

Chapter 1 : Introduction

- 1.1 This is the Evidence Report for the Highland Local Development Plan (HLDP), prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended, and the Town and Country Planning (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2023.
- 1.2 The Highland Council prepares the Local Development Plan (LDP) for all its area except for the portion within the Cairngorms National Park, for which the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) is responsible. Much of the evidence presented in this Evidence Report is for our LDP Area only, but some evidence will include data for the Highland portion of the National Park, which approximately equates to the Badenoch and Strathspey Ward and Local Committee area.
- 1.3 The Council currently has four adopted LDPs for its development planning area. The [Highland-wide Local Development Plan](#) (HwLDP), adopted in 2012, provides general planning policies and site allocation detail for a number of strategic locations across Highland. The other three Area LDPs also contain a small number of general planning policies but are focussed primarily on settlement proposals and site allocation details, including more up-to-date content for the sites that were included in HwLDP. These LDPs are:
 - [Caithness & Sutherland LDP](#) (CaSPlan) adopted in 2018,
 - [West Highland & Islands LDP](#) (WestPlan) adopted in 2019, and the
 - [Inner Moray Firth LDP2](#) (IMFLDP2) adopted in 2024 (being a replacement for the first IMFLDP adopted in 2015).
- 1.4 The development plan also includes a number of adopted Supplementary Guidance (SG) documents, relating to topic policies or site allocations in the LDPs. In accordance with paragraph 93 of the Scottish Government [Local Development Planning Guidance](#) (2023), this Evidence Report provides an evaluation of the adopted LDPs within **Chapter 14: Performance of the Plan**. In line with the guidance this evaluation assesses whether the previous plan has delivered on its outcomes, and allocations, identifying any lessons learnt for the preparation of the new plan and considers the appropriateness of the previous spatial strategy.
- 1.5 Following adoption of the IMFLDP2, the Council commenced the production of the HLDP Evidence Report. The new, single Highland Local Development Plan (HLDP) to be prepared, and to which this Evidence Report relates, will replace the four current LDPs. Upon adoption of HLDP, the development plan within the Highland development planning area will therefore comprise the National Planning Framework (currently NPF4 as adopted in 2023) and the HLDP.

- 1.6 Upon adoption of the HLDP, the Council's Supplementary Guidance will lose its status as part of the development plan.
- 1.7 The evidence presented within the Evidence Report has been grouped into Chapters that collate related policies, so that key evidence is not repeated in multiple areas. The structure of how these are covered is shown in Table 1:1 which should be interpreted as the Evidence Report **List of Topics**.

Table 1:1 Evidence Report List of Chapters

Evidence Report Chapter	Corresponding NPF4 Policies
Chapter 1: Introduction	-
Chapter 2: Area Profiles and Key Areas of Change	-
Chapter 3: Statement of Engagement	-
Chapter 4: Climate Change and Energy	1, 2, 11, 19
Chapter 5: Nature and Environment	3, 4, 5, 6
Chapter 6: Coastal Development and Aquaculture	10, 32
Chapter 7: Flood Risk Management	22
Chapter 8: Economy, Business, Tourism and Productive Places	25, 26, 29, 30, 31, 33
Chapter 9: Housing	8, 16, 17
Chapter 10: Transport	13, 18
Chapter 11: Infrastructure	12, 18, 24
Chapter 12: Historic Assets, Brownfield Land and Empty Buildings	7, 9
Chapter 13: Design, Wellbeing, Local Living and Placemaking	14, 15, 20, 21, 23, 27, 28
Chapter 14: Performance of the Plan	-

- 1.8 The Highland Council is a large authority with predominantly rural areas and also significant urban areas including the City of Inverness. The Council contains nine administrative (committee) areas and incorporates a diverse range of communities, economies and environments, for whom some topics within the Evidence Report are of greater significance than others.
- 1.9 As an overview to this diversity, **Chapter 2: Area Profiles and Key Areas of Change** outline some key indicators and distinctions between the nine administrative areas to orient those perhaps less familiar with the Highlands. Where possible, the Council has therefore sought to gather and present information in a place-based manner, recognising that doing so for all the necessary policy remits adds considerable detail and depth.

