

## Glen Urquhart Community Council

### March 2021 discussion on Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan – Housing and Development Sections.

**Page 20. Strategic and Other Employment Sites Preferred approach** We will continue to support and allocate larger, strategic employment development sites such as Cromarty Firth Port, Former Longman Landfill site and Inverness Campus. Sites which are not located within a Main Settlement, including Inverness Airport Business Park, Nigg and Whiteness, will be identified as Economic Development Areas (EDAs) in the Plan. We also wish to allocate a wide range of other business and industrial land within the Plan's Main Settlements. Typically, these will support the expansion or development of vacant plots within existing business and industrial parks. **We want to provide greater support for smaller scale multi-purpose industrial/business uses. Due to the lack of sites being suggested for these uses, to achieve this we think there is merit in introducing a new policy that requires a proportion of land to be made available for such uses in larger development sites.** This policy would only be applied in areas which have been identified as having sufficient levels of demand for employment accommodation. If land is made available then there is greater scope for new models of developing and managing these properties, such as a community trust. Small scale commercial buy-to-let is also increasingly attractive to investors as they can offer a good rate of return, particularly as residential buy-to-let has seen many regulatory and tax changes recently. To help provide certainty and reduce the risk for developers and businesses, we think that the Plan should introduce a framework for Masterplan Consent Areas (MCAs) to be identified. These would essentially grant up-front consents for planned development. MCAs would be a useful, proactive tool to promote and incentivise investment in development by providing consent in advance for specified types of development, in carefully defined circumstances, in a particular area

**Page 22. Growing Sustainable Tourism Preferred Approach** **We think the Plan should designate Loch Ness and its surrounding area as an "Area of Outstanding Tourist Potential" to provide greater support for tourism development, lever funding for the infrastructure that supports tourism, and to help strengthen local communities. This designation would be particularly supportive of proposals which diversify the geographic spread and type of destinations, facilities and attractions on offer. By encouraging visitors to explore further it will help lengthen their stay in the area and avoid the adverse effects of certain destinations reaching saturation point.** The designation of the area reflects work currently being undertaken by Highlands and Islands Enterprise, with support from The Highland Council, Scottish Canals and Visit Scotland, to produce a strategy for Loch Ness to coordinate public-sector support and resources and stimulate private-sector investment in the area. A draft of this strategy and consultation on it is expected during 2020.

**Page 25 Housing Strategy.** Settlement hierarchy Taking account of the housing requirements shown in Table 2 '20 Year Inner Moray Firth Plan Area Housing Requirements Based on 2015 HNDA', the other main issue of tackling climate change, and the importance of protecting the viability and vitality of our town and city centres, we believe that **the Plan should direct a higher proportion of future development to more sustainable locations. In practice, this means classifying the places within the Inner Moray Firth into a hierarchy according to their sustainable travel mode, access to existing and planned future, employment, education, public transport and other services and**

infrastructure capacity. This is shown in Table 3 'Settlement Hierarchy'. In simple terms, the Plan intends to direct most future growth to the settlements with the best existing or committed future access to all these facilities, services and opportunities. Unsurprisingly, Tier 1 settlements include Inverness City, existing towns with good active travel and public transport links such as Beaully and Tain, and the committed new town at Tornagrain. In contrast, Tier 4 settlements offer very limited employment, transport options and services. As these settlements will be almost exclusively dependent on car based transport, we don't think that they are appropriate locations for any significant development. Because of these considerations Cawdor, Contin, and Inchmore are suggested for reclassification from main settlements to growing settlements. However, within all these settlements, we will still support the principle of infill development, refurbishment of existing properties and redevelopment of brownfield (previously developed) sites. This hierarchy has influenced the number and size (likely housing capacity) of preferred sites in this Main Issues Report.

Drum Tier 2, Balnain Tier 5.

