

Phillips Aitchison Consultants

in association with

Jefcoate Anderson Architects Limited

Feasibility Study for a New Community Centre

conducted for

Dornoch and District Community Association

funded by

Highland LEADER Programme



The European Agricultural Fund
for Rural Development:
Europe investing in rural areas

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1 Summary

1.1 Introduction

Dornoch and District Community Association (DADCA) rescued the former Social Club building from a state of significant disrepair in 2007. Since then usage has increased to the point that bookings are turned away for lack of capacity. Despite this evidence of demand, the building does not meet the requirements of other potential users, whose support could otherwise yield increased revenue. Earlier consultation with members indicated a 20% minority in favour of retaining the status quo, and that was before the full financial implications of staying put were made public. That led to the LEADER grant to fund this study.

DADCA currently leases the Social Club building from Trustees, and the lease is coming to an end soon. Surveys indicate that the fabric will require some £700,000 spent on it (including VAT) in the short to medium term, and that significant Disability Discrimination Act problems need to be remedied. In addition, heating costs consume an excessive portion of revenue. An Energy Audit and Renewal Energy Options Appraisal was done during this study, and the problems identified cannot be readily remedied, to the extent that it will always be difficult to run the Social Club economically. The building has become a problem to the Trustees, and they are prepared to dispose of it to DADCA for a nominal sum.

DADCA, then, faces a dilemma. Renewing the full repairing lease means a liability for repairs, ability to fund which is uncertain, and which in any event will not produce a building fit for purpose. Taking over the building ultimately creates the same result: but it presents the opportunity to keep things going as they currently are, for a limited period, while a new Community Centre is developed. The Social Club could then be sold to raise match funding for the new build.

We agree with DADCA that staying at the Social Club is not viable beyond the short term. The issue becomes not simply supplying new facilities for Dornoch, but keeping in existence those community activities which are already flourishing.

1.2 Location

So, where should a new building be? The Meadows Park Recreation Ground is already allocated for community development in the Sutherland Local Plan, after objections from neighbouring residents were taken into account. We have evaluated alternative locations in Dornoch because there were still voices in favour of certain other sites, and we consider that Meadows Park Recreation Ground remains the optimum site. The Meadows Park Trustees were consulted on a development here at the start of the study. No legal obstacle to this new use of the land, or to a new build has been identified by DADCA's solicitors.

1.3 Scope

It is to DADCA's credit that they have not merely set out to reproduce the old Social Club on a new site, but have sought to maximise community use. An extended range of options has been evaluated for inclusion in the building.

Options excluded after review are:

- indoor sport activities destined for the Dornoch Sports Hall (e.g. indoor hockey, badminton), to avoid duplicate provision and competition for grant funding
- sporting items, requested in the earlier consultation, which are really appropriate to large sports centres (e.g. swimming pool, climbing wall), and which were already eliminated from the Sports Hall
- fitness suite; on grounds of viability and management risk for the Community Centre, and UHI's proposal to make a fitness suite publicly available in Ross House, Dornoch
- café, which would compete with local businesses and would anyway lack passing trade; however a wi-fi hotspot is proposed for the building
- squash court; after consultation the Squash Club elected not to collaborate with the project
- curling rink, considered impractical after consultation with the North Highland Curling Trust's parallel Feasibility Study.

1.4 Options and capital implications

Jefcoate Anderson Architects have produced conceptual drawings for discussion with DADCA, based on the scope carried forward. These went through several design iterations before being exhibited for public consultation. The drawings have formed the basis for an estimate of development costs.

Potential build costs are estimated on a per sq. metre basis, derived from the average cost of completing buildings of this nature nationally during 2008. A low and high range of costs is indicated for each option. The low range reflects a cheap building approach with a low standard of finish. The high range reflects a good standard of finish and a high quality of fittings. Sited next to an area of outstanding landscape value, and sensitively located close to housing and the Dornoch Conservation Area, a building of high quality external appearance is indicated.

Options are costed as follows:

- Core Community Centre requirements
 - Estimated capital cost in the range £1.17m to £1.77m
- Dornoch Highland Gathering facilities
 - Capital cost included within the core provision
- Football changing rooms and showers
 - Additional capital cost in the range £140k to £183k to cover extra floor-space and equipment (showers and changing provision would be the most expensive part of the building to fit out)
 - This assumes that the Football Club will offer its present pavilion for Community Storage once the Community Centre is occupied. Funding bodies will not be prepared to offer grants for football facilities when the Football Club already has a building of its own, which it could enhance on its own account, unless the Club is giving it up for some other community purpose.
 - The Football Club has written indicating it wishes to participate and should be involved in the detail design phase to ensure that League requirements are met.

