and character. While we support proposals in these settlements we will also judge them in terms of how compatible they are with the existing pattern of development and landscape character and how they conform with existing land uses.

The Council's criteria for supporting a new croft house within a SDA are:

We will support proposals that maintain the the local traditional pattern of croft development and are not prejudicial to the running of the crofts; result in the loss of locally important croft land; or impede the use of remaining croft land by virtue of its location.

Hinterland Areas

- 5.0.5** The potential for new housing relate to crofting is restricted to new crofting townships, or significant extensions to existing crofting townships and meet the criteria set out in HwLDP Policy 48:New/Extended Crofting Townships. Proposals for single crofts/croft houses will be considered in line with the criteria for Housing to Support an Existing or New Rural Business in Section 3.7.
- 5.0.6** For the avoidance of doubt, proposals for new houses on croft land that are not related to crofting will require to meet with at least one of the other exceptions outlined and are not prejudicial to the running of the crofts; result in the loss of locally important croft land; or impede the use of remaining croft land by virtue of its location.

Section 5 Housing to Support a Croft

Wider Countryside

5.0.7 Proposals should maintain the local traditional pattern of croft development; and, where possible, avoid siting on the better part of a croft in terms of its agricultural value or impeding the use of the remaining croft land by virtue of its location.

The Council's criteria for supporting a new croft house within the Wider Countryside are:

- Croft registration information including: reference number(s); size of croft; access to common grazing or woodland;
- Information on the croft (wood)land quality and how this has influenced the siting of the proposed house;
- A *Business Plan* and a *Woodland Management Plan* where applicable
- A *Masterplan* for the entire development area for new or significantly extended crofting townships

Question 8

Crofting has been merged into a single dedicated section, do you agree with the approach taken? If not please tell us why.

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 The erection of a new house within the countryside is a permanent feature that will affect the landscape and character well beyond the life of the developer. The Council therefore considers that this offers an opportunity to achieve exceptional innovative design, siting and finish for new residential developments. This guidance has not been developed to provide a list of acceptable designs or locations; instead it provides a guide of important considerations which should be studied and utilised as necessary to achieve a fitting development and is relevant to all rural housing regardless of location.

6.1.2 The guidance is split into four categories:

1. Site Selection - Choosing the right site in the landscape, often dictates the success of the project.
2. Site Layout - The placing of the built development, infrastructure and landscaping within the chosen site.
3. Design Material Selection - The individual design characteristics of the buildings.
4. Building Detailing - The finer design aspect which can improve the overall building design.

6.2 Site Selection

6.2.1 Finding a good site takes time, patience and a great deal of consideration. The guidance below provides advice to assist applicants in choosing the right site, the advice is relevant to both houses located in the hinterland and wider countryside areas of Highland.

6.2.2 Highland landform is not uniform and extends from seaward Coastal areas right up to wild-land mountain ranges, corollary there is not a 'one solution fit all' approach to the identification of rural housing sites. Applicants should instead identify the main characteristics of the particular location and ensure the following considerations are taken into account:

Elevated or Exposed sites:

6.2.3 Modern building techniques allow houses to be built on almost any site, regardless of the surrounding physical landscape. This allows houses to be built on skyline locations or artificially elevated sites, resulting in the natural contours of the landscape being irrelevant to the construction of the building and thus often making them unduly prominent. Significant under-building further increases the visible mass of a building, contributing to its dominating detrimental effect.

Access & Servicing:

6.2.4 The provision of road access to and within the site and areas for car turning and parking often involves leveling, cutting and/or mounding, which can have as much impact as the house itself and, as such, full details should be included.

Section 6 Siting and Design

Biodiversity Impacts:

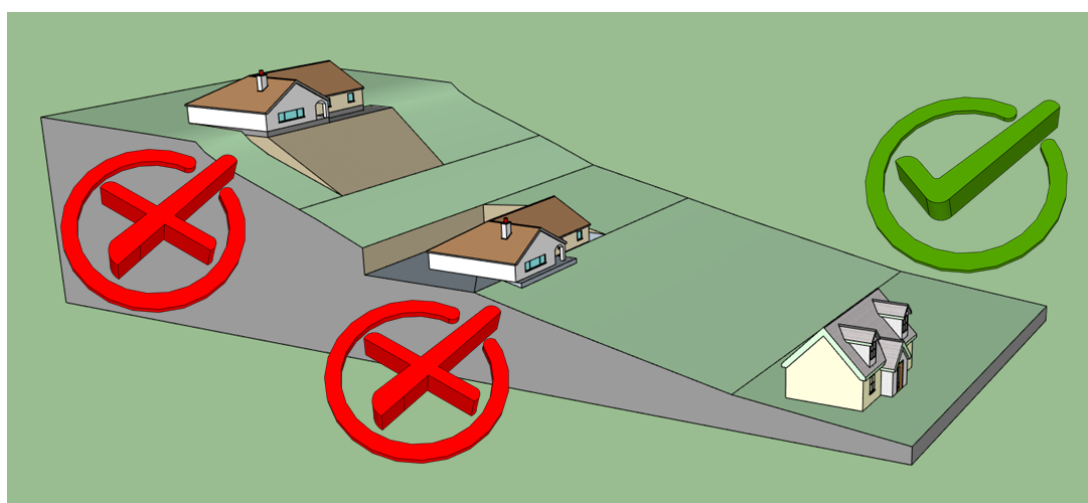
6.2.5 Rural sites provide feeding and living habitats for a large number of wildlife species and important habits for bio-diversity assets, the majority of which are offered a degree of protection under UK and European legislation. A full landscape and habitat impact review should be undertaken at an early stage to ascertain any likely negative impacts on biodiversity interests and mitigation proposed.