- 1.10 The Evidence Report **Chapter 3: Statement of Engagement** sets out the engagement exercises undertaken by the Council and has been prepared to set out how the Evidence Report meets the statutory requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 with regard to evidence requirements set out in sections 15(5) of the 1997 Act, and the engagement requirements set out in sections 16B(2) and 16B(4) of the 1997 Act. A summary of specific engagement exercises undertaken on individual policy areas and the outcomes, are provided within the respective chapters throughout the Evidence Report.
- 1.11 Each subsequent chapter contains a short position statement on the purpose of the Evidence Report chapter and the NPF4 policy areas within it. Where the Council considers that information gaps remain in the Evidence Report and thereby insufficiencies in information collection, these are stated alongside proposed steps to address these. In line with the Scottish Government [Local Development Planning Guidance](#) (2023) the Evidence Report attempts to avoid delving into site specific matters or take confirmed stances on matters of future policy, as they will be addressed at the Proposed Plan stage.
- 1.12 Each chapter also sets out where disputes and or information gaps have been identified following the public HLDP Evidence Consultation or circulation of earlier iterations among key agencies and stakeholders. Further details on these are provided within the respective chapters. Unless depicted in this manner, the Highland Council considers there to be no disputes or information gaps.
- 1.13 The HLDP Evidence Report has been produced in tandem with other key work that has informed its content namely:
- A Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA),
 - Nature Network Mapping,
 - Housing Land Audit (HLA),
 - Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) and Open Space Audit (OSA),
 - Strategic Flood Risk Assessment,
 - Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Scoping, and
 - Local Place Plans and Area Place Plans.
- 1.14 The Council has also identified evidence gaps that will require to be addressed through further work to inform the proposed plan, and states clearly within the respective chapters where this is the case.
- 1.15 The Council is considering the use of [Masterplan Consent Areas](#) (MCAs) in Highland and has therefore already facilitated a Call for Development Sites process from January to May 2025, which sought bids from landowners, developers, and others for potential development sites to be considered for inclusion in the forthcoming Highland Local Development Plan and/or as candidate MCAs.

- 1.16 The Council's HwLDP is currently one of the oldest LDPs in force within Scotland, and adopting a new HLDP in accordance with the new processes introduced by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 is a recognised priority. We started the process of reviewing the HwLDP with a Main Issues Report consultation in 2016. In December 2017, the Scottish Government published a Planning Bill outlining potential changes to the Scottish planning system. The Council decided to halt the HwLDP Review until more was known about the changes. The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 was subsequently made.
- 1.17 The Council is satisfied that it has undertaken appropriate and sufficient engagement and considers that the Evidence Report sets out necessary evidence for informing the production of the HLDP and its development strategy and policy framework. Following the Gate check assessment of the HLDP Evidence Report, the Council seeks to prepare the HLDP Proposed Plan.

List of Acronyms

APP	Area Place Plan
BILA	Business and Industrial Land Audit
CaSPlan	Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan (2018)
CAT	Community Asset Transfer
CNPA	Cairngorms National Park Authority
CTA	Cumulative Transport Appraisal
CWB	Community Wealth Building
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
HES	Historic Environment Scotland
HIE	Highlands and Islands Enterprise
HiTrans	Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership
HLA	Housing Land Audit
HLDP	Highland Local Development Plan
HNDA	Housing Need and Demand Assessment
HST	Housing Supply Target
HSVC	Highland Social Value Charter (for Renewables Investment)
HwLDP	Highland-wide Local Development Plan (2012)
IMF	Inner Moray Firth
IMFLDP	Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan (2015)
IMFLDP2	Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2 (2024)
LHS	Local Housing Strategy
LHLR	Local Housing Land Requirement
ICFGF	Inverness & Cromarty Firth Green Freeport
iLHLR	Indicative Local Housing Land Requirement
LDP	Local Development Plan
LPP	Local Place Plan
LTS	Local Transport Strategy
NHSH	NHS Highland
NPF4	National Planning Framework 4
RSS	Regional Spatial Strategy
RTS	Regional Transport Strategy
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SEPA	Scottish Environment Protection Agency
UHI	University of the Highlands and Islands
WestPlan	West Highlands and Islands Local Development Plan (2019)