- Community storage
 - The current assumption is that the Football Club will offer its present pavilion for Community Storage once the Community Centre is occupied
 - For comparison, supplier estimates indicate that the cost of providing a free standing agricultural style storage building would be between £11k and £18k plus VAT. We have not reviewed building specifications in detail and these figures are for guidance only.

- Community Garden and Nature Walk
 - This would involve a community garden, including a children's garden, leading into a nature walk on the southern boundary, and integrating with a proposed Nature Reserve on the Natura 2000 land beyond it.
 - Disability access should be provided in line with current best practice, remembering that disability considerations are not limited to wheelchair use.
 - Taken together, these facilities would encourage use of the Community Centre by other groups in the community (educational visits by school pupils, disabled groups, tourism).
 - We could not develop the concept until proposals for the Nature Reserve have been clarified but, once they are, the requirement should be worked up and costed in collaboration with SNH and UHI as a separate exercise. Separate biodiversity and horticultural funding may be available.

- An outdoor, all-weather multi-sport court for, say, tennis and outdoor basketball, which could make additional use of changing facilities if provided for football, but does not necessarily require them.
 - This was suggested during our consultations in response to the poor tennis facilities in Dornoch, and we were directed to a court which has been installed in Lairg.
 - A wide variety of multi-sport courts is available, list prices for which range from £22k to £38k exclusive of VAT. The cost of installation is unclear.
 - This would be entirely appropriate as a development of the sports facilities at Meadows Park, and would certainly be consistent with and ancillary to use of the Community Centre. It should be considered as a separate phase, but only after fuller investigation of the options and with sports funding.

- Members of the public visiting the exhibition asked for a new Outdoor Bowling Green next to the Community Centre, saying that the present pavilion is not improvable and on a cramped site. Bowls was not included as an activity in our scoping discussion with DADCA, though clearly it would provide another source of revenue. It would be sensible for construction of a new green to be pursued with separate sports funding. DADCA should engage with the Bowls Club (50 members) to determine how the Club would use the Community Centre. This response came from 10% of the Bowls Club membership, and 5% of exhibition visitors, and should not be ignored.

1.5 Operational viability

A potential operating budget for the new building has been worked up by the DADCA Committee. This was done using a best practice template provided by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO), and indicates:

- financial management ability
- an operating surplus
- a range of marketing opportunities to support revenue growth
- a fund raising event strategy.

The budget includes provision for Governance and other necessary training for the management team, using the resources of Voluntary Groups East Sutherland.

Some of the lines in the budget have to be estimated, but it is based on a firm understanding of current experience, and the assumptions for business expansion appear to be reasonable.

Although there has been talk of full time employment being created once the new building opens, we recommend that DADCA sticks to the current voluntary operating model with part time paid cleaning and maintenance. Employment of full time staff would create a revenue burden which DADCA's business forecasts would not support, which is typical for most village halls. Some paid assistance might possibly be provided later on, once business patterns from the new building are better understood, after revenue has grown enough to support it, and with advice from the Enterprise Agency.

1.6 Consultation

Parties consulted during the study are listed in Appendix A.

Public consultation on the proposals was carried out by means of an exhibition and public meeting. These yielded a number of constructive suggestions for inclusion in the detailed design of a new Community Centre, which are listed in Section 7.

A vote at the public meeting indicated near unanimous support for the proposed content and location, as did responses to questionnaires distributed at the exhibition and public meeting.

1.7 Compliance with funding criteria

The project can be shown to contribute to the 5 Government Targets, concerned with economic growth, productivity and sustainability.

The project contributes to 9 out of 15 National Outcomes for Scotland and Sutherland

The project can be shown to contribute to 3 Regional Priorities of the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP):

- HIG31: Improved viability and well being of Scotland's rural communities.

- HIG32: Sustainable, resilient rural communities, which are empowered and encouraged to take a positive role in influencing issues affecting them and their communities, through improving skills, knowledge and capacity and supporting other community led initiatives.
- HIG25: Improved public access provision through the creation, improvement and promotion of paths and other facilities.

1.8 Acknowledgements

During the study we consulted a wide range of bodies and individuals, for advice or information, or as a source of best practice or collaboration. These are set out in Appendix A. We are more than grateful for the kind support we have received.

Map extracts from the Sutherland Local Development Plan 2008 are reproduced with the kind permission of the Highland Council.

1.9 Further detail

The topics summarised here are set out in greater detail in the main report, in the following sections:

- Section 2 - Factors driving choice of Meadows Park for the new Community Centre
- Section 3 - Site options within Meadows Park
- Section 4 - Evaluation of options and proposed scope of the new Community Centre
- Section 5 - Design response and estimated range of capital costs
- Section 6 - Operational viability of the new Community Centre
- Section 7 – Public consultation and analysis of support
- Section 8 – Compliance with funding criteria
- Section 9 – Outline of project phasing

2 Factors driving choice of Meadows Park for the new Community Centre

2.1 Existing policy preference for Meadows Park

Meadows Park Recreation Ground (4.2 ha) is already identified by Highland Council as a preferred site. The planning context is set out in the Deposit Draft of the Sutherland Local Plan, November 2008. References to “the Map” relate to Plan Inset Map 1 together with the associated notes.

