

Proposed Strategy

Map 3 illustrates the strategy which is being developed for the A96 Corridor after 2011:

- population growth of 20-30,000 people over the next 30-50 years.
- a new settlement of 10,000+ population located south of the Airport to be developed post-2011.
- a new community/resort at the site of the former Ardersier Fabrication Yard for approximately 3000 people.
- expansion of existing settlements within the Corridor in accordance with housing allocations contained in the current Inverness and Nairn Local Plans at Ardersier, Croy, Culloden Moor/Sunnyside, Culloden and Nairn, together with various smaller settlements.
- review of the scope for additional long term development around the southern edge of Nairn and the eastern margins of Inverness, linked explicitly to,
- improvements to the transport network, particularly further dualling of the A96(T), provision of a Nairn bypass and an interchange upgrade/bypass for Raigmore/Inshes.
- corresponding commitment to reinforce the existing Local Plan policy presumption against further development within the Corridor including sporadic housing in the countryside, allied with a strategy to enhance the landscape/heritage features and supplement recreational facilities including the network of cycle/walkways.

Next Steps

The Council intends to commission further work to examine the detailed implementation of the strategy, including infrastructure networks, layout and design together with financial requirements. The final conclusions will be subject to incorporation into future Local Plans for the area.

Public Consultation

If you wish to comment on the draft masterplan, please write to: John D. Rennilson, Director of Planning and Development, The Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, IV3 5NX by 5th August 2005.

INFORMATION SHEET

FREE



A96 Corridor Masterplan

June 2005

Planning & Development Service

Introduction

The A96 Corridor covers all of the land between Inverness and Nairn and south to the B9006 (Map 1). The Inverness City-Region continues to be one of the fastest growing areas in Scotland. During the last 30 years the population has grown by almost 32,000. Over the same period, just over 20,000 houses have been built. More locally, Culloden has grown from a scatter of houses to a community of 11,000 in the same period. Recent official Government figures show that in the year 2003-04, the Highland population increased by 2,260 persons.

The *National Planning Framework for Scotland* (2004) promotes the City-Region as one of the key development areas in Scotland over the next 20 years, specifically referring to potential within the A96 Corridor. Both the *Highland Structure Plan* and the *Inverness Local Plan* identify the Corridor as the preferred location for long-term development. In 2003, Scottish Ministers endorsed the City Partnership's *Vision* of a further 30,000 people to be housed in the Corridor over the next 30 plus years.

The attractions of the Corridor include plentiful flat land, expanding employment opportunities, particularly at the Airport, and relationship to national transport links.



There is enough land already identified for housing and community uses around Inverness and Nairn to meet short-term needs. However, we must plan beyond 2011:

- to guarantee a continuing supply of developable land;
- to ensure upgraded infrastructure, transport and utilities are in place; and
- to secure environmental improvements and conservation of the Corridor's wider heritage.

Consultants Study

In 2004 the Council agreed to appoint consultants, FG Burnett, to examine the potential of the Corridor to accommodate development in order to take forward the policies in the Local Plan.

A three-fold approach was taken:

- stakeholder workshops*
- technical assessments by consultants
- consultation with representatives from Community Councils and a sample of local residents in the Corridor

Development Options

Eight development options were identified and tested:

1. *Eastern growth* – focus growth in a chain running from Nairn to Ardersier
2. *Polar growth* – promote substantial growth at both ends of the corridor
3. *Island Growth* – a series of independent new settlements scattered throughout the Corridor
4. *String of Pearls* – several new settlements intertwined with the trunk road and Aberdeen railway line
5. *Land Use* – promoting substantial growth of existing settlements
6. *Transport* – focus growth into a new settlement in the centre of the Corridor

7. *Landscape* – eleven small settlements on sites where the impact of development on landscape amenity would be minimised
8. *Infrastructure* – two large new settlements to the east and to the south west of the Airport

Selection

These options were tested by:

