

## Appendix 3 –Assessment of Alternatives

This section contains detailed assessments of the Green Networks: Supplementary Guidance and the reasonable alternative which has been identified.

The assessment considers:

- What level of impact the guidance/reasonable alternative may have in the short/medium/long term on each of the SEA Objectives;
- The sensitivity of the SEA Objective to the policy/reasonable alternative; and
- At what scale the preferred approach/reasonable alternative may have an impact.

The matrix also includes a justification of the assessment for each SEA objective. This is intended to guide the reader through the decision making process. To aid in this the matrix also records assumptions which have been made in the decision making process.

For consistency the following scoring system has been used through out the assessment matrices:

<b>Significant Positive Impact</b>	<b>No or minimal positive impact</b>	<b>Neutral Impact</b>	<b>No or minimal negative impact</b>	<b>Significant negative impact</b>	<b>Possible Positive and Negative Impacts</b>	<b>Unknown Impact</b>
++	+	=	-	--	+/-	??

<b>High Sensitivity</b>	<b>H</b>
<b>Medium Sensitivity</b>	<b>M</b>
<b>Low Sensitivity</b>	<b>L</b>

Each assessment will be followed by a concise commentary on the findings of the assessment of the policy/reasonable alternative.

On the following pages the SEA Objectives are set out and are accompanied by the key considerations for the assessment of the guidance/reasonable alternative. These have been refined following consultation with the Consultation Authorities.

## SEA Objectives and Key Considerations

The key considerations which are set out below will be used in the assessment of the guidance/reasonable alternatives.

1	<p><b>Maintain and enhance designated wildlife sites, biodiversity, valuable habitats and protected species, avoiding irreversible losses</b></p> <p>Will it contribute to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity in Highland?</p> <p>Will it contribute to achieving local and regional biodiversity action plan targets?</p> <p>Will habitats of importance to for biodiversity be protected?</p> <p>Will it safeguard Natura 2000 sites?</p> <p>Will it safeguard Sites of Special Scientific Interest?</p> <p>Will it ensure the importance of the protected species of the area is made a priority?</p>
2	<p><b>Maintain, enhance and create green networks for wildlife and people</b></p> <p>Will fragmentation of the green network be avoided?</p> <p>Will existing green networks be protected and enhanced?</p> <p>Will connectivity within the green network be enhanced?</p>
3	<p><b>Provide opportunities for people to come into contact with and appreciate nature/natural environments</b></p> <p>Will it safeguard the ability of people to experience qualities of wildness?</p> <p>Will it enhance responsible access to natural areas, including those of high biodiversity value?</p> <p>Will it contribute to education of local people and tourists in terms of their understanding of the local wildlife?</p>
4	<p><b>Protect and enhance human health</b></p> <p>Will it ensure a more healthy lifestyle for the residents within the settlements?</p> <p>Will it ensure better opportunities for walking and cycling?</p>
5	<p><b>Retain and improve quality, quantity and connectivity of publicly accessible open space</b></p> <p>Will it increase the level of fit for purpose open spaces?</p> <p>Will it improve existing open spaces?</p> <p>Will it ensure better connectivity of open spaces?</p> <p>Will it ensure recreational access to green networks?</p>
6	<p><b>Reduce vulnerability to the effects of climate change</b></p> <p>Will it ensure new developments are free from flooding?</p> <p>Will it enhance natural drainage?</p> <p>Will it reduce the vulnerability of existing areas to flooding?</p> <p>Will it facilitate species adaptation to climate change through the protection of or contribution to green habitat networks?</p>
7	<p><b>Increase opportunities for recreational access to the outdoors and active travel</b></p> <p>Will it promote the use of core paths by linking them to a green network?</p> <p>Will it improve links to the wider countryside?</p> <p>Will it be protect and enhance the existing path network?</p> <p>Will it provide opportunities to travel between settlements using active travel?</p>
8	<p><b>Protect and where appropriate enhance the cultural heritage</b></p> <p>Will it protect or enhance listed buildings and their settings?</p> <p>Will it protect or enhance the scheduled monuments and their settings?</p> <p>Will it protect or enhance locally important archaeological sites?</p> <p>Will it protect and enhance conservation areas?</p> <p>Will it protect or enhance gardens and designed landscapes?</p>

9	<p><b>Conserve and enhance landscape character and scenic value</b></p> <p>Will existing landscape character be maintenance or enhanced?  Will local diversity and distinctiveness be maintained or enhanced?  Will it protect areas with strong qualities of wildness?</p>
10	<p><b>Protect and enhance the water and riparian environment</b></p> <p>Will it ensure that development has no detrimental impact on the water environment?  Will it ensure developments enhance the water environment where possible?</p>

## Explanation of Matrix

SEA Objective	Time Scale			Sensitivity (H/M/L)	Magnitude		Assumptions and Justification
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term		Local	Regional	
	1						

How relevant is the issue to the SEA objective.