Meadows Park is described on the Map as: “Site maintained for community and associated uses. Potential for development of community centre subject to suitable access, siting and design”. This arose from representations made by the Community Association, by Dornoch Community Council and by the Meadows Park Trustees themselves.

Trustees of Meadows Park supported the proposal in principal at a meeting on 13th July 2009, and have been consulted individually at intervals during this study, to ensure that the specifics of this proposal are in line with the generality of their earlier representations. A legal opinion has been obtained on the feus which relate to the site, and no obstacle has been identified to development of a Community Centre here.

Relevant Trustees are listed at Appendix B.

2.2 Alternatives within Dornoch envelope, considered and discarded

We have evaluated alternative locations in Dornoch because there were still voices in favour of certain other sites. We did not hold discussions with landowners since we are not recommending any of the alternatives. Inside the Settlement Development Area, Dornoch is compact and generally built up. Locations identified as possible development sites are assessed in detail in Appendix C and conclusions are as follows:

1. Dornoch North	Both sites acceptable in planning terms and potentially viable but with material drawbacks.
2. Dornoch North Expansion	
3. Site adjoining the Meadows Nursing Home	Significant Planning and Highways objections. Small site
4. Site on Shore Road	Site subject to flooding. Highways objections. Small site. Location next to abattoir likely to be unpopular
5. Site at Dornoch Academy	Potentially developable but zoned as open space. Potential legal restriction on use and Highways issues. Highland Council own it and may have other uses in mind.

Given the clear steer in the Local Plan towards the Meadows, it would be perverse to opt for another site unless developing on Meadows Park were not feasible.

2.3 Development outwith the Dornoch envelope, considered and discarded

Outside the Settlement Development Area, development is tightly constrained. There are material objections to building a scheme of this nature, the land being variously identified as of:

- international importance
- national importance
- regional / local importance

In these locations, although the Local Plan policies are written in language which suggests there are circumstances in which consent might be considered, there will be a presumption against development in practice.

In any case, a key sustainability requirement of the new Community Centre is to be within walking distance of the centre of Dornoch. Few locations outwith the development envelope are likely to satisfy that.

It follows that no site outside the Settlement Development Area should be considered unless there were no practical alternative.

3 Development options within Meadows Park

The greater area of the Meadows Park is used for one football pitch and the annual Dornoch Highland Gathering. We have been told there is also a wish to create a 5-a-side pitch at some point. It follows that any site chosen for Community Centre use has to be on the periphery. Four options have been discussed with the DADCA Committee and the Meadows Park Trustees. They are assessed in detail in Appendix D.

We prefer a site beside the football pitch, although two sites are potentially viable, depending on scope of the building and soil conditions. Both should be assessed early in the next phase, after which it will be necessary to balance the development capability of each site, against the business case for core and optional facilities.

Sited next to an area of outstanding landscape value, and sensitively located close to housing and the Dornoch Conservation Area, a building of high quality with good sound insulation is indicated.

3.1 Preferred site - Beside football pitch

This site is preferable for a Community Centre because it is close to the pedestrian entrance, when arrival on foot is encouraged in reference to generation of traffic, even if Planners may prefer the Southern Perimeter site. It is not in direct line of sight of the householders to the north, and shielded by trees to the west.

This site is located between the Highland Gathering viewing stand and the lane which runs along the Meadows Park western boundary. A building here would have to incorporate new viewing facilities for the Highland Gathering, because the existing stand would have to be demolished. The site is constrained, but the conceptual design discussed in Section 5 indicates that the required facilities can be provided within it. Care would have to be taken to ensure that the lateral space required for building operations protected the football pitch from damage.

3.2 Parking

Parking design will have to fit around the siting of the building. The conceptual design is based on the preferred site. It provides for a small number of spaces close to the entrance, including all disabled spaces, which should be sufficient for smaller events during the day. There would be separate parking for football use, if football were included, serving a separate entrance to the building. When usage of the Community Centre is more intense (multiple hirings for meetings and classes), parking extends down the side of the building. Only for large functions will an overflow area to the rear be needed. The number of spaces set out in the Architects' example layout is in line with standard requirements for the proposed occupancy of the building. Based on observation of this year's event, that should provide sufficient parking for the Highland Gathering, but would require a higher standard of finish. Final specification of parking requirements should be clarified with the Council in the next phase, before the design is worked up for a planning application. The high proportion of users who have indicated that they will not drive to the site should be noted, when negotiating the number of spaces (see Section 7).

3.3 Access

The Highland Council have indicated that vehicle access must be by the northern entrance, currently used as the pedestrian entrance for the Highland Gathering. We have been provided with the required junction layout, which is set out in Appendix E.