**Table 3 Settlement Hierarchy**

Scale of Growth	Sustainability	Hierarchy	Tier	Settlements/Locations
Strategic	Most sustainable	Main Settlements	1	Alness, Beaully, Dingwall, Invergordon, Inverness City, Muir of Ord, Nairn, Tain, Tornagrain.
Modest	Sustainable		2	Ardersier, Conon Bridge, Drumnadrochit, Evanton, Fort Augustus, North Kessock.
Local	Partially sustainable		3	Auldearn, Avoch, Croy, Fortrose and Rosemarkie, Kiltarlity, Maryburgh, Seaboard Villages, Strathpeffer, Tomatin.
Limited	Least sustainable		4	Cawdor <sup>(1)</sup> , Contin <sup>(1)</sup> , Cromarty, Culbokie, Dores, Inchmore <sup>(1)</sup> , Kirkhill, Munloch, Tore.
"Infill" only	Growing Settlements	Growing Settlements	5	Abriachan, Balnain, Barbaraville, Cannich, Farr/Inverarnie, Foyers, Garve, Gorthleck, Hill of Fearn, Inver, Milton of Kildary, Marybank, Portmahomack, Rhicullen/Newmore, Tomich, Whitebridge.
Typically single unit development	Countryside	Countryside	6	All housing groups not otherwise classified as part of a settlement.  Wider open countryside (no general restriction).  "Hinterland" open countryside (general restriction on housing).

## Balnain policies

**Growing settlements** The aIMFLDP contains an "Other Settlements" policy which, within a defined list of places, supports a lesser scale of development than within the "Main Settlements" but a more positive approach than within the countryside. Settlements currently included are places which have/had at least one community facility (e.g. a school or public hall). We intend to bring our policy approach to these smallest settlements in line with our other local development plans for Highland. We wish to call them "Growing Settlements" and not use the existence of a facility as the sole reason for including or excluding places from the list. Instead, we will only include places that have an established, sizeable cluster of development, have some development pressure, few environmental constraints to development, and facility/service networks that can accommodate additional housebuilding

**Growing Settlements Policy Preferred approach** We wish to support the principle of limited "infill" development within the Plan area's smallest settlements listed in Tier 5 of Table 3 'Settlement Hierarchy'. The following draft policy would apply to planning proposals within these settlements. Development proposals that are contained within, round off or consolidate the listed Growing Settlements will be assessed against the extent to which they: take account of the issues and placemaking priorities identified for the individual Growing Settlements; are likely to help sustain, enhance or add to facilities with proposals being located within active travel distance of any facility present; are compatible in terms of use, spacing, character and density with development within that settlement and demonstrate high quality design; can utilise spare capacity in the infrastructure network (education, roads, other transport, water, sewerage etc.) or new/improved infrastructure can be provided in a cost efficient manner, taking into account the Council's requirement for connection to the public sewer other than in exceptional circumstances; avoid a net loss of amenity or recreational areas significant to the local community; and, would not result in adverse impact on any other locally important natural or cultural heritage feature, important public viewpoint/vista or open space. Proposals which demonstrate overall conformity with the above criteria will be in accordance with this policy.

**Self build housing development** As well as setting out the amount and location of new housing, it is important that we provide people with a choice of housing types. We discuss meeting the needs of the ageing population and delivering affordable housing in other parts of this Main Issues Report but we believe that this diversity should also include housing land within our main settlements for self build. We define self build as where an individual commissions or (whether acting alone or with other individuals) is personally involved in the design and construction of a dwelling that is intended to be the individual's main residence once it is built. This includes "custom build" which is essentially self build homes facilitated in some way by a volume housebuilder

**Self Build Housing Policy Preferred approach** We intend to introduce a policy that will require developers to provide a proportion of self build plots on larger housing sites. Our draft policy for discussion is as follows. Each developer of a large (50 or more dwellings) planning application will be required to safeguard and adequately service part (a minimum of 10% of the application's total dwelling capacity) of that application site for self build plots. The exact number, location, size and shape of those plots should take account of the Council's statutory register of self build housing

interest - i.e. best match the supply of plots to local, registered demand for those plots. Where registered demand doesn't translate into self build plot sales over a minimum, adequate marketing period of one year then that part of the site will revert back to being available for general demand housing. The Council will provide guidance to accompany this Plan which will define self build, adequate marketing, and adequate servicing. The guidance will also explain the relationship of this policy to those on placemaking, affordable housing and developer contributions. Alternative approaches This is a developing planning policy topic so there are several alternatives on which we invite comment: Should the site size threshold and minimum percentage requirement be higher or lower than 50 dwellings and 10%? Could more self build housing development be achieved by earmarking certain housing sites only for self build development particularly where the landowner agrees? Should the public purse subsidise or otherwise financially incentivise (for example by reducing developer contributions for the same application) the provision of self build plots?