Site Prominence:

6.2.6 Housing positioned adjacent to main roads and tourist routes will be highly visible and therefore careful consideration need to be given to these types of sites, Sites in open fields devoid of any landscaping either within or bordering the site will lack natural enclosure and often results in obtrusive developments.

Development on Sloping Ground:

6.2.7 Housing on sloping ground should carefully consider the most appropriate location for the new house, to avoid the need for significant earthworks, whether mounding or cutting. The use of split levels designs can avoid the need for engineered solutions.



Picture 6.1 Building on a Slope

Design Rules 1

Design Rules for Building on a Slope:

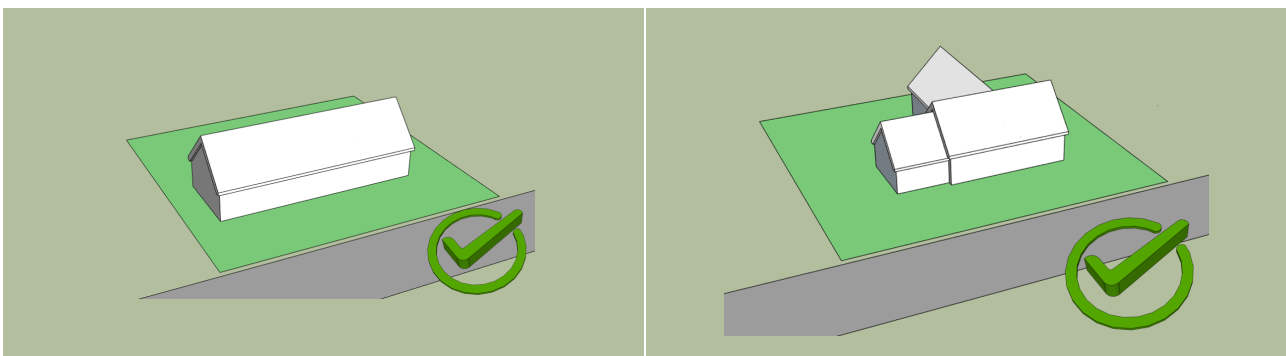
1. Avoid building on a skyline;
2. Avoid engineered 'platforms' or underbuilding to form a level site;
3. Avoid forming excessive 'cuts' into the landscape;
4. Seek a naturally flat site;
5. Orientate the buildings with the contours to integrate the building into the setting;
6. Use split level buildings to work with the slope; and
7. Retain existing landscape for enclosure and backdrop.

6.3 Site Layout

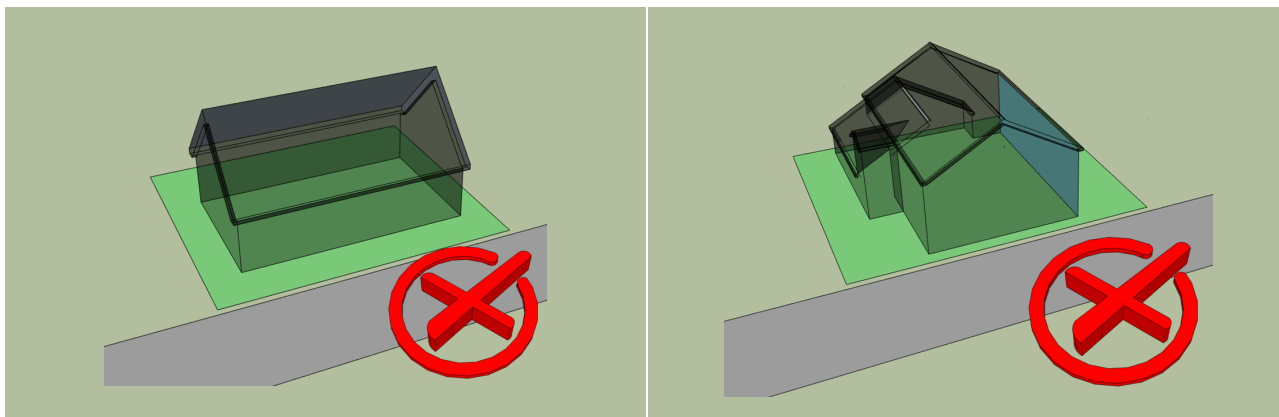
6.3.1 Having selected the right site, it is then important to consider the most appropriate location to position the house on the parcel of ground, its orientation to both neighbouring uses and environmental constraints, the protection of existing landscaping and boundaries and the point of access/egress onto the site.