3.4 Issues requiring attention

- **High Water Table**

Pat Munro (Alness) Ltd kindly made available to DADCA a copy of the Soil Investigations carried out by Consulting Engineers for the housing development immediately next door. These show that the water table is generally less than 1 metre below the surface. That is in line with anecdotal evidence of a high water table in this area of Dornoch as a whole. It is fair to assume that tests at Meadows Park will yield similar results, meaning that building the Community Centre here will require:

- a pumping station
- either vibro-strip foundations or dry piling

This did not hinder development of the neighbouring housing.

Recommendation: It is essential that soil investigations are carried out by a Consulting Engineer, and detailed recommendations received, at the start of the next phase of the project and before any further design work is done.

- **Soil conditions at Southern Site**

We have been told that the land here is made up with builders' rubble and topsoil. We have not verified the state of the soil, but it will be remembered that the site of the Dornoch Sports Hall has already had to be moved, because the original location had a similar issue with soil structure.

Recommendation: If any preference emerges for the southern site, the soil conditions should be verified by a Consulting Engineer to make sure that the ground will support the required foundations.

- **Revised requirements for Access**

There is a right of way over the land which currently forms the north entrance to the Meadows Park. The Highland Council has designed a new access which means crossing a small piece of land owned by Sutherland Estates, whose agreement will be necessary before development can take place. There is no reason why such agreement cannot be reached with goodwill.

Recommendation: The Sutherland Estates office should be formally approached immediately by DADCA's legal advisor to negotiate an agreed access.

- **Risk of extended build phase**

DADCA's aspiration is to start the building project on the Monday after the Highland Gathering, and finish before the following year's event. This is possible providing that a single building contractor is engaged after competitive tender, that contract terms clearly confine the build to the specified period (with penalties for late completion), and the enterprise is professionally project managed by DADCA from the very start of the planning phase; many problems during construction typically originate in oversights or mistakes during this phase.

Recommendations:

- Appoint project manager early
- Follow best procurement practice in specifying the project and the work required
- Allow for temporary seating on the opposite side of the pitch as a contingency plan.

4 Proposed scope of the Community Centre

Early in 2009 a public survey was carried out by DADCA to identify potential uses for the Community Centre. We analysed the list of uses (the approach is set out in Appendix F) and identified:

- core uses
- possible additional uses to be evaluated as separate options.

4.1 Core uses

We define core uses as:

- activities already established in the Social Club but requiring better facilities, especially kitchen, toilets and disability access
- activities which cannot be accommodated in the Social Club

EITHER because it is frequently booked already, which means more rooms are needed

OR activities which cannot be supported because the building is not big enough, or facilities are not good enough (weddings, large fairs, internet provision, separate youth facilities, toddler group, lunch club, performances)

- any other compatible use of the same facilities, which would increase revenue streams but not have an undue impact on complexity of the building:

The consolidated list of core uses so far identified covers, but is not necessarily limited to:

- meetings of local societies; conferences with break out rooms; meetings and training events for the Highland Council and other governmental organisations
- events, such as heritage exhibitions, craft fairs, antique fairs, sales of work, indoor boot fairs (as well as outdoors in the car park), charity auctions
- Highland Dancing for the Gathering in wet weather
- luncheon clubs
- child play groups
- adult education
- classes, such as Highland Dancing, Scottish Country Dancing, line dancing, Weight Watchers, Pilates, yoga, aerobics and art classes, dog training
- indoor bowls
- youth development, including snooker / pool and table tennis
- private functions such as wedding receptions, birthday parties, dances, ceilidhs and discos
- film shows
- music performances
- amateur dramatics

4.2 References for best design practice

Jerry Bishop (DADCA New Build Sub-Committee Chair) attended a Village Halls Conference in 2008, and we attended a similar event in 2009.

We visited the recently built hall at Boat of Garten, which is a good and well known case study, while Jerry Bishop consulted Balintore.

We note the imminent publication of SCVO's Keystone best practice document for village halls, and recommend that its provisions are fully taken into account in the next phase of design, and in developing management practices.

The team learned some good lessons on how to get the maximum number of uses out of flexible space, which we have gratefully adopted for our own specification. We found that consultees were also generous in admitting frankly those things that they would like to have done better, and we have taken those lessons into account.

4.3 Requirements arising for the core building

The present Social Club has a total capacity limit of 280, which is insufficient to meet the current requirement of social functions. DADCA want the new building to accommodate:

- 350 people at a dance in the main hall
- 110 seated for a meal at a function, like a wedding reception
- 400 in the building overall.

We agreed the following core accommodation requirements with the DADCA New Build Sub-Committee, which were then worked up by Jefcoate Anderson Architects Ltd into a conceptual design for discussion. References to DDA relate to the Disability Discrimination Act which has significant impact on design of new buildings. See also Appendix G for disability related design issues we have already identified, in conjunction with the Sutherland Access Panel.

