

The Highland Council
Caithness and Sutherland Area Committee

23 September 2014

Agenda Item	9
Report No	CS/ 28/14

Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan

Report by Director of Development and Infrastructure

Summary

This report presents the Main Issues Report (MIR) for the Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan (CaSPlan) for approval for consultation. The MIR will mark the first formal stage in the preparation of the CaSPlan. It presents suggested outcomes that the plan should deliver in terms of Employment, Growing Communities, Connectivity & Transport and Environment & Heritage. It also seeks people's views on the main issues affecting the area and the location of future development.

The MIR has been prepared taking into account the existing Development Plan, including the Caithness Local Plan and the Sutherland Local Plan which CaSPlan will replace when adopted. It also takes account of feedback from the previous stage - the Call for Sites and Ideas. Alongside, a Monitoring Statement and a Strategic Environmental Assessment provide background for the options presented. The consultation on the MIR will inform the preparation of the next stage – the Proposed Plan.

1. Background

- 1.1 The adopted Highland-wide Local Development Plan (2012) sets the framework for the preparation of a new Local Development Plan for the Caithness and Sutherland area. The enclosed Main Issues Report (MIR) (Booklet C of the agenda papers) marks the first formal stage in the preparation of this plan, which is proposed to be named CaSPlan.
- 1.2 The MIR is not intended to be read as a draft version of the Local Development Plan but rather as a report setting out the main issues for the future of the Caithness & Sutherland area. The MIR provides options for dealing with each main issue, including the Council's preferred option, and these are presented for consideration by Committee. These preferences are the suggested initial position of the Council, and are not fixed.
- 1.3 The MIR will be subject to full public consultation, pending approval by Committee. Feedback received on the MIR will be reported to this Committee in mid-2015 with proposals for how the issues raised are considered in preparing a Proposed Local Development Plan for the area. Once the final

CaSPlan has been prepared it will eventually sit alongside the Highland-wide Local Development Plan, and will replace the two Local Plans for Caithness and Sutherland. Supplementary Guidance may also be prepared to support this Plan.

2. Steps Undertaken So Far

2.1 A considerable amount of consultation, research and analysis has been undertaken in preparing this MIR.

2.2 For example, we have involved a range of people with different interests using a variety of techniques. Pupils from every secondary school in the plan area have given us their views on what they would like their community to look like in 20 years, and how they would see themselves within it. We have collaborated with the local community in two of the largest settlements – Wick and Thurso – to prepare visions and masterplans for each town. We have held informal discussions with public sector partners including various Council services, NHS Highland, Highland and Islands Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland, Highlife Highland, Hitrans and Transport Scotland. These discussions have been taken into account in our drafting of the MIR and in particular ensuring that our 4 key outcomes are fit for purpose.

2.3 We have carried out a full assessment of future development options taking account of:

- Sites submitted during a CaSPlan “Call for Sites and Ideas” and a separate more targeted Call for Sites for the “North Highland Onshore Vision”.
- Sites identified through the Wick and Thurso Charrettes.
- Sites allocated in the adopted Development Plan.

The assessment of potential development sites has included input from other teams within the Council such as Contaminated Land Unit, Historic Environment Team, Flood Team, Area Roads Engineers and Access Officer. There has also been considerable engagement with the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Consultation Authorities (Scottish National Heritage, Historic Scotland and Scottish Environment Protection Agency).

2.4 All of the sites suggested through the Call for Sites and Ideas exercise will be available on the CaSPlan website www.highland.gov.uk/casplan. However, please note that not all sites suggested through these routes are presented in the MIR. We have sought to identify the most suitable locations for development concentrated around existing settlements. Sites that were considered to be too far removed from existing settlements, or sited within the wider countryside, and were judged to be unsuitable to identify as specific development allocations in CaSPlan were discounted.

2.5 A number of Community Councils (Brora CC, Edderton CC, Tannach and District CC and Thurso CC) responded to our Call for Sites and Ideas. A small number of sites were suggested by these Community Councils. Key issues/priorities raised were:

- attracting new business opportunities;
- retaining young people;
- attracting people to relocate to the area;
- developing brownfield sites; and
- Thurso Community Council also stated their overall support for the outcomes of the Thurso Charrette.

2.6 Alongside the MIR a Monitoring Statement has been produced which sets out background information on the main issues and the development options set out in the MIR.

3. The Main Issues Report

3.1 The CaSPlan will seek to deliver outcomes that benefit all those who live, work and visit the area, and those who invest in it. The suggested vision for the CaSPlan area set out in the MIR is therefore represented by the following four outcomes which we believe reflect what the CaSPlan should try to achieve for the area by 2035. These are:

Employment	A strong and diverse economy characterised by a renowned centre for renewable energy, world class engineering, traditional land and sea based industries and a tourist industry that combines culture, history and adventure.
Growing Communities	A network of successful, sustainable and socially inclusive communities where people want to live, which provide the most convenient access to services, education, training and employment and are the primary locations for inward investment.
Connectivity and Transport	Enhanced communications, utilities and transport infrastructure that support communities and economic growth, with development anchored to existing or planned provision.
Environment and Heritage	High quality places where the natural, built and cultural heritage is celebrated and valued assets are safeguarded.

