

Feedback Report for Lochinver Community Development Options Project 2019

This document is intended as supplementary to the report by John Gilbert Architects entitled *Lochinver Community Development Options Appraisal 2019* (which is available on Assynt Development Trust website), and is intended to show the public feedback and ideas received as part of the project assessing development options for a number of sites in and around Lochinver.

Feedback and ideas were sought and received, mainly from local residents, from the 'charrette' workshops and drop-ins within the project, from other direct meetings, from an online survey, and from facebook comments. The online survey had 25 responses, of whom around 21 were Assynt residents or people who worked in Assynt. The other contributions of ideas, comments and other feedback came from around 60 people, mainly Assynt residents, split fairly evenly over the first workshops period in late April and the second workshops period in late May.

Workshops Feedback

(Generally each number represents an individual attendee)

Feedback from attendees at April 19 workshop events

1. Thought any new housing in Culag area would benefit from primary school access by the track through Culag Woods. Preferred eco-housing, if possible.
2. Questioned about housing mechanisms, and road safety concerns, and educating drivers. Liked the proposals.
3. Said Skiff group want a clubhouse and covered storage area.
4. Generally supportive including of housing.
5. Supportive of sketch 2 housing around Culag Gardens. Wouldn't want housing directly facing Culag Gardens. Is keen to have garden space for existing residents. Suggested there may be issues/uncertainties over ownership of smaller shed on the site.
6. Thought arts/crafts studio / enterprise units may well have a demand. Was in favour of a campsite at the far quarry. Generally in favour of proposals.
7. Generally in favour of proposals.
8. In favour of more housing and the sketched proposals in that regard.
9. Thought arts/crafts units may well have a demand. Said more parking is needed in the area in question, including at the suggested site for multipurpose enterprise/local-group-use units near pontoons.
10. Concerned over housing development without also new job creation (but maybe concern eased by our mentioning business demand for housing evidenced by HSCHT report). Wanted sites including creelers' shed near Culag Park, and hotel workers accommodation near police station, tidying up / repainting. Also, wanted old HC-owned salt dump site on the main road on way to Lochinver considering for development potential.
11. Suggested the old salt dump site could be a good site for tourism stuff eg. *welcome to Lochinver* signage and interpretation.
12. Asked about hillside wooded site immediately south of football pitch, and thought it may have been considered for housing creation potential in the past.

Others were generally in favour of proposals. Around 17 people attended, plus community councillors.

Feedback from attendees at May 19 workshop events

1. Asked about possible housing development outwith Lochinver, for wider Assynt. (ACT's housing plans for Stoer area were mentioned in response.)
2. Asked about local-priority burden/scoring criteria possibility for housing. (Matt Bridgestock of JGA responded explaining possible means of this.)

3. (A regular visitor to the area) Said how important physical signage is.
4. (A regular visitor to the area) Suggested donations boxes at places like playparks, and said playparks are used by adults too as greenspaces to sit at.
5. (A regular visitor to the area) Said that the far quarry site is a great location and suggested a possibly-log-built tourism interpretation / information building would be good, possibly at that quarry site or at site B near Billy's Path, with access into Culag Woods.
6. (A regular visitor to the area) Agreed with efforts to encourage more 'slow tourism' and tourists including NC500 tourists staying in Assynt for longer.
7. (A regular visitor to the area) Suggested tourist info boards about the history of the fishing industry etc., possibly at or near the RNLi building or near the breakwater or marina pontoons.
8. Mentioned need for a care home.
9. (A regular visitor to the area) Mentioned successful use of shipping containers including at Bristol docks, and container housing in Dundee.
10. (A regular visitor to the area) Said it was good that housing proposals are on brownfield sites.
11. Said that tourism season is expanding and likely to continue to do so.
12. Mentioned Dark Skies tourism and the potential to incorporate / market this.
13. Mention of roads and infrastructure struggling with the NC500. Discussion on possible tourist tax.
14. Mentioned Home Energy Scotland, and a suggestion one of their representatives made that ADT could lead on investigating possibility of a renewable district heating system in Inver Park.
Said that at present Inver Park residents wouldn't be able to charge e-cars, as there are no garages or parking spaces near enough to houses. Suggested e-charging points for residents will be needed in future. Said it would be great to have more local housing stock, and that the presence of active community groups was one reason for having moved to Assynt.
15. (A regular visitor to the area, related to local residents) Said he thought the plans weren't 'in the land of the real' and didn't feel positive, but didn't really give a detailed explanation of what was meant by this.
16. Was in favour of housing at sites F and G but was worried about nearness of the road at site F and traffic through the south section in Sketch 3. (Matt responded that the route from there to Leisure Centre could be pedestrianised / bollarded, with car access to the Leisure Centre being from the north, past Culag Hotel.)
Had no objection to the enterprise/multi-use units proposed at site B.
Was opposed to a hotel or similar major development at the far quarry site, for ecological reasons.
Was in favour of having a care home or residential care housing units.
17. (Visitors to the area) Said "keep the herons safe!" (Assumption being that major development at the quarry site would be near enough to their nest site in Culag Woods to disturb them). But were positive about housing plans and the need for housing.
18. Expressed personal interest in shared arts/crafts use of a unit at site B. [Since workshop, this respondent has expressed their interest and that of 2+ other craftspeople in hire of such units, and has suggested that land at Glencanisp could also be a site for such units (potentially shipping containers clad in timber, as suggested by Matt), and that units could be installed at both sites simultaneously, as part of the same project.]
19. (Two semi-permanent residents) Said that showers and toilet facilities are not currently provided for marina users, and as such HC mooring fees seem too high. Suggested that showers and toilets at site B could serve users of site B but also double up for use by yachting tourists / marina users. Suggested that HC should take some responsibility for provision of showers and toilets for this use.
Were in favour of sketch 3.
Said that accommodation / housing had to come before employment.
Complained about community bodies being able to purchase land but then not make it available to community, although admitting some groups, eg. Assynt Foundation, have had extenuating circumstances for not yet providing affordable housing, plots etc.