Office	Provision for the day to day administration of the Centre and storage of limited amounts of cash. Positioned by the main entrance, will enable one individual on the premises to carry out reception functions, and also enables use as box office for upcoming events if required. Broadband access will be required for day to day office administration, and this would enable provision of a wi-fi hot spot in the building without significant additional cost
Circulation area	Providing congregation space between main entrance and the hall for ticketed events requiring access to bar

Hall	<p>See capacity above. Hall will be used especially for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • larger events, such as heritage exhibitions, craft fairs, antique fairs, sales of work, indoor boot fairs, charity auctions • luncheons where attendance is too big for a smaller room • classes, such as Highland Dancing, Scottish Country Dancing, line dancing, Weight Watchers, Pilates, yoga, aerobics and art classes • indoor bowls • snooker / pool • table tennis • private functions, wedding receptions, birthday parties, dances, ceilidhs and discos • film shows, music performances and amateur dramatics • Highland Dancing for the Gathering in wet weather <p>Performances require a stage area with non-slip flooring, curtained off at one end of the hall. Boat of Garten told us that Arts Council grant eligibility requires performances at ground level to enable disabled performers to take full part (DDA). This requires raked seating, staging for which may be dismantled, stacked (compact) and stored. Chairs for the raked seating may also be compactly stored. Seating for around 200 is practical within the conceptual design, though the building is sized for numbers at a dance or a reception.</p> <p>See also Green Room requirement below.</p> <p>Events requiring a raised platform and floor-level seating can be handled with portable, stackable staging.</p> <p>Requirement for lighting / projection arrangements at floor level within the hall. DDA mitigates against a raised control booth reached by a staircase.</p> <p>Hall lighting should cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lighting boom for stage performances: care needed with ceiling height to avoid obstructing line of sight to rear of raked seating • bright lighting for day to day use • subdued lighting for functions <p>Induction loop will be required</p> <p>3 phase power supply will be required.</p>
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Bar	<p>We and DADCA have received conflicting advice from Licensing Standards on how the provision of new legislation might affect design of the building. We think this reflects general uncertainty as the legislation is implemented. It is of no great concern just now, but must be resolved in the next, detailed design phase.</p> <p>At Boat of Garten, where bar facilities are only provided for performances and functions, the office by the main entrance doubles as a secure bar. For now we have followed that concept, but also considered mobile bar furniture for use in different rooms in the building according to requirements.</p>
Kitchen	<p>Equipped to support large catered functions where food is brought in ready prepared; and including cookers, warming ovens, refrigeration and commercial dishwasher.</p> <p>Direct serving access required to circulation area, adjacent activity rooms, and to hall</p> <p>Public catering at the Highland Gathering is provided by outside catering vans on the field which would continue, but indoor catering is required for organisers and helpers. The present facilities on the field are rudimentary, and would be demolished in any event if the Centre were built on the western boundary site.</p>
Selection of smaller rooms	<p>A mixture of uses will require:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Straightforward meeting space with one larger room able to accommodate 50 people in conference format. • The larger room capable of division into two with a sound proofed partition, enabling smaller meetings simultaneously with a hiring charge appealing to small organisations. • Studio / workshop, with sinks and water supply, eg for art classes, children's activities, but suitable for general meeting use when required • Green Room with segregated corridor to the stage (Arts Council requirement identified by Boat of Garten) which can double as reception lounge, meeting or counselling room at other times <p>Uses from the list at 4.1 above, which might be suited to smaller rooms, could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highland Gathering administration and meetings • society meetings • luncheon clubs if attendance is limited • smaller classes • youth activities • snooker / pool, which needs to be kept separate from any bar to be usable by young people

Coffee facilities	<p>Ideally separate, providing break out facility for activities in other parts of the Centre.</p> <p>Equipped with tea and coffee making facilities, or using the facilities of, and adjacent to the kitchen</p> <p>Should be capable of providing limited café services, subject to demand, without requirement for additional kitchen facilities or additional capital cost.</p>
Dedicated youth room	Should be reserved for youth development only.
Secure children's play area accessed from within the building	There is no play area in this part of Dornoch, and the Social Club is currently unable to host a children's play group or school holiday activities. An outdoor play area forms a natural adjunct to the Community Centre's indoor facilities, which the Social Club cannot provide by virtue of its location and restricted site
Toilets	<p>Male, female, disabled as per Entertainment Licensing guidelines</p> <p>Sufficient capacity for hall in full use for ticketed performances</p> <p>A lesson learned from the Boat of Garten Community Hall is that toilets should be separate from, and additional to any provided in sports changing areas. Otherwise mainstream use of the premises is prevented while the changing rooms are in use. Separate toilet facilities will also enable changing facilities, if provided, to be secured and separately supervised.</p>
Cleaners' storage	Space for significant quantities of housekeeping equipment and stock, and a vented chemical cupboard
Storage	<p>Storage inside the building will be required for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • catering supplies • office supplies • folding staging, raked seating support and the chairs to put on it, and associated performance equipment • theatrical props • Allsorts (children's holiday club) and playgroup equipment • indoor bowling carpets • table tennis equipment • Community Centre furniture (tables, chairs etc)

4.4 Additional Option 1 – Highland Gathering viewing stand

This is included on the assumption that the development takes place at Meadows Park, **and** the building is situated alongside the present stand.