3.2 These outcomes are based directly on the priorities which the Council and community planning partners have agreed with the Scottish Government through the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) 3. We have also discussed and agreed these outcomes with a number of partner organisations representing the Caithness and Sutherland area.

3.3 The MIR is split into seven sections. Section 1 sets out the vision and strategy for the area. Section 2 outlines issues that need to be addressed in order to deliver the vision and strategy. Sections 3 to 6 cover more detail on the main issues for delivering the four outcomes reflected in the vision - Employment, Growing Communities, Connectivity & Transport and Environment & Heritage.

Section 7 presents options for future development in settlements. Each section contains questions for the consultation on each of the main issues.

- 3.4 An associated Environmental Report accompanies the MIR and will be published alongside it. It is an integral part of the Plan and has influenced the content of policies and options for future development in settlements. Habitats Regulation Appraisal will be undertaken in due course and published alongside the Proposed Plan.
- 3.5 The MIR takes account of the National Planning Framework (NPF3) and Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) which were published by the Scottish Government on 23rd June 2014.
- 3.6 An Equalities Impact Assessment Screening has been undertaken and accompanies the MIR.

4. Consultation on the MIR

- 4.1 The MIR is a consultation document. We aim to carry out this consultation between October 2014 and January 2015. It is essential that communities are aware of the MIR and get engaged in the consultation.
- 4.2 Building on recent experience we intend to actively engage with communities and businesses within the plan area to discuss the issues that concern them. We specifically intend to hold consultation events across the Plan area using various techniques to engage people on the main issues. We will prepare a Consultation Strategy to show proposed arrangements and will review it in discussion with Members.
- 4.3 We will be in touch with Community Councils across the area to ensure that they have ample opportunity to get involved in the consultation and to encourage them to put forward comments on behalf of their communities. We will also be asking Community Councils and Members to help spread the word about the Plan and details of the consultation. This includes encouraging members of the local community to engage in the process and submit their comments.
- 4.4 Following on from successful events with all the Secondary Schools in the Plan area, we intend to follow this up by providing material to teachers to enable pupils to get involved in the consultation and submit comments.
- 4.5 We will widely publicise the consultation events by providing a notification letter to neighbours of all potential development sites. We will also contact all those on our mailing list, putting notices in the local press, circulate posters to communities and use social media.
- 4.6 We will be encouraging people to make comments on the MIR electronically and an online form will be available on The Council's website.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Subject to approval of this MIR by Committee, the MIR and associated Environmental Report will be subject to a 12 week public consultation. However, a number of presentational and typographical changes will be required prior to publication. This includes desktop publishing of the document, making the document more user-friendly and producing an interactive version for The Council's website. Any modifications will be made in consultation with the Chair of this Committee.
- 5.2 It is intended that the North Highland Onshore Vision Action Plan will be built into the CaSPlan Action Plan in due course, rather than it continuing as a separate document.
- 5.3 The results of the MIR consultation will be reported back to this Committee for consideration, prior to the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Committee deciding on the contents of the Proposed Plan.

6. Implications

- 6.1 Resource
Resources to deliver the Local Development Plan are available from the Development and Infrastructure Service budget.
- 6.2 Legal
There are no known legal implications arising from this report.
- 6.3 Equalities
An Equalities Impact Assessment screening has been undertaken.
- 6.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever
The MIR outlines specific options for delivering the Carbon Clever initiative. A Strategic Environmental Assessment has been integral to the production of the MIR which assesses the potential impacts of development options and to help steer development towards the most suitable locations. In due course the Plan will be subject to Habitats Regulation Appraisal.
- 6.5 Risk
There are no known risks arising from this report.
- 6.6 Gaelic
All headings in the MIR will be provided in Gaelic.
- 6.7 Rural
The MIR addresses a range of development-related rural issues.

Recommendation

The Committee is invited to:-

- (i) Approve the MIR content for publication, accepting that a number of minor presentational and typographical changes will need to be made prior to publication in consultation with the Chair;
- (ii) Agree to the MIR and an associated Environmental Report being subject of public consultation for a period of 12 weeks, to commence during October 2014;
- (iii) Agree the proposed arrangements for consultation and role of Members in encouraging people to engage in the plan process; and
- (iv) Agree that the results of the consultation will be reported to this Committee in due course for consideration, prior to the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Committee deciding on the contents of the Proposed Plan.

Designation: Director of Development and Infrastructure

Date: 11/9/14

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Background Papers:

All available on the CaSPlan website www.highland.gov.uk/casplan

CaSPlan Main Issues Report (Committee stage, for approval) – Appendix 1

CaSPlan Monitoring Statement (Committee stage)

CaSPlan Environmental Report (Committee stage)

CaSPlan MIR EQIA Screening (Committee stage)

CaSPlan Call for Sites and Ideas responses