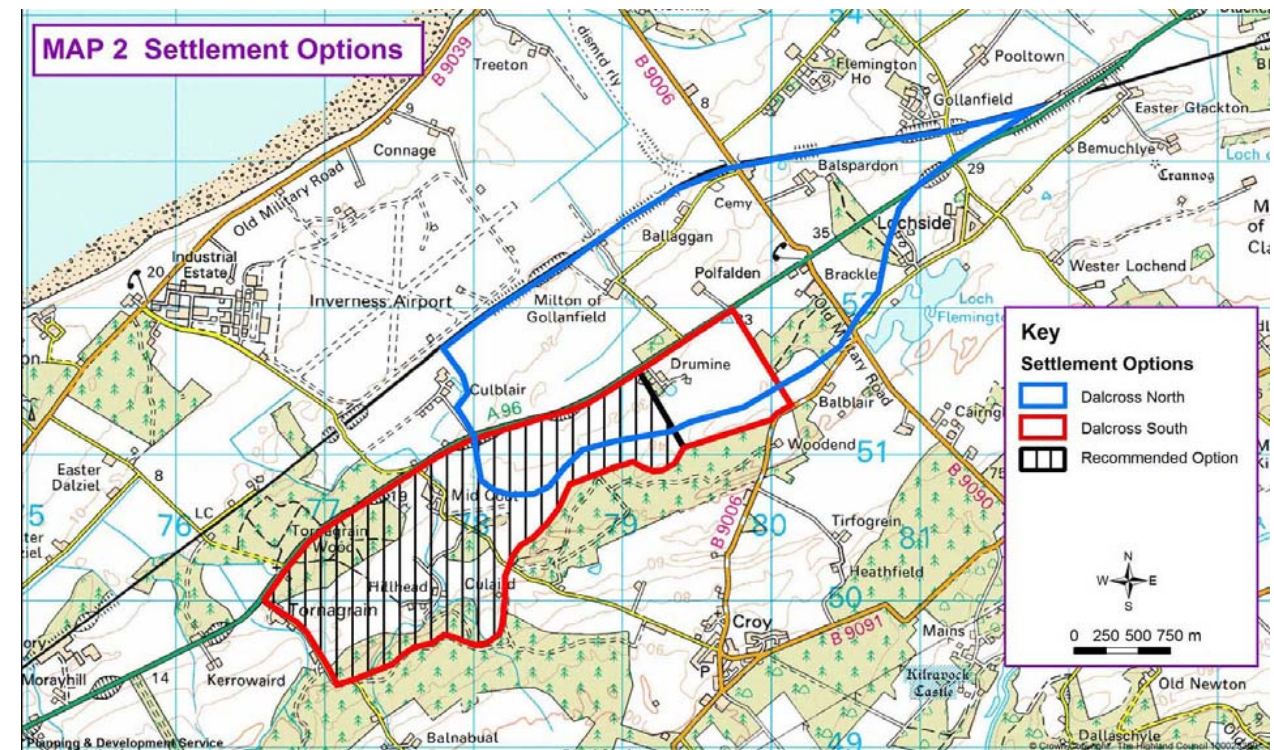
- consultants scoring
- a sustainability appraisal by the stakeholders
- taking a sample of local views through a Community Councils' conference and focus groups

Conclusion

The table below summarises the assessment. This shows that the *land use* and *transport* options received a strong support from the technical and stakeholder assessments. However, when community considerations were taken into account, the most broadly supported option was *Transport* – a new settlement in the centre of the Corridor.

The consultants produced two alternative indicative footprints for the new community at Dalcross. These are shown on Map 2. The first occupies land immediately adjoining the Airport and proposed Business

Park, extending eastwards as far as the A96 rail bridge crossing on the Inverness-Nairn Area boundary. The second option is situated entirely to the south of the A96, extending from Tornagrain in the west to Drumine Farm in the east. The principal road access would be taken from the Croy arm of the new A96 roundabout scheme (under construction) to serve the Business Park and Inverness Airport.



New Community Proposals

Map 2 shows the option selected by the Council (black hatched area) to investigate further. Extending to 250ha, this enjoys good separation from airport activities and benefits from well-established treebelts along a significant portion of its frontage with the A96. Access into the site will be directly opened up by the current Airport road scheme. The location's proximity and convenient relationship with the Business Park and proposed Airport rail halt should help maximise the number of walking and cycle-based trips, with corresponding reduction in vehicular movements. An 800m buffer can be maintained between this settlement and the nearest major community at Croy, although development will integrate with the existing cluster of houses at Tornagrain. The compact nature of the site will allow residents the opportunity to walk to the main services.

OPTIONS	ASSESSMENT TYPE		
	Technical	Stakeholder	Community
1. Eastern Growth	x	x	✓
2. Polar Growth	x	✓	x
3. Island Growth	x	x	n/a
4. String of Pearls	x	x	n/a
5. Land Use	✓	✓	x
6. Transport	✓	✓	✓
7. Landscape	x	x	n/a
8. Infrastructure	x	x	n/a

* Stakeholders included statutory agencies, landowners, tenants, businesses and private developers.