Plot Size

6.3.2 Rural buildings have traditionally enjoyed spacious grounds in comparison with urban sites. However, modern accommodation needs, construction techniques and increased wealth, has resulted in rural housing increasing in size over the traditionally scale of rural properties. Nevertheless, the spirit of spacious grounds should be upheld to retain the very character of the countryside. The plot size should also respect that of any residential neighbours and complement the local house to plot ratio.



Section 6 Siting and Design



Using Landform & Environmental Features:

6.3.3 The prevailing wind is from the south-west across much of Highlands and therefore developments on northern slopes often results in colder and damp sites which lack sunlight in the winter months. Low lying hollows in rural landscapes can be 'frost hollows' and ground at the base of a slope adjacent to watercourses can be marshy, both of which results in cold unattractive sites, which are difficult to develop. Southerly facing sites benefit from solar gains and deciduous tree crops to the south of the house offers shelter from the weather in the winter and shading in the summer.

Impact on Neighbouring Properties

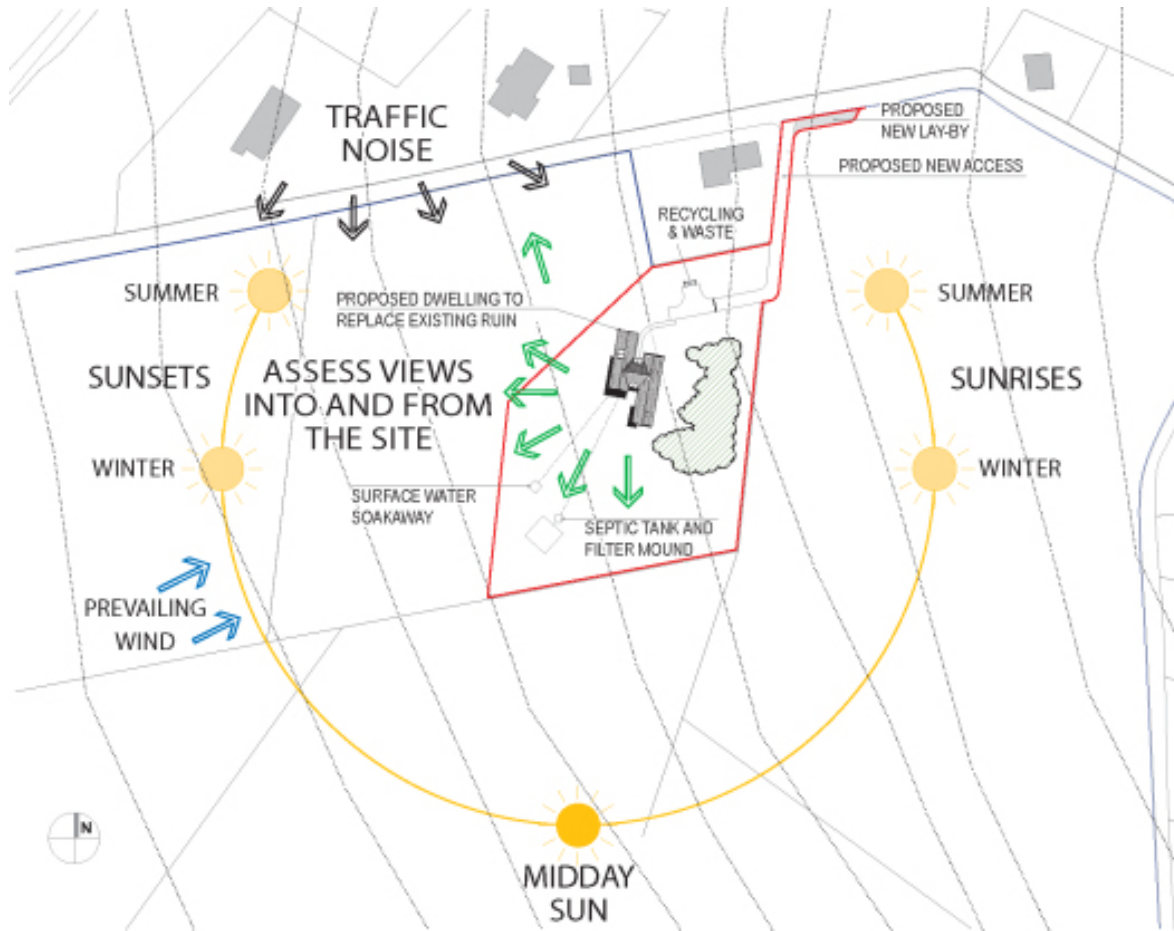
6.3.4 Proposals adjacent to or in close proximity to existing housing group or within garden ground will require the new house siting not to detract from the character and setting of the existing buildings or their surrounding area.