SEA Objective from Environmental Report

Will it have an affect in the short (0-5yrs), medium (5-10yrs), long term (10+yrs)

Will it have an affect at a local or Highland wide (also cross LA boundary) scale.

Assumptions made when assessing the approach against the SEA objective and why the SEA has been given this assessment

## Preferred Option

SEA Objective	Time Scale			Sensitivity (H/M/L)	Magnitude		Justification and Assumptions
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term		Local	Regional	
1	+	++	++	H	++	+	<p><b>Assumptions</b> Policies within the Highland wide Local Development Plan seek to safeguard the Natural Environment including designated sites, protected species and habitats and other species and habitats. National and international legislation safeguard designated sites.</p> <p><b>Justification</b> The guidance will seek to create a connected green network which will provide opportunities for the enhancement of biodiversity in Highland. Through ensuring that these networks are safeguarded through this guidance and policies within the Highland wide Local Development plan there is significant opportunity to protect biodiversity within green networks from the potential adverse affect of development.</p> <p>While the guidance can not afford any additional protection to protected species which is not already afforded to them through legislation, the guidance seeks to, in conjunction with policies within the Highland wide Local Development Plan, protect the habitats within which may protected species may reside. In areas where green networks are to be identified there should be a priority set out for the area to ensure that protected species are protected. This could be as part of a wider priority. Protected species will not be mapped as part of this guidance due to their fluidity but links will be provided to the NBN Gateway where information on protected species in an area can be identified.</p> <p>The guidance seeks to ensure that biodiversity is safeguarded and where possible enhanced. This is done through the identification of green networks and the setting of priorities for the networks. This may include opportunity to specific RBAP or LBAP targets or it may simply contribute towards the targets indirectly be ensuring that habitats are connected facilitating species movement and facilitation of species adaptation to climate change.</p> <p>It is anticipated that habitats of importance will be safeguarded through this guidance. When identifying a green network in an area the spatial analysis will seek to identify the most represented habitats as part of the</p>

SEA Objective	Time Scale			Sensitivity (H/M/L)	Magnitude		Justification and Assumptions
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term		Local	Regional	
							<p>environmental element of the network. These will then be a consideration when assessing planning applications in the area given the contribution they make towards, and the support they give to the biodiversity of the area. In addition if a designated site is so because of the biodiversity value, then it will also be safeguarded as part of the environmental element of the green network.</p> <p>All designated sites (including Natura 2000) will be identified through the mapping of green networks. They will then form a key part of the environment element of the network. This will then provide for additional safeguarding on top of the policies of the Highland wide Local Development Plan but it will not afford additional protection to them above that afforded by the relevant legislation. If a Natural 2000 site is likely to be affected by a green network priority then an appropriate assessment will be carried out (this is the case for GN priority to “realise the potential of the Inverness-Nairn Coastal Trail, as well as a Landward Trail, north-south connections between the trails and a tourist trail”.</p>
2	++	++	++	H	++	+	<p><b>Assumptions</b> The Highland wide Local Development Plan seeks to protect and enhance green networks only where green networks have been identified. Other policies of the Highland wide Local Development Plan address issues related to elements of the green network.</p> <p><b>Justification</b> This guidance will seek to influence planning proposals at an early stage to ensure that green networks are considered from the outset. To facilitate the achievement of this the guidance will set out key considerations which will ask how and to what scale the green network will be delivered through a new development. This will also ensure consideration is given to the potential fragmentation of the green network and ensure mitigation is put in place to ensure that this is avoided. To ensure that existing networks can be protected and enhanced the guidance will set out how a green network can be delivered including through the planning system (developer contributions, good masterplanning) and out</p>