Others generally in favour of proposals. Around 12 local residents and 15 visitors to the area attended, plus community councillors and 5 further local residents who attended community council meeting.

23/5/2019

The access are to the compound is owned by the owners of the flats - at present with the useless parking at mission [resident's] can't get parked at [Coach House Apartments] flats, [...] have little or no view of the greenery and trees as it is but you want to destroy that by planting houses on an already congested and busy site. Not on.

23/5/2019

I don't think the housing in location F is wise. It is leading to a messy industrial estate. Dangerous for any young kids.

23/5/2019

Do not want visitor area at end of breakwater. Not enough room for parking for 3 more houses on site of sheds and compound next to Coach House (there is already congestion). Do not want events venue. Fill the gaps in the current industrial estate area [*presumably meaning vacancies in existing units*] before building more. 23/5/2019

Again I support delivery of housing and I can see rationale for making the breakwater area more attractive to visitors to draw people through the village. I do not think we need an events venue and I am not sure we need more business units although this is possibly a "chicken and egg situation" with housing. I would not want pursuit of a bigger plan to delay delivery of a smaller project. 13/5/2019

You will need more parking spaces

8/5/2019

Need to see more detail about upper part of quarry near breakwater as events venue. This is currently used by otters. 8/5/2019

In favour of the housing element especially, but only if a site is available for hardware store storage including gas which is as suitable and as affordable (or more so) for hardware store as the current site. Not convinced temporary venue use of quarry site is worth the effort, or if so, could maybe be run through a different body, eg. CALLP, so not taking up ADT resources. New industry on quarry behind leisure centre looks good - hope it could be progressed but guess it'd take a lot of time and effort and funding. Not sure of funding route for it, if not done as part of grander plans involving other land uses elsewhere. 7/5/2019

What about a partnership with the Culag Community Woodland Trust? - focusing housing in the lovely, secluded court behind their offices, with new housing on the H1 and G shed sites behind the Mission. Move the Culag Trust [and CALLP] out of their offices, which may well make a better home than office, with a new office for them on the site you call F [site of old fuel tanks, proposed for housing in Sketch 1] - giving them a beacon/front door leading up to their Woodlands. And what about completing the square in Culag Gardens? 8/5/2019 [This comment was from a non-resident architect occasional visitor to the area.]

Sketch 3



(Given that this drawing was more of a long-term vision nature, the survey did not ask for support for it quantitatively but did welcome comments on it.)

Specific comments:

In general I like this, but does the area really need another hotel?

7/7/2019

As previously said the addition of businesses is a fantastic idea for the area both with providing long term jobs to locals, a hotel or a similar sort of place would be ideal, however I have concerns that another large hotel would only seasonally employ locals and permanent full time jobs is what is needed for the community, these areas are large and ideal for development, even things like creating a local village farm/garden area bringing in local produce and giving a place to sell these thing is vital for the long term development of Lochinver. 1/6/2019

That's just great - destroy the look off the area as people sail in the bay

23/5/2019

Is there any demand for industrial units?

23/5/2019

Not in favour of any development near the breakwater or in that quarry area. Do not want to encourage more traffic on road between Coach House and Assynt Leisure. There are unused areas in the Industrial estate. Why would more units be required? 23/5/2019

There is no room for visitors at the breakwater as they all come on four wheels. We need Kenny John's garage! I like the viewpoint idea. Need more parking and ideas for industrial units eg. compost making etc.

8/5/2019

Worried about encroachment into Culag Woods near the quarry site and potential disturbance to heronry and otter holt and other wildlife. 8/5/2019

Going too far into the future to be able to comment. Much depends on the fortunes of the commercial activities in the harbour area and the reduction on their environmental impact. 8/5/2019

Again affordable, affordable for who? Affordable for a couple on full time jobs and can easily get a mortgage? Or affordable for self employed people with a not so good credit score and so can't get a mortgage. You have to quantify what you mean by affordable. 7/5/2019

This looks great, if any/all of it is possible!