The requirement would be for:

- tiered seating for 320 people to replace the present stand, and alignment with one exterior wall of the Community Centre; the present suggestion is that mobile tiered seating proposed for the main hall could be usable for this, subject to confirming weather resistance and Health & Safety compliance in the detailed design phase..
- ideally, but not necessarily, access from inside the building as well as from the field.

This should be swept up in the development of the main building and we have made no additional capital provision for it.

4.5 Additional Option 2 - Changing facilities

The provision of changing, showering and separate toilet facilities represents a significant step beyond the core building. If it is to be cost-justified, it needs to be supported by EITHER sufficient level of use to give confidence in a reliable revenue stream OR sufficient community benefit to justify cross-subsidy.

We propose inclusion of changing and showers on grounds of community benefit, and because it would provide a foundation for further development of sporting activities at Meadows Park. However please read this in conjunction with the proposal for Community Storage below.

Changing facilities were originally considered in combination with football, the Highland Gathering, squash and a fitness suite. Squash and a fitness suite having been excluded, we are left with:

- the Football Club which has facilities of its own, which are unsatisfactory. The Club has written to DADCA indicating a wish to participate in the new Community Centre.

Football was the original justification for the creation of Meadows Park and has been played there continuously for over a century. Currently there is a youth team and an adult Summer League team. Players go to train at Tain because the facilities in Dornoch are not good enough. The Northern Caledonian League team recently folded but there is no reason to suppose it could not be restarted with the assistance of better facilities.

- the Highland Gathering: present changing facilities for Highland Dancers (mostly young women) and games participants are quite inadequate. The President of the Gathering has written to DADCA indicating a wish to participate.

The Highland Gathering takes place on one day a year, and one could not justify the inclusion of changing facilities if they were not already provided for football. However the Gathering is central to the cultural life of Dornoch and better facilities would help Dornoch maintain a prominent position in the Highland Games calendar.

4.6 Additional Option 3 – Storage for community organisations

In addition to the need for storage in the main building, DADCA has identified a need to store material for community organisations which is currently scattered around the area in private premises, the availability of which cannot be relied on in years to come.

The materials being stored comprise:

- Highland Gathering equipment and materials which cannot be accommodated in the small building on the Meadows Park, which might in any event have to be demolished to make way for the Community Centre
- Dornoch Christmas lights
- Football equipment
- Tables for the Dornoch Farmers Market and Street Fair, the property of the Community Interest Company
- Marquees.

No access to these items is required from within the main building. Keyless access from outside should be provided. There is no requirement to sub-divide the space for different users.

We mention elsewhere that grant applications are subject to critical scrutiny. We made a preliminary exploration of grant opportunities, and we were told that a separate, agricultural type building would not be grant eligible. We were also given guidance on what would and would not help a grant application succeed. The remaining options are to provide storage:

- either by space in the main building accessed from outside
- or by converting the Football Club pavilion into storage.

DADCA has told us that the storage footprint required is equivalent to that of the current Football Club pavilion. We do not believe that grant support will be given for football changing in the Community Centre if the Football Club retains its current changing facilities. We therefore recommend that the Club be invited to offer its present building for community storage as soon as the Community Centre is ready, as a key trigger for releasing funds for new changing rooms.

This would not involve additional capital cost.

For comparison, supplier estimates indicate that the cost of providing a free standing agricultural style storage building would be between £11k and £18k plus VAT. We have not reviewed building specifications in detail and these figures are for guidance only.

4.7 Additional Option 4 – Community Garden, Play Area and Nature Walk

This is included on the assumption that the development takes place at Meadows Park.

- There is no play area in this part of Dornoch, and a children's play group and school holiday activities are proposed. An outdoor play area forms a natural adjunct to the Community Centre's indoor facilities, which the Social Club cannot provide by virtue of its location and restricted site. A secure play area is included in the conceptual design of the Community Centre (see Section 5).
- There is local enthusiasm for a community garden leading into a nature walk on the southern boundary, and a children's garden has been suggested as part of it. Assistance may be available to defray the cost of creating it (eg UHI horticultural students). Maintenance should be practical with volunteer help, We understand that there is also a suggestion that the area beyond the southern boundary could become a Nature Reserve, following an exercise by school pupils in 2008. The community garden and nature walk should be integrated with this.
- Disability access should be provided in line with current best practice, remembering that disability considerations are not limited to wheelchair use. Reference should be made to the well located seating and picnic tables installed on the Littleferry Nature Reserve.
- Taken together these facilities would encourage use of the Community Centre by other groups in the community (educational visits by school pupils, disabled groups, tourism).