SEA Objective	Time Scale			Sensitivity (H/M/L)	Magnitude		Justification and Assumptions
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term		Local	Regional	
							<p>with the planning system (SRDP/LEADER+ funding etc). The guidance will also have key linkages to other guidance to facilitate the enhancement of a network including, but not limited to; Open Space in New Residential Development: Interim Supplementary Guidance, draft Core Path Plans, THC Access Strategy and LBAPs. These will ensure that elements of the network will be enhanced through application of this guidance and other associated guidance. The policy on Green Networks in the Highland wide Local Development Plan puts in place the local planning policy framework necessary to ensure that this guidance can be applied.</p> <p>It is anticipated that through the identification of the green network that the Social and Environmental elements of the networks especially that connectivity of the green network will be protected and enhanced. The social element of the network includes core paths and open spaces which will improve connectivity for recreation as well as active travel for people. The environmental element of the network identifies habitats which are present in the area and through the guidance seeks to facilitate the connection of these through the delivering of priorities section of the guidance. While the way in which this will be delivered for each local green network may differ due to circumstance, it will be ensured that this is always a consideration through the vision for green networks set out in the guidance.</p>
3	+	++	++	M	++	+	<p><b>Assumptions</b>  Policies in the Highland wide Local Development Plan address access to the outdoors and wild areas. The Highland Council Access Strategy addresses issues related to access to the outdoors. The Council are working with SNH to identify areas of wild area which may form an element of the green network in due course.</p> <p><b>Justification</b>  It is anticipated that the guidance will not facilitate the ability of people to experience qualities of wildness given the areas in which green networks will be mapped (i.e. in and around larger settlements). However, it is not anticipated that the guidance will have an adverse affect on people's abilities to experience qualities of wildness either. Out with areas where green networks have been mapped (where people may be able to experience qualities of wildness) the same green network principles will apply however it is not anticipated that development in areas out</p>

SEA Objective	Time Scale			Sensitivity (H/M/L)	Magnitude		Justification and Assumptions
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term		Local	Regional	
							<p>with these areas that development will be of such a scale that it would have significantly adverse affect on people's ability to experience qualities of wildness.</p> <p>The guidance seeks to facilitate responsible access to the outdoors in and around towns through a series of connected paths and trails which have been identified as part of the social element of the network and provide opportunity to deliver protection and enhancement of these routes. The guidance however does not and can not attempt to change behaviours toward responsible access, this is the role of other guidance and policy.</p> <p>Through the delivery of the green network and providing opportunities to make contact with natural areas it is anticipated that there will be significant opportunity to contribute towards education of local people and tourists understanding of their local environment. To ensure that significant benefits are achieved then there may need to be provision within particular sections of the guidance e.g. "Delivering the Priorities", to ensure interpretation is delivered as part of any part of an enhancement to the green network.</p>
4	+	+	++	M	++	+	<p><b>Assumptions</b></p> <p>Open Space in new Residential Development: Supplementary Guidance will be compatible with this guidance. Core paths will be an integral element of a green network.</p> <p>Consideration is given to the policies of the Local Transport Strategy to encourage opportunities for walking and cycling.</p> <p>Policies in the Highland wide Local Development Plan address travel, access to the outdoors, and open space.</p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>It is anticipated that through identifying, protecting and enhancing a connected network of open space, paths and trails in an area that it will provide opportunities for people to have a healthier lifestyle. This is because spaces and places will be available to take part in either formal or informal recreational activities given the protection afforded to them as part of the green network.</p> <p>The protection and enhancement of paths and trails sought by this guidance should also facilitate a modal shift towards use of more sustainable transport methods such as walking and cycling. The affect of this is likely to vary</p>



SEA Objective	Time Scale			Sensitivity (H/M/L)	Magnitude		Justification and Assumptions
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term		Local	Regional	
							on where the green network is and the current level of provision in the area.
5	+	+	++	M	++	=	<p><b>Assumptions</b> Open Space in new Residential Development: Supplementary Guidance will be compatible with this guidance. Policies in the Highland wide Local Development Plan address open space provision. Results of the Highland Greenspace Audit will be a key element of the spatial analysis of a green network.</p> <p><b>Justification</b> The green networks guidance used in isolation is unlikely to increase the level of fit for purpose open spaces, however it will seek to protect enhance those which are already developed. Through linkage to the Open Space in New Residential Development: Interim Supplementary Planning Guidance it is anticipated that this guidance can be used to ensure a more cohesive approach to open space ensuring quality, quantity and quality are all addressed where it is appropriate to do so. The guidance will seek to ensure that open spaces link together to deliver benefits in terms of improved access to the wider countryside for recreation. It will do this through the identification of the green networks in and around towns and the safeguard of them.</p>
6	=	+	+	M	+	=	<p><b>Assumptions</b> Policies in the Highland wide Local Development Plan address flooding.</p> <p><b>Justification</b> While unlikely to ensure that developments are free from flooding this guidance could ensure that functional flood plains are given an extra level of safeguard through the mapping of green networks to ensure that they are taken into consideration when developments are being brought forward. While this may be done the level of protection afforded by the green networks guidance would not be as strong as that offered under policies of the Local Development Plan or relevant legislation.</p>

