

Mr Malcolm MacLeod
Development Plans Manager
The Highland Council
Glenurquhart Road
INVERNESS
IV3 5NX

28th April 2011

Dear Mr Macleod

Ref: Local Plan Proposals

I would like to make the following comments:

SEABOARD VILLAGES

All the seaboard villages, Shandwick, Hilton, Balintore and Portmahomack all have very distinctive local characters and the policing of the conservation area especially in Portmahomack needs to be, I feel, far more vigilant and therefore the setting up of an inventory of buildings within the seafront and policing of potential development, tightening up on sash and case windows, the loss of timber porches, the general historic fabric on a lot of the buildings and the poor standard of most of the infill architecture needs to be policed far more and this could be done by the involvement of The Highland Council Conservation Officer in helping to police the existing conservation areas. It might be necessary to extend the conservation area in Portmahomack to cover the whole length of the seafront and possibly along past the harbour going towards the icehouse.

BALINTORE & SHANDWICK

Also the historic centre of the village policing of new development and also especially in Shandwick the character and grain of the existing village seafront is very important and this should be recorded and protected.

Expansion of all these villages should be encouraged and the concentration of proper urban extensions to each of the villages could comprise of new square possibly with some mixed use rather than just executive-type homes. The mix of affordable housing and executive homes should be carried out along a more densely joined up street rather than the plot-type extensions that especially Portmahomack is being faced with. This needs to be much more of a street-type architecture rather than executive home-type architecture and this should be policed with more vigour.

Cont/.....Most importantly Easter Ross

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Most importantly Easter Ross in general the presumption for development on the peninsula must be revoked and that the green field site rash that is spreading across Easter Ross must be curtailed. This is some of the best agricultural land in the Highlands and to build on it seems to be very short term in outlook and it is not in the long term interest of Easter Ross or the wider Highland area. If more houses required as they are then they should be concentrated as said earlier informing new urban streets in the existing villages.

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It was agreed that the comments already made to the council regarding the ASDA site that the Civic Trust were encouraged by the proposed alterations to the building to create a much more locally identifiable structure and also a much simpler and more agricultural-type feel to the architectural situation however the lack of tree planting within the parking area is a concern as this will be a large open area of car park. It seems unrealistic not to allow for more trees in this area. In particular concern to the Civic Trust was the idea of policing any conditions on tree planting on the road-side of the development and particular care must be taken to shield the development from the A9 with good tree planting. This should be maintained over a 10-15 year period and the conditions should have some teeth in that it should be able to make the proprietors of the site replant and maintain the planting and good condition for the next 10-15 years.

Yours sincerely



Lachlan Stewart
Chairman for Tain & Easter Ross Civic Trust