The requirement should be worked up and costed in collaboration with SNH and UHI as a separate exercise. Separate biodiversity and horticultural funding may be available.

4.8 Additional Option 5 - Outdoor multi-sport court

The present tennis court on Common Good land beside the golf club is in a poor state of repair, and we were told that there is nothing in the Highland Council budget to cover this. The court to the rear of the school has disintegrated.

We have been told that the tennis club in Dornoch no longer exists which, given the state of the facilities, would not be surprising. However we note that refurbished hard courts in Golspie have generated regular use, and consideration should also be given to the forthcoming influx of UHI students in Dornoch.

There have also been suggestions that a hard surface might be useful to the Football Club for training and 5-a-side.

During our consultations Cllr. Ian Ross drew our attention to the all weather tennis and basketball court in Lairg. A wide variety of multi-sport courts are offered by the same manufacturer, Husson International, list prices for which range from £22k to £38k exclusive of VAT. The cost of installation is unclear.

This would be entirely appropriate as a development of the sports facilities at Meadows Park, and would certainly be consistent with and ancillary to use of the Community Centre. It should be considered as a separate phase, but only after fuller investigation of the options and with sports funding.

5 Design response and estimated range of capital costs

5.1 Conceptual design

Jefcoate Anderson Architects Ltd have prepared drawings in response to the requirements laid out in Section 4. This includes a potential site layout, building floor plan and a computer modelled elevation sketch for those who find plans difficult to read.

The quality of modern computer generated output might make it appear to be a detailed proposal and almost ready for a planning application, so it must be stressed that this is a conceptual design to invite comment, and provide the basis for a detailed design phase.

Having been through several iterations in discussion with DADCA, the design broadly includes the facilities which are required, and therefore provides a reasonable basis for estimating build costs. Those layout revisions which have already been discussed for the next phase will not have a significant impact on the estimated cost range.

The latest version of the conceptual design is set out in Appendix H. These are difficult to read at A4 size, and electronic copies of full size sheets have been provided to DADCA separately.

5.2 Potential range of capital costs

Jefcoate Anderson have estimated the range of potential build costs on a per sq. metre basis, based on the conceptual design drawings and using figures derived from the average cost of completing buildings of this nature during 2008.

The low range reflects a cheap building approach with a low standard of finish. The high range reflects a good standard of finish and a high quality of fittings. Sited next to an area of outstanding landscape value, and sensitively located close to housing and the Dornoch Conservation Area, a building of high quality external appearance is indicated.

	Build cost range <-----low – high----->	
	Very basic building	High finish building
Scenario 1: Core building only without changing Building, car parking, road, landscaping, professional fees, planning application fee and building warrant fee, VAT	£ 1,165,593	£ 1,774,971
Scenario 2: Building with changing included Building, car parking, road, landscaping, professional fees, planning application fee and building warrant fee, VAT	£ 1,304,947	£ 1,955,812
On cost	£ 139,743	£ 182,936

Professional fees includes Architect, Architects' Expenses, Structural Engineer, Quantity Surveyor, M&E And H&S Consultant. It does not include Project Management.

VAT assumptions:

- New build for a charitable building is zero rated.
- Fees are standard rated
- VAT rate will be 17.5% at the time of the project

As a contingency against agreement with the Football Club not being reached, resulting in Scenario 1 and an separate requirement for Community Storage, we sought costs for an agricultural style storage building. Supplier estimates indicate that the cost of providing a free standing agricultural style storage building would be between £11k and £18k plus VAT. We have not reviewed building specifications in detail and these figures are for guidance only.

5.3 Assumptions and strategies used in estimating costs

The cost estimates also take into account assumptions set out in Jefcoate Anderson's copyright design statement, supplied separately with the drawings, comprising:

- Site Strategy
 - Site analysis
 - Car parking strategy
- Building layout
- Energy and Sustainability Strategy
 - Ventilation strategy
 - Heating strategy
 - Daylight strategy
 - Water conservation strategy
 - Sustainable materials and local sourcing strategy supported by style references

5.4 Site strategy

Site analysis

- The building is located on the site in a way which avoids disturbance to the existing football pitch.
- Locating the building to the north of the site allows for the maximum area possible to the south to be used for outdoor events.
- The building has been located away from houses on the northern boundary so that disruption from noise to these properties is minimised.
- The building does not interrupt views from houses on the northern boundary towards the Dornoch Firth.
- The building location provides shelter to spectators from prevailing winds, both at the main entrance and at outdoor events held on the football pitch.
- The building's location provides a hub for activities on the site.
- Existing trees provide screening to the building on the western boundary.