6.3.5 New buildings can often integrate with an existing housing group where careful attention is paid to layout, built form, building lines and landscaping taking account and incorporating the characteristics of neighbouring traditional properties.

Sustainability Design

6.3.6 In 2019, the Highland Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency through which it is promoting positive change and resource efficient planning. New housing plays an important part of this work and rural sites should reflect existing building patterns that have developed over time to take account of local climatic considerations, with more isolated sites observing how to best utilise a site in respect of weather patterns.

6.3.7 Houses should be designed and sited to maximise solar gains and shelter from the prevailing weather. It is also important to consider protection from 'overheating' from solar gains during the summer months, either with the use of native planting, landscape or man-made features. However, siting for solar gains does not negate the need to ensure compatibility with any the established settlement pattern or result in an overly prominent building in the landscape.



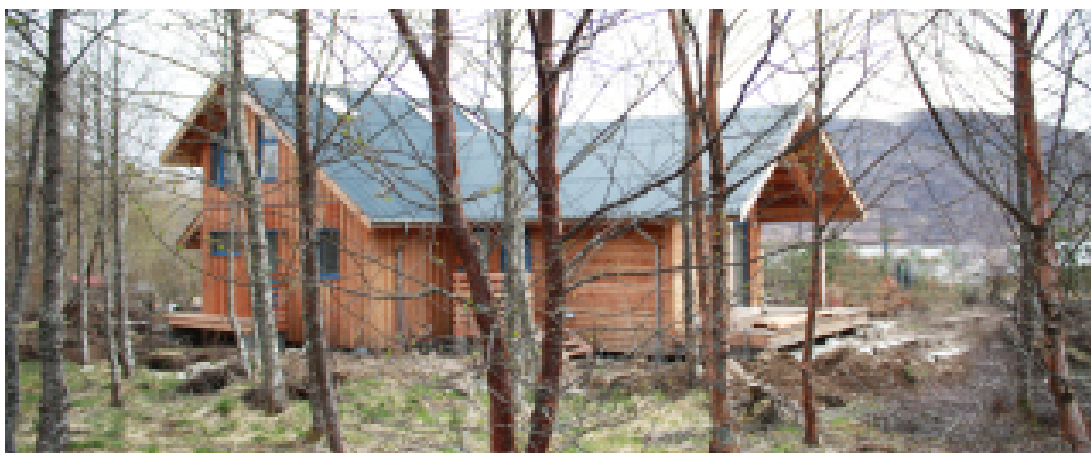
Site Assessment ©Highland Council

- 6.3.8** The discharge of surface water back into the natural water cycle is critical in rural areas to avoid onsite and offsite flooding. The use of permeable surface materials to accesses & parking areas will be expected.
- 6.3.9** Rainwater harvesting systems also reduce water demand and will be supported providing they are suitably engineered.
- 6.3.10** The use of renewable technologies such as solar panels, ground and air source heat pumps, and passive heating are now common place. Whilst the use of these technologies are strongly supported, consideration is required as to the most appropriate location of these to be sympathetic to the new building and avoid any conflict within neighbouring uses.
- 6.3.11** Due to the growth of recycling, most households now have to accommodate a number of refuse bins. As part of the site layout consideration should be given to the storage of these within the site and siting for collection purposes. These areas should be clearly annotated on the submitted documentation.

Section 6 Siting and Design

Landscaping

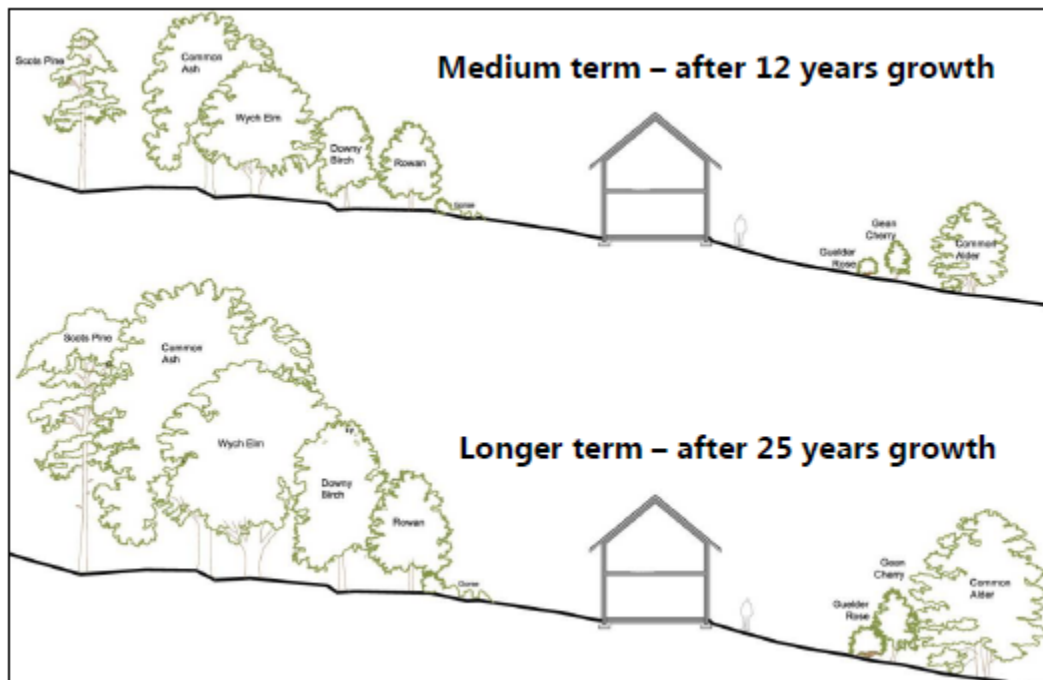
6.3.12 Landscaping and planting can significantly aid the integration of a new house into the rural landscape, with long established houses being located in close proximity to woodlands or shelter belt of trees to provide weather protection to the house. These locations offer the house an immediate enclosure, backdrop and screening from wider views. Existing and new landscaping provision should therefore be fully considered at the outset and the planting selection should be appropriate to the locale and size of the development.