SEA Objective	Time Scale			Sensitivity (H/M/L)	Magnitude		Justification and Assumptions
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term		Local	Regional	
							<p>Through the protection and enhancement of green networks as sought by this guidance there will be significant opportunity to ensure natural drainage is enhanced. Green Networks provide opportunities to limit soil sealing in new developments and sustainable drainage systems could form a part of a green network creating wetland habitats and performing a drainage function. This may lead to areas which are currently at risk of flooding becoming less vulnerable.</p> <p>It is anticipated that this guidance will provide significant opportunity to facilitate species adaptation to climate change through the protection of or contribution to green habitat networks. By ensuring that green networks are considered at an early stage, the development can be built in around important habitats to facilitate improved connectivity of the network. Through doing this there will be opportunity for species to move freely to between habitats to help them to adapt to the affects of climate change.</p>
7	+	++	++	M	++	=	<p><b>Assumptions</b>  Core paths will be an integral element of a green network.  Consideration is given to the policies of the Local Transport Strategy to encourage opportunities for walking and cycling.  Consideration will be given to the Highland Council Access Strategy.  Policies in the Highland wide Local Development Plan address travel and access to the outdoors.</p> <p><b>Justification</b>  Through this guidance core paths will be an integral element of the green network contributing to the social sustainability of the network. By doing this it will also provide opportunity to protect and enhance the existing path network and improve linkage to the wider countryside through linkage with policies within the Highland wide Local Development Plan.  It is anticipated that through embedding paths and trails into the social element of the network that there will be opportunity to encourage active travel as the guidance will raise the awareness of the paths and trails but also seek to deliver improved connectivity between paths and trails making it a more cohesive path network which would</p>

SEA Objective	Time Scale			Sensitivity (H/M/L)	Magnitude		Justification and Assumptions
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term		Local	Regional	
							again encourage their use as a real alternative to the use of public transport.
8	+	+	+	M	+	=	<p><b>Assumptions</b> Policies within the Highland wide Local Development Plan seek to safeguard the built and cultural heritage including listed buildings and settings, locally important archaeological sites, conservation areas, gardens and designed landscapes. National and international legislation safeguard certain built heritage features.</p> <p><b>Justification</b> Through mapping of the green network the listed buildings and settings, locally important archaeological sites, conservation areas, gardens and designed landscapes will all be identified and safeguarded as an important element of the environmental network. If appropriate the guidance may seek to enhance the settings around these historical features through a green network priority. The guidance however will not be able to afford any additional protection to these historic features than is already afforded to them through national policy and legislation.</p>
9	+	+	++	M	+	=	<p><b>Assumptions</b> Consideration is given to the Special Landscape Area Citation where appropriate when identifying green networks and assessing planning applications. Consideration will be given to the findings of the most relevant Landscape Character Assessment when identifying potential landscapes of local significance and when assessing planning applications. Policies in the Highland wide Local Development Plan address landscape.</p> <p><b>Justification</b> The green network guidance seeks to identify the landscape character of the area to ensure that this is a consideration when developing an area. The guidance should facilitate the maintenance of local diversity and distinctiveness of the landscape through safeguarding of key views, and green buffers to avoid coalescence of settlements which may have a detrimental affect on the local distinctiveness. It is anticipated that the guidance will not protect areas with strong qualities of wildness given the areas in which</p>

