



5th April 2011

H.C. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICE		
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FILE REF:		

Tim Stott Esq.,
Principal Planner,
The Highland Council,
Council Offices,
Glenurquhart Road,
Inverness,
IV3 5NX.

Dear Tim,

Following our meeting on 18th March regarding the planning allocations for commercial/industrial land in the East Ross, Inverness and Nairn areas, I summarise our discussions below. References are based on the settlement maps which form part of the currently adopted local plan.

1. Tain.

Now that the issue of the siting of the supermarkets seems to have been settled, the area of land to the North-East of the town, designated 23 and 22(a) on the plan, should be considered for commercial and light, clean industrial use (i.e. Use Classes 4 & 6). HIE had previously considered purchasing this site for development as a food park, but this had not been progressed because of the supermarket land allocation issue. It is believed that this land is in the ownership of the Stone family and the owners of Glenmorangie Distillery. HIE feels that this allocation will be adequate for the time being, but currently owns no development land or property in Tain, nor do we currently have any plans to do so but we feel that it is important to make the allocation so that the opportunity is there.

2. Invergordon.

Generally the availability of designated industrial/commercial land is adequate. HIE sees developments of this nature being sited to the North and East of the town. The large site at Delny/Ord Farm merits separate mention in the Plan, and this site's designation should be maintained.

The Seabank Tank Farm represents a major opportunity for the redevelopment of the town, but has major issues of access, demolition of existing structures and contamination. HIE thinks that this site is best suited to housing though I should make it quite clear that we do not see ourselves as leading on any such scheme. Access could be improved by a new bridge over the railway where Tomich road meets the site from the North and constructing a new road through the site to meet the High Street through the former Victoria Garage site (no. 19, believed owned by a religious organisation). It is believed that there are also contamination issues with this site.

The former railway sidings site (22), the Travis Perkins yard and the site to the East of Station Road should also be considered for imaginative redevelopment including class 4,5 and 6 uses.

3. Alness.

Demand for premises in the Eastern part of Teaninich Industrial Estate remains buoyant. Land (22) to the South-West of the development should be redesignated from business to industrial use as HIE feels that there is an imbalance in the split in the allocation of commercial vs. industrial land. (The large site (29) can be discounted since it is a sand and gravel pit). Alness Point Business Park is not shown on the settlement plan and HIE retains sites here for major commercial and clean, high-technology industrial uses. An extension of this business park to the North-East has been considered by HIE but there are no plans to take this forward in the immediate future.

4. Dingwall.

HIE believes that there is a shortage of land allocated for industrial development in Ding wall, particularly Class 5 uses. The site to the West of Dochcarty Road (11) has limited potential due to it being traversed by an high voltage electricity transmission line, complete with pylon. HIE is in the process of disposing of the remaining sites on Dingwall Business Park for Class 4-type uses and is considering expanding it to the West by taking in the next field between the river Peffery and Strathpeffer Road. The site conditions are difficult on account of need for flood bunds and underlying clay deposits and will therefore costly to develop. It is also understood that the landowner is hopeful of achieving housing designation for this, consequently our negotiations are at an impasse.

5. Maryburgh and Conon Bridge.

Little comment here, it should be noted that HIE considers that the former Pescanova site on the Northern edge of Conon Bridge is unsuitable for development due to flooding issues.

6. Tore.

Discreet consideration should be given to a specific commercial/industrial (Use Classes 4, 5 & 6) allocation of land, to be identified, to the South-West of the roundabout, accessed from the Muir of Ord road.

7. Muir of Ord.

HIE is anxious to ensure that SGL Technic Ltd has the ability to expand its operations. This company has recently acquired the 'Burdens' site to the North-East of its present factory, but other options are severely limited and may require some innovative thinking.

Further industrial land in the area opposite the entrance to Mannsfield Showground could be designated. HIE may wish, in the medium-long term to acquire land here to be offered as serviced industrial/commercial sites.

8. Beauly.

No comment.

9. Inverness.

Generally lack of market failure in Inverness means that there is no need for HIE to intervene directly in the property market here. Post-phase 1 phases of the Inverness Campus development plus the existing allocations in the A96 Corridor should serve the foreseeable Class 4 needs for the time being. However, we feel there is a continuing need to ensure an adequate supply of Class 5 opportunities – these do not appear to be evident at present.

10. Nairn.

HIE has disposed of its development land holdings at Balmakeith, and no plans for further property holdings in the town, but will maintain a watching brief. We support the continued allocation of land to the east of Balmakeith Business Park.

11. Strathpeffer and Garve.

HIE has no comment to add on these settlements.

I hope that the comments are an accurate summary of our discussions and that you will find them helpful in determining the land designations.

As mentioned at the meeting, under the Government Economic Strategy, HIE sees itself in a much more 'strategic' role in the provision of sites and property than it did in the past. Thus, there is unlikely to be further provision of smaller advance premises in the Inner Moray Firth area though we may continue to do so in more economically challenged areas where the market will not provide these. We have the ability to assist the private sector to undertake such schemes under the Scottish Property Support Scheme.

We continue to be able to provide properties (subject to availability of budget) to accommodate major inward investments in circumstances where the private sector is proven to be unable or unwilling to provide same, provided, of course, a robust business case can be made for so doing.

Keith Bryers and I, along with others in the Property Team in HIE are keen to continue the dialogue with the Planning and Development team at The Highland Council and will welcome further discussions.

Yours sincerely,



Robin Gilbert
Property Manager – HIE Inner Moray Firth