Protection of Trees ©Highland Council

6.3.13 A mix of native species with varying canopy covers and growth rates can ensure that the house remains integrated in the landscape over the year and its lifespan, as faster growing trees with shorter life spans, are replaced over time with slower growing trees with longer life spans.

6.3.14 The potential size of any tree should also be fully considered when proposing and undertaking planting and species selected on the basis of their future growth potential and impact in the medium and longer term. The diagram below indicates relative heights of small, medium and large native shrubs and trees after 12 and 25 years and consideration of positioning relative to a house.



Tress and Development ©Highland Council

6.3.15 The following criteria should be followed when considering site landscaping:

- Ensure all planting/fencing is clear of visibility splays from access points.
- Consideration needs to be given to the falling distance of existing and newly planted trees in relation to habitable buildings;
- Retain, incorporate and sensitively add to any existing landscape features. Setting a building against an existing backdrop is one of the most successful ways of ensuring that it blends into the landscape;
- Avoid very formal gardens with large expanses of manicured lawn which can look out of place in rural areas. The garden area should, however be clearly defined;
- In many locations planting can help development integrate with the surrounding landscape. Preferably use local, native species which will blend with the surroundings and provide wildlife habitats. Planting should be undertaken at an early stage or prior to development commencing, and full details should be submitted with any planning application; and
- Planting may appear incongruous in some areas and landscapes, especially open crofting areas, assessment of the appropriateness of boundary treatments should be assessed as part of the wider site considerations. In certain circumstances the planting of non-native species may be acceptable.

6.3.16 Existing landscaping on or adjacent to a site should be maintained and protected wherever possible and details of such should be included with the proposal from the outset, including consideration to protect the root area of retained landscaping.

Section 6 Siting and Design

6.3.1 More information on landscaping protection is provided within the Council Supplementary Guidance: [Trees, Woodlands and Development](#).

6.4 Design & Materials

6.4.1 Historically, the local climate and availability of local materials have influenced the traditional design and forms of rural homes. As materials supply has become standardised, coupled with the growth of Kit House Companies, house design has become homogeneous. The Council are however, committed to promoting distinctive and responsive developments which relative to their local setting.

The traditional Highland building form can be characterised as follows:

- Clear, simple geometric form;
- Clear structure to building groups and settlements;
- Limited palette of natural materials;
- Robust detailing;
- Modest use of contrast and colour; and
- General lack of intricate detail.

6.4.2 With a tendency against:

- Complex and delicate forms;
- Fussy detailing; and
- Ornamentation.

Scale

6.4.3 Scale is the comparison of the size and proportions of one object to those of another. It is important that buildings are appropriately scaled to both their landscape setting and plot size, but also to any surrounding buildings.