### **Affordable Housing Interventions**

**Preferred approach** We think that the best way to deliver affordable housing is a combination of one or more of the following: We are considering the introduction of a new policy which would set a higher level of affordable housing contributions in places which are shown to be in greater need. The results of the HNDA would help to influence the rate and geographical area to which it would apply. **At present we consider an increase to 35% would be most appropriate and apply only to Inverness settlement development area.** The policy would continue to apply to developments of 4 or more units but will represent an increase from the current 25% which is the standard rate across areas of Highland. We would welcome further input during the Main Issues Report consultation from key partners and the private sector to fully assess this proposal. **Embed within the new policy, measures which ensure that the delivery of affordable housing components of private sector developments are prioritised within the early phases of development.** An opportunity could also be provided for a much higher percentage of affordable units being delivered within the first phase with the percentage being tapered down in later phases so long as there is still tenure diversity within each part of the neighbourhood or community. As we are mindful of maintaining the viability of allocated development sites this option could form an alternative to an increase in percentage of affordable housing contributions rates. **As outlined in other Main Issues we support the principle of higher density development as a means of improving placemaking and creating more sustainable, sociable and accessible neighbourhoods. Increasing density can also make developments, such as affordable housing schemes, more viable.**

**Non-preferred approach** We could continue to allocate a very generous supply of housing land - as has been the approach over at least the last decade - to increase competition between landowners and result in reduced land values. However, this approach has been shown not to deliver the scale of affordable housing required and it has led to significant challenges to site delivery and infrastructure planning.

We could also not increase the affordable housing contribution from 25%. However, the current framework is not creating enough opportunities for addressing the affordable housing need in the most pressurised areas. Whilst older plans allocated land exclusively for affordable housing, this option is not preferred because it may lead to suggestions from landowners for "exceptions" sites in unsustainable locations and result in a segregation of tenures.

**DOESN'T SHOW SOIRBHEAS & LOCH NESS HUB AMBITIONS and nothing for local active travel – do we ask for the hub to be recognised and links to Strathglass at the very least?**



For other (not Inverness) towns and villages this means: 1. Maximising the use of and connections to existing and planned new rail halts and bus stops. 2. Creating mini park and ride/park and share sites on strategic routes. 3. Delivering active travel improvements to connect communities within and between towns and villages. 4. Lowering parking standards where an acceptable level of public transport and active travel provides a viable alternative.

For more rural places this means: 1. Maximising the opportunities to utilise rail halts and park and ride/park and share sites. 2. Supporting communities to identify and deliver active travel connections that will make sustainable travel a realistic option. 3. Supporting the delivery of electric vehicle charging infrastructure at key destinations that rural communities can benefit from.

**Sustainable transport policy Preferred approach** We recognise that all development has impacts on the transport network and therefore an up to date, overarching transport policy is required: 1. To receive planning permission, development proposals must be able to demonstrate that walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport are at least as, or more, competitive travel options than travelling by private car. The methodology will be based on journey time competitiveness to key employment and other destinations, and the requirements for developers and how it will be assessed will be set out in full in the sustainable transport policy. Work has already been undertaken about this and can be read in the Transport Appraisal supporting the Main Issues Report. 2. Travel Plans will be required to support the transition to sustainable transport. Any development



Outwith the main, identified settlements, our Spatial Strategy for housing is better to manage pressure for new building because of its adverse environmental and economic effects. Specifically, uncontrolled, sporadic housing development in the open countryside closest to the major employment settlements, other things being equal: increases car-based trips to work and most other activities resulting in higher carbon and other harmful emissions than otherwise need occur; suburbanises the open (or dispersed pattern of settlement) landscape character of the existing countryside; and, increases the cost of public (and private) service provision such as a wired internet connection, a postal service, a private parcel delivery, a water main connection, waste collection, a public sewer connection, a mobile library van service, a school transport service. **Therefore, we believe that new development in the open countryside should be controlled to favour those with good reason to be there.** Housing in connection with a business already in a countryside area or a new enterprise particularly suited to a rural area are existing, sensible exceptions. This includes farmers, crofters and others with a genuine, frequent need to manage their rural land use activity but also managers of kennels, catteries and other "bad neighbour" uses that are not suited to a traditional industrial estate.