SEA Objective	Time Scale			Sensitivity (H/M/L)	Magnitude		Justification and Assumptions
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term		Local	Regional	
							green networks will be mapped (i.e. in and around larger settlements). However, it is not anticipated that the guidance will have an adverse affect on people's abilities to experience qualities of wildness either. Out with areas where green networks have been mapped (where people may be able to experience qualities of wildness) the same green network principles will apply however it is not anticipated that development in areas out with these areas that development will be of such a scale that it would have significantly adverse areas with strong qualities of wildness.
10	+	+	+	M	+	=	<p><b>Assumptions</b> Policies in the Highland wide Local Development Plan address the water environment. Consideration will be given to the area River Basin Management Plans (when published) when identifying networks.</p> <p><b>Justification</b> Through seeking to integrate habitats into the green network (including wetland and water bodies) it will be possible to ensure that these habitats are appropriately protected as part of the green network. While each land allocation will be required to not have a detrimental affect on the water environment through connection to the public sewer, no culverting of water courses etc. through national policy or through the Highland wide Local Development Plan the green network will seek to ensure no detrimental impact on the water environment by integrating any sensitive water bodies into the environmental element of the network to add an additional level of protection and enhancement. However this will not afford any protection above that offered by the Water Framework Directive. While not directly enhancing the water environment the guidance will ensure that through the successful delivery of a green network which aims to protect and enhance habitats that a positive affect will be noticeable on the water environment in the longer term.</p>

**Commentary**

It is considered that this approach is likely to have a positive affect on all SEA objectives, with some SEA objectives being significantly positively affected by this guidance. The SEA has identified a number of areas where the guidance could be improved to ensure that a

significantly positive affect is delivered on SEA objectives. This is likely to be through changes to the guidance itself. These are set out in the mitigation section of the Environmental Report.

## Reasonable Alternative

SEA Objective	Time Scale			Sensitivity (H/M/L)	Magnitude		Justification and Assumptions
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term		Local	Regional	
	1	=	=		=	M	

SEA Objective	Time Scale			Sensitivity (H/M/L)	Magnitude		Justification and Assumptions
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term		Local	Regional	
2	+/-	+/-	+/-	M	+/-	+/-	<p><b>Assumptions</b> The Highland wide Local Development Plan seeks to protect and enhance green networks only where green networks have been identified. Other policies of the Highland wide Local Development Plan address issues related to elements of the green network.</p> <p><b>Justification</b> The policy on Green Networks in the Highland wide Local Development Plan seeks to protect and enhance green networks, however it can only avoid the fragmentation of a green network where one has been identified. Without this guidance identifying networks through spatial analysis there is a risk that green networks may be fragmented, it will be difficult to protect and enhance existing networks or improve connectivity of the network when developments are brought forward. This is likely to become a more significant issue in the medium to longer term as development occurs both within and at the edge of settlements.</p>
3	+	+	+	M	+	=	<p><b>Assumptions</b> Policies in the Highland wide Local Development Plan address access to the outdoors and wild areas. The Highland Council Access Strategy addresses issues related to access to the outdoors. The Council are working with SNH to identify areas of wild area which may form an element of the green network in due course.</p> <p><b>Justification</b> It is anticipated that other plans, programmes and strategies which the Council have in place would be able to address this SEA objective, if a Green Networks: Supplementary Guidance is not brought forward. While this may be the case there would not be a document which could co-ordinate this approach to bring forward the significant cumulative benefit that green networks can offer to this SEA objective.</p>

SEA Objective	Time Scale			Sensitivity (H/M/L)	Magnitude		Justification and Assumptions
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term		Local	Regional	
4	+/-	+/-	+/-	M	+/-	+/-	<p><b>Assumptions</b>  Open Space in new Residential Development: Supplementary Guidance will be utilised to facilitate opportunities for recreation to enable an enhancement of human health.  Consideration is given to the policies of the Local Transport Strategy to encourage opportunities for walking and cycling.  Policies in the Highland wide Local Development Plan address travel, access to the outdoors, and open space.</p> <p><b>Justification</b>  It is anticipated that other plans, programmes and strategies which the Council have in place would be able to address this SEA objective, if a Green Networks: Supplementary Guidance is not brought forward. While this is the case a green network would facilitate the creation of a sustainable, connected network of high quality, fit for purpose green spaces and green corridors which may mean that by following this approach there may not be the opportunity to realise the full potential in order to protect and enhance human health through appropriate provision of opportunities to access the outdoors and connected networks of open spaces for both formal and informal recreation in a co-ordinated manner, instead good masterplanning principles will be heavily relied on.</p>