7/5/2019

Hotel development next to an existing hotel might not be a very sensitive thing to do. Also is enough space available in that area to take the increase of traffic? Is there a demand for 20 new affordable homes? How would current users be re-housed? Potentially a plan that although in essence very positive could lead to negative reactions from local community. 7/5/2019

This, I think would be the most ambitious plan for the harbour area. I like the idea of the events area. 7/5/2019

Hotel at the breakwater could potentially have a devastating effect on current accommodation providers. 7/5/2019

Hotel looks like great idea. Would be useful for HC to have concept plans for that drawn up, I guess. Though possibly one layer could be a care home instead?! Housing at garage/industrial site looks good as a long term vision, though not sure if it'll ever happen. We'll see. I like the viewpoint on the hill. Hope kids wouldn't climb on railings and fall down cliffs though! It's a pretty scary site. 7/5/2019

We don't need another hotel unless it has a spa jacuzzi etc.

8/5/2019

Section (A) [quarry beyond breakwater] would be an ideal spot for developing an overnight spot for those traveling the NC500. Water and a waste point would be welcomed and would go some way to negating some of the issues surrounding visiting motorhomes. Being close to the village would encourage trade for local business. There could be a charge for the use of the facilities which as well as paying for the upkeep could also go towards community funds. An excellent example exists at Hushinish on Harris in the Outer Hebrides. [This comment was from a non-resident frequent visitor to the area.] 7/5/2019

More housing - fantastic idea (will it be private or association housing...?) but I'm not really understanding the point of the viewpoint behind Culag Gardens. It will just be overlooking old & new housing, walk up the Culag Woods hill and you'll get a much better view, no? It's very difficult to access as it's so steep, but the thought of tourists etc. overlooking Culag Gardens is a strange concept, all the flat bedroom windows & kitchens are in view from this hill? Brilliant idea for social housing as there's not much in terms for younger folk to get their own place for example / get an improved social house from what they're currently in. [facebook comment 8/5/19.]

Wider Comments:

How would these developments be made eco-friendly, ie. how would they be heated & powered? What materials used? How would these developments encourage use of public transport etc etc....

7/7/2019

These ideas are very promising however I think that developments such as these are not radical thinking enough and there needs to be some form of large community-led concerted effort to develop the area, leading to more people moving into the area, retaining existing young people, importantly keeping and encouraging more local traditional but modern styles and involving young people; many people move away, many stay but many young people such as myself want to come back one day and the area needs to be more centrally built up to accommodate for a unique modern highland lifestyle. This could turn Lochinver into a regional hub building up more local modern services which help both the community and the burgeoning tourist season, which focuses the Assynt community. Additionally more people have to be brought in especially younger ones who are the future rather than just the

Same old people doing everything, diversity of thought is always extremely valuable, and is the key to the area's growth. 1/6/2019

Was Matt commissioned for these proposals or just forwarded his ideas?
29/5/2019

Keep your bright ideas in Lochinver. Stoer is doing just fine as long as am able there will be no more houses or any daft ideas. Houses? Like who is going to stay in them? – throw-outs from other areas. Look about you – there's no work here and after Brexit there will be less. When I was a boy growing up in Stoer crofting was a way to survive now it's a rich man's hobby. Our broch in Stoer bay had been vandalised so enough is enough. (facebook comment 26/5/2019)

First who's going to fill them? [*presumably referring to more houses*] – there's no work in the area – what, fill them with unemployed from elsewhere in the country? - these ideas are crazy pie in the sky; it's already congested and a harbour that's working all hours - it's madness and I for one will be forceful in my objections. 23/5/2019

Do need more places to rent. [*Assume this may refer to housing specifically, rather than housing and enterprise units*]
23/5/2019

Need to consider the development of more green tourism-related activities being accommodated in the harbour area. This isn't necessarily the best area for housing - a better use might be to encourage the development of new green businesses and hence jobs. 8/5/2019

It's great you're looking into this. Please can you clarify what you mean by affordable? Have a look at how housing associations work, shared equity schemes, right to buy schemes. There's lots out there but it would be better to say from the start what you mean by affordable. 7/5/2019

The area is screaming out for infrastructure to get the best out of the NC500 but with min negative impact on the area. 7/5/2019

Development is essential to provide housing and jobs, and amenities for visitors and residents. The locations make sense and would improve visual impressions too. 7/5/2019

Great initiative! Keep up the good work! 7/5/2019

Compiled by: Adam Pellant, Assynt development Trust development officer (jobshare) Sept 2019

NB. Where comments etc. listed here have had some content removed or replaced this has been shown using square brackets and has solely been for the purpose of ensuring anonymity of the contributors. Other notes in square brackets by the compiler are to show any assumptions made and to try to add clarity.