**This Plan cannot change the planning policy that applies within the Hinterland only the boundary that determines where that policy is applied.** Presently, we are reviewing the detail of the policy itself including ways of increasing flexibility such as widening the definition of a housing group. This review is subject to a public consultation process separate from this Plan.

#### **Drumnadrochit – Land allocations.**

Each development site option has been given an initial, colour coded, Council preference of "preferred" (green), "alternative" (amber) or "non-preferred" (red). This preference is based on a sustainability appraisal consideration of each site/proposal which includes input from a variety of stakeholders including public service providers. **Please note that the Council's intention is to confirm for allocation in the next Proposed Plan, only those sites shown as "preferred" in this document.** An "alternative" site will only be considered for confirmation where it can be evidenced, in response to this Main Issues Report, that it is clearly better in sustainability appraisal terms than at least one equivalent "preferred" site in that locality. The following explains our approach to site preferences. Preferred Sites Sites that are the most suitable in sustainability appraisal terms, i.e. they are the most environmentally sustainable and most economically viable to develop for both the public and private sector especially in terms of infrastructure provision and other mitigation necessary to deliver them. Larger (10 or more dwelling units and non housing equivalent) fully committed sites that are under construction as of summer 2020.

Map 3.13 Drumnadrochit





## Sites

### Preferred Sites

#### DR01

**Name:** Land Adjoining New Co-op

**Use(s):** Mixed Use (Housing, Retail, Business)

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#### DR02

**Name:** Drum Farm

**Use(s):** Mixed Use (Housing, Business, Retail, Community)

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#### DR03

**Name:** Land West of Post Office

**Use(s):** Mixed Use (Tourism, Business, Retail, Community)

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#### DR04

**Name:** Retail Units on A82/Balmacaan Road and Land Adjoining

**Use(s):** Mixed Use (Retail, Business, Housing, Community)

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#### DR05

**Name:** Shinty Pitch and Adjoining Land

**Use(s):** Community

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#### DR06

**Name:** Schools Junction

**Use(s):** Community

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## Non-Preferred Sites

### DR07

**Name:** Land South of Medical Centre

**Use(s):** Mixed Use (Housing, Retail, Business, Community)

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### DR08

**Name:** Easter Milton

**Use(s):** Either Housing or Community

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The preferred sites above are existing commitments with firm developer interest and are part serviced. In contrast, land south of the medical centre is more speculative albeit also part serviced. We believe that the housing capacity of the preferred sites are sufficient to accommodate the village's growth requirements in the short and medium term. Allocating another large site for development in Drumnadrochit would not meet the Plan's overall sustainability objective. The suggested development site between the village and Milton is bordered by an area of flood risk and is relatively distant from the village centre and its facilities.

## 4 Growing Settlements | Tuineachaidhean a' Fàs

### Balnain | Baile an Àthain

Map 4.2 Balnain



### Issues

Balnain lies alongside the A831, some 5km west of Drumadrochit and within commuting distance of Inverness. It provides basic facilities for a scattered population throughout Glen Urquhart. Local farming, forestry and estate work supports most local jobs. Opportunities to develop local tourist facilities and accommodation may arise with further promotion of the A831 tourist route and the Western Glens, and the Glen Urquhart's archaeological, fishing and forest based recreation assets. Existing development is clustered around the primary school and hall, flanked by rising farm and woodland.

Placemaking Priorities To support further small scale housing development where it will help underpin local community facilities.

To direct most future development north of the A831 so as to protect the fine outlook west across open ground bordering Loch Meikle and avoid land at risk to flooding or erosion.

To respect the limited local waste water treatment capacity.

To support community initiatives to enhance local amenities, including management of the woodland beside the school, refurbishment of the play area and creation of a visitor focal point with better signage of local attractions and places of interest.