SEA Objective	Time Scale			Sensitivity (H/M/L)	Magnitude		Justification and Assumptions
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term		Local	Regional	
5	=	=	=	M	=	=	<p><b>Assumptions</b>  Open Space in new Residential Development: Supplementary Guidance will be utilised to facilitate creation/improvement of open spaces.  Policies in the Highland wide Local Development Plan address open space provision.  Results of the Highland Greenspace Audit will be used as an evidence base to secure additional open space provision.</p> <p><b>Justification</b>  It is anticipated that other plans, programmes and strategies which the Council have in place would be able to address this SEA objective, if a Green Networks: Supplementary Guidance is not brought forward. However, without this guidance on green networks a connected approach to open spaces may not be taken, which may result in limited recreational access to green networks and not ensure better connectivity of open spaces.</p>
6	=	=	=	M	=	=	<p><b>Assumptions</b>  Policies in the Highland wide Local Development Plan address flooding.</p> <p><b>Justification</b>  It is anticipated that other plans, programmes and strategies which the Council have in place would be able to address this SEA objective, if a Green Networks: Supplementary Guidance is not brought forward, however, they may not address all elements of this SEA objective. It is anticipated that there would be limited opportunity to facilitate species adaptation to climate change as without this guidance habitats which form part of the green network may become fragmented and as a result there will be less opportunity for species movement which can facilitate their adaptation to climate change.</p>

SEA Objective	Time Scale			Sensitivity (H/M/L)	Magnitude		Justification and Assumptions
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term		Local	Regional	
7	=	=	=	M	=	=	<p><b>Assumptions</b>            Consideration is given to the policies of the Local Transport Strategy to encourage opportunities for walking and cycling.            Consideration will be given to the Highland Council Access Strategy.            Policies in the Highland wide Local Development Plan address travel and access to the outdoors.</p> <p><b>Justification</b>            It is anticipated that other plans, programmes and strategies which the Council have in place would be able to address this SEA objective, if a Green Networks: Supplementary Guidance is not brought forward, however the full benefits may not be delivered. For example, core paths and other paths and trails would not be promoted as part of a green network which may reduce the opportunities to develop a cohesive path network. This could in turn lead to limited opportunities being provided to travel between settlements using active travel, which could lead to no improvement in public health or no movement towards a modal shift to travel by sustainable transport methods.</p>
8	=	=	=	M	=	=	<p><b>Assumptions</b>            Policies within the Highland wide Local Development Plan seek to safeguard the built and cultural heritage including listed buildings and settings, locally important archaeological sites, conservation areas, gardens and designed landscapes.            National and international legislation safeguard certain built heritage features.</p> <p><b>Justification</b>            Through not mapping the green network the listed buildings and settings, locally important archaeological sites, conservation areas, gardens and designed landscapes will not be identified and safeguarded as part of the network. This approach would rely solely on protection of these historic features which is afforded to them through national policy and legislation.</p>

SEA Objective	Time Scale			Sensitivity (H/M/L)	Magnitude		Justification and Assumptions
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term		Local	Regional	
9	=	=	=	M	=	=	<p><b>Assumptions</b>            Consideration is given to the Special Landscape Area Citation where appropriate when assessing planning applications.            Consideration will be given to the findings of the most relevant Landscape Character Assessment when assessing planning applications.            Policies in the Highland wide Local Development Plan address landscape.</p> <p><b>Justification</b>            It is anticipated that other plans, programmes and strategies which the Council have in place would be able to address this SEA objective, if a Green Networks: Supplementary Guidance is not brought forward, however the full benefits may not be delivered. It is important to safeguard land around settlements and landscapes which are locally important to ensure local distinctiveness as part of the green network, this approach is unlikely to identify these sites, even in broad terms, so it is unlikely that local distinctiveness will be protected through this approach.</p>
10	=	=	=	M	=	=	<p><b>Assumptions</b>            Policies in the Highland wide Local Development Plan address the water environment.            Consideration will be given to the area River Basin Management Plans (when published) when identifying networks.</p> <p><b>Justification</b>            It is anticipated that other plans, programmes and strategies which the Council have in place would be able to address this SEA objective, if a Green Networks: Supplementary Guidance is not brought forward, however the full benefits may not be delivered. For example the Highland wide Local Development Plan contains a number of policies related to the water environment however a green network can ensure that natural drainage and SuDS are considered as part of the wider green infrastructure for the area and without supplementary guidance on the matter this will not be achieved. As with the preferred approach, this approach will not afford any protection above that offered by the Water Framework Directive.</p>

**Commentary**

While it is not anticipated that this approach will have a negative affect on any of the SEA objectives it is considered that it does not offer opportunity to facilitate a cohesive approach towards green networks, thus not maximising the positive affects on each SEA objective. This has led to overall this approach being assessed to likely have a neutral affect. While other plans, policies and strategy may deliver benefits they are not delivered directly by this approach and this approach does not co-ordinate them to deliver cumulative benefit.