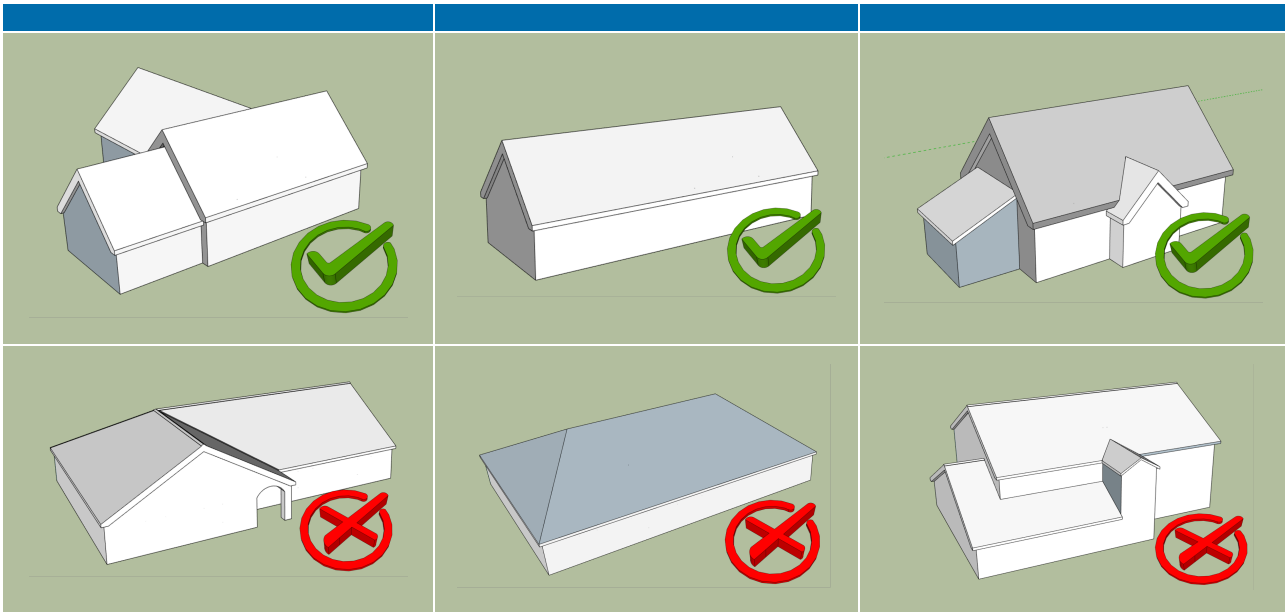
Massing

6.4.4 Many of the newer one and a half storey kit houses have been designed to imitate the proportions of a traditional house - e.g. symmetrical, 1 ½ storeys, dormer windows, traditional style porch and vertical windows. However, modern living standards result in much larger footprints than were traditionally built. This results in houses with wide gables, large roofs and dormers which look out of place when viewed alongside their smaller traditional neighbours.

6.4.5 To overcome this, and produce a more successful and realistic replica of the traditional house, whilst allowing for the larger floor area, it is often better to break larger buildings into smaller elements. This can be achieved with the use of:

- A central single or one and a half storey core;

- Single storey projecting porches which are considered traditional features of many rural houses and perform a variety of functions including reducing draughts, shoe, boot, coat, bag and pram storage;
- Subservient sunrooms and conservatories extensions to the side and rear elevations – these should be sited to benefit from natural daylighting and solar gains;
- Single storey buildings can be arranged in the same way as typical farm steadings and outbuildings which would result in a smaller mass and a lower building, better able to nestle into the landscape.



House Design & Plot Layout

Walls

Within Highland, a fairly limited number of external wall finishes was historically used, including; natural stonework (coursed in different ways, from random/coursed rubble walling to dressed ashlar), wet dash renders, harl and timber cladding. Colouration of the finish should reflect the locality.

New houses will generally be expected to conform to and complement these traditional materials. Modern contemporary materials will be supported where justification for their use is provided.

Roofs

Highland roofs tend to be steep, with slopes between 40° - 50°, as steeper pitches are less prone to letting wind-driven rain or snow into the roof space and water quickly drains down the slope, making it less likely to ingress. Given this, the use of low pitch, flat, hipped and mansard roofs will strongly be resisted as these are non-traditional rural building features.

Where multiple roofs are proposed (dormers and projecting extensions) as far is reasonable practical, all roofs should respect the pitch of the principal section.

Section 6 Siting and Design

Corner quoins, overly decorative basecourses and heavy window detailing are not considered to be a traditional element of rural housing and, as such, will be discouraged.

Natural slate, corrugated iron, thatch, turf, timber shingles, lead and stone slabs are all traditional roof materials. The use of modern alternatives (roofing tiles, zinc, metals) should be justified in its approach.



©Highland Council

Garages and Outbuildings

Detached garages and outbuilding are common features of traditional rural plots and are often sited to offer a degree of protection to the main house. They are normally subservient in nature and are sited behind the front building line of the house, to the side or rear; achieving a natural reduction of the dominance of the car.

Their design should respect the main house in terms of proportions and roof pitches – flat roofed garages will generally not be supported. Material finish should generally reflect the main house or use of traditional materials

Parking

Parking should be positioned to screen it from public view either to the side or rear of the main house.

Parking provision should be sufficient and meet the Council Standards - Council Supplementary Guidance: [Access to Single Houses and Small Housing Developments](#)

A turning area should be provided to allow entry and exit of the site in a forward gear.

Surface finish should avoid hard surfaces and instead use permeable, locally sourced materials.



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Access

New rural developments offer the opportunity to develop creative solutions to securing a safe and suitable access.

1. The use of existing access points is preferred, but may require additional improvements to improve visibility splays.
2. Where a service bay is required avoid using concrete kerbing. Overly defined bays look out of place in a rural landscape.
3. Entrances should avoid being overly elaborate or engineered and should use suitable materials that link to wider boundary treatments.

Boundaries

The types of boundary treatment which may be appropriate in urban areas e.g. ornamental walling or fencing are rarely successful in rural areas, appearing suburban and out of keeping. Generally boundary treatments should assist in the integration of development into the landscape and soften the edges of a development. Options are listed below for potentially appropriate boundary treatments, not all options, however, are suitable for all locations and will required to be assessed against the local context.

Considerations for boundary treatments include;

Section 6 Siting and Design

Further guidance on rural accesses is contained within the Council Supplementary Guidance: [Access to Single Houses and Small Housing Developments](#)

- Appropriate boundary treatments for rural areas include stone dykes, hedging, post and wire fencing, walls with wet dash harl and stone copings;
- Retain and repair existing landscape features such as stone walls and hedges;
- Avoid concrete, rendered walls, timber ranch style/panel fencing or hedges of a non-native species. Wooden fences should be left in a naturally coloured state;
- Down takings from derelict buildings within the site can often be incorporated in boundary treatments, e.g. creation of stone boundary walls;
- Use a consistent boundary treatment alongside roads.



©Highland Council

6.5 Building Detailing

6.5.1 The finer detail of any building can significantly aid its integration into its setting and, as such, getting these details right is fundamentally important in ensuring the success of new developments. The following table outlines important considerations which should be taken into consideration with new schemes.

Windows and Doors

- Windows to have a vertical emphasis
- Windows & Doors to be recessed back from the face of the building to offer protection from the elements.
- Large glazed gables on exposed or elevated sites will not always be supported due to light pollution and their reflective nature across the landscape.
- Ground floor bay window arrangements are not traditional in the countryside and will therefore be resisted.
- Dormer windows should respect the symmetry of the property and be as far as practical located directly above ground floor openings.
- The use of timber windows and doors is preferred.

Lighting

- Use of LED lighting to provide a focused area of illumination
- External lighting should be controlled by PIR sensors and angled in a downward direction.



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Eaves and Verges

Gables and chimneys

Section 6 Siting and Design

Overhanging eaves and projecting verges are part of the traditional rural architecture and will be encouraged where they follow the surrounding traditional design characteristics.

- Chimneys should normally be located on gable ends and breach the roof slope close to the ridgeline to avoid long slender stacks exposed to the weather.
- Skew tabling is widely used to offer edge protection to roofs within the rural setting and there inclusion is generally supported.



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Question 9

The Siting & Design Section has been extensively revised make it easier to use and to place more emphasis on achieving high quality sustainable developments and promote innovative proposals. Do you find this section helpful and / or agree that we will achieve higher quality design? If not please tell us why, or suggest alternatives.

Question 10

Do you have any other comments to make on any part of the document or the guidance as a whole? Please reference the relevant section / paragraph number where appropriate.

Section 7 Appendix 1 - Stages of Rural Building Dereliction

Description of Decay	Photo/Diagram	HwLDP Hinterland Policy Consideration
Stage 1: Building in Active Use		
<p>Building in regular use and is actively maintained, with no major structural defects, or evidence of any decay.</p> <p>All windows and doors secure and rainwater goods working effectively. Internal rooms are habitable and services are connected.</p> <p>Garden ground well maintained and boundaries secure.</p>	 <p data-bbox="663 891 930 920">©Highland Council</p>	<p>The Council supports the retention of existing buildings in active use and would only support their replacement where net environmental, locational or character improvements can be achieved.</p> <p>The extension and alteration of existing building will generally be supported, where the proposal is sympathetic to the design & character of the original building and does not impact on the amenity and privacy of any adjacent users.</p>
Stage 2: Unused Wind & Water tight Building		
<p>Disused building which is still secure, wind and water tight.</p> <p>Doors & windows in place; although could be boarded up for security purposes.</p> <p>Garden ground unkempt and boundary treatment beginning to fail.</p>		<p>Policy 35 (Housing in the Countryside (Hinterland Areas)) supports the reuse of traditional buildings which make a positive contribution to the landscape setting.</p> <p>Substantially complete traditional vernacular buildings should be sensitively renovated, converted and/or extended rather than wholesale demolition and replacement.</p>
Stage 3: Complete Building in early state of failure		
<p>Where a building's main structure is substantially complete, albeit in a dilapidated or derelict state.</p>	 <p data-bbox="759 2033 834 2063">©HES</p>	<p>If it is demonstrated that the building is unfit for rehabilitation, the Council will consider demolition and replacement of the existing</p>

Section 7 Appendix 1 - Stages of Rural Building Dereliction

Easy access for vandalism, theft, water ingress, or animals' infestation.

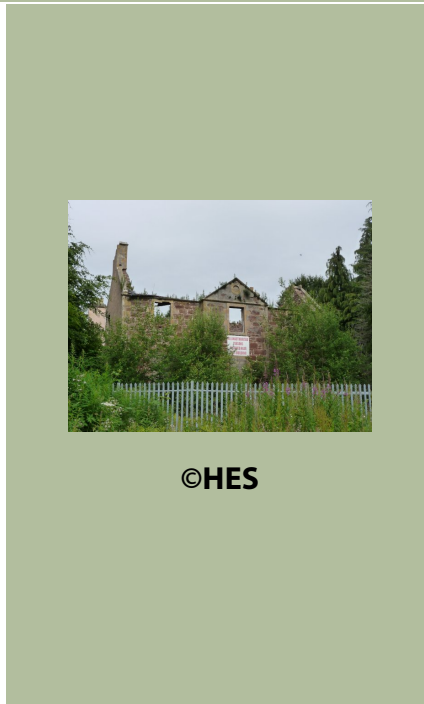
Garden ground and boundaries indistinguishable from surrounding landscape.

Stage 4: Building Shell

Building walls remains standing to at least ground floor wall head height. The former use is still clearly evident.

Loss of roof structure or partial collapse of one gable without affecting integrity of built form.

Decay and failure occurring rapidly. Planting beginning to take hold, including at wallheads and within the structure.



building with a new house in line with the criteria outlined in Conversion/Reuse section of this guidance

Table 2 Stages of Rural Building Dereliction

Section 8 Appendix 2 - Supporting Information to Accompany a Planning Application

Hinterland Housing Exception	Supporting Information Required to Accompany a Planning Application
Housing Groups:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Plans and illustrations clearly identifying the existing housing group, including its characteristics and boundary extent. ✓ Details demonstrating how the new development respects the character, layout and building pattern of the housing group.
Garden Ground:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Details of the existing site boundaries and extent of formal garden ground. ✓ Details of the scale and proportions of the 'parent property'. ✓ Applications for detailed planning permission are preferred.
Conversion & Reuse of Traditional Buildings:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Evidence that the building is substantially complete and meets one of the 'Stages of Rural Building Dereliction'. ✓ Drawings and details of the unaltered structure. ✓ Site Analysis demonstrating established boundaries, existing landscape and historic land-uses. ✓ Appropriate Contaminated Land Investigation and Remediation Plan (where required). ✓ Applications for detailed planning permission are preferred.
Demolition & Replacement of Traditional Buildings:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Evidence that the building is substantially complete and meets one of the 'Stages of Rural Building Dereliction'. ✓ Structural Report from a suitably qualified professional demonstrating that conversion or rehabilitation cannot be achieved and the justification why. ✓ Drawings and details of the structure(s) to be demolished. ✓ Site Analysis demonstrating established boundaries, existing landscape and historic land-uses. ✓ Details of any down takings reused as part of the redevelopment. ✓ Appropriate Contaminated Land Investigation and Remediation Plan (where required). ✓ Applications for detailed planning permission are preferred.
Replacement of an Existing House:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Evidence that the building is substantially complete and meets one of the 'Stages of Rural Building Dereliction'. ✓ Details of the building previous use and confirmation as to when it was last used as a dwelling. ✓ Site Analysis demonstrating established boundaries, existing landscape and the site original layout/house position.

Section 8 Appendix 2 - Supporting Information to Accompany a Planning Application

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ If the property has become uninhabitable because of a natural occurrence or accident, details of the event and any Structural Report related to the event. ✓ Applications for detailed planning permission are preferred.
Previously Developed Sites:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A Statement detailing the history of the site, how long it has been disused, why it is no longer fit for purpose, why it can not be used for another non residential use and why it can not be left to naturalise. ✓ Historic mapping and historic and current photographs of the existing land/buildings. ✓ Appropriate Contaminated Land Investigation and Remediation Plan (where required).
Affordable Housing:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Demonstration of a local affordable housing need. ✓ Evidence of the involvement of a Registered Social Landlord or the Council. ✓ A statement of evidence that details how the sequential approach to site selection has been satisfied.
Housing to Support an Existing or New Rural Business:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A statement of evidence that details how the sequential approach to site selection has been satisfied. ✓ A planning application (if required) to expand or establish a rural business is in place before or submitted concurrently with any worker accommodation proposal. ✓ A plan identifying the extent of the applicants land holding and details of any previous planning approvals for new housing on the holding. ✓ Operational Needs Assessment. ✓ Evidence of formal long-term tenancy agreement is in place / agreed subject to planning approval. ✓ Business Plan. ✓ Applications for detailed planning permission are preferred.
Retiring Land Manager:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Evidence from a chartered accountant or solicitor that the land manager has managed the land for at least ten years and intends to retire, including information on the future management of the landholding. ✓ Operational Needs Assessment, which includes evidence to demonstrate that an ongoing full time on-site presence is required to support the business.

Section 8 Appendix 2 - Supporting Information to Accompany a Planning Application

Crofting:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Croft registration information including reference number(s); size of croft; access to common grazing;✓ Information on the croft land quality and how this has influenced the siting of the proposed house.
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Table 3



**The Highland
Council
Comhairle na
Gàidhealtachd**