Car parking

- The building is sited to enable the existing access from Eaglefield Road to be used, subject to junction improvements required by the Highland Council.
- Parking is located to minimise disruption to views, both from the building and from neighbouring properties.
- The majority of car parking is located to the north and south of the building.
- Accessible parking is located within close proximity to the main entrance
- The southern car park is easily extended for overspill parking during large outdoor events
- Parking to the north is intended for public users like those using the Activity and Conference rooms
- Parking to the south is intended for larger events, and for those using the sports entrance

5.5 Building layout

- The building is required to accommodate a great variety of community facilities and functions.
- The building Entrance is designed to be welcoming to visitors.
- The angled Main Entrance provides shelter from prevailing winds.
- The large roof overhang provides shelter for bike racks and space for benches.
- The splayed design at the Entrance draws visitors towards the door.
- The glazed wall at the Entrance provides visitors with direct views of the building.
- The angle of the entrance wall directs people towards Reception.
- The Internal Street has a fully glazed roof to maximise daylight.
- The Internal Street is paved with the same material as the external entrance area to create a connection between inside and outside.
- The Internal Street provides usable area which would otherwise be just corridor.
- The Internal Street can be used as a foyer during events in the Main Hall, or for self-contained foyer receptions.
- The serving hatch from the Kitchen into the Internal Street allows the street to be used for coffee mornings and other functions requiring refreshments or catering.
- The kitchen will also provide multi-way serving routes to enable direct serving for functions in the Main Hall and the Lunch Club / Post Match Tea Room / Counselling / Green Room.
- The Activity Room is located close to Reception to provide secure access control when used for children's activities.
- The Conference Room is located close to Reception to facilitate access control.
- The Conference Room can be sub-divided to allow for smaller meetings to use the same space simultaneously, and economically.
- The Conference Room can be accessed from the Main Hall. This will allow the room to be used as an overspill area, or bar, for the Main Hall during large events.
- The Main Hall will accommodate approximately 350 people at a dance depending on how the room is used, and can accommodate approximately 215 seats in tiers.
- Tiered staging for seats in the Main Hall is to be used underneath the roof overhang for occasional outdoor events. The best means of ensuring weather protection is to be confirmed with the manufacturers and HSE.
- The toilets are located on the west wall of the building to minimise the cost of connection to the public sewer.

- The Youth Room is located away from other public rooms to minimise disruption to other activities in the building.
- The Youth Room has potential to be used as an overspill conference break-out space, although we recognise that the intention is to maintain it for dedicated youth activities.
- The Lunch Club / Post Match Tea Room / Counselling / Green Room has views out to the south and east of the building. It can be accessed from a rear entrance foyer enabling a segregated access to this area.
- The Main Hall storage area has sufficient capacity to store collapsible tiering and staging, stackable seats, function tables and indoor bowls equipment
- The Main Hall store area is double height, enabling the installation of racking to maximise storage capacity for smaller items, and has direct access both to the Main Hall and to the outside.

5.6 Sustainability

The building should meet or exceed the requirements of BREEAM (the BRE Environmental Assessment Method). This is the leading and most widely used environmental assessment method for buildings. It sets the standard for best practice in sustainable design and has become the de facto measure used to describe a building's environmental performance.

BREEAM provides clients, developers, designers and others with

- market recognition for low environmental impact buildings
- assurance that best environmental practice is incorporated into a building
- inspiration to find innovative solutions that minimise the environmental impact
- a benchmark that is higher than regulation
- a tool to help reduce running costs, improve working and living environments
- a standard that demonstrates progress towards corporate and organisational environmental objectives

BREEAM addresses wide-ranging environmental and sustainability issues and enables developers and designers to prove the environmental credentials of their buildings to planners and clients. It:

- uses a straightforward scoring system that is transparent, easy to understand and supported by evidence-based research
- has a positive influence on the design, construction and management of buildings
- sets and maintains a robust technical standard with rigorous quality assurance and certification

5.7 Ventilation strategy

- The building is to be provided with natural ventilation to the majority of rooms.
- Sanitary accommodation is to be ventilated with mechanical extract fans.
- Cold fresh air is to be provided to all rooms by means of a duct, known as a plenum, beneath the floor slab.
- Hot stale air will be removed through the use of special high level vents and the action of natural convection.

5.8 Heating strategy

- The building is to be heated with underfloor heating wherever possible.
- Underfloor heating requires substantially less energy than other heating systems.
- Heating controls are to control each room individually, meaning that heating can be turned off where required.
- The building is to be insulated above the minimum allowed standard.
- 80% of heat lost in a building is through air leakage. The technical design of the building will seek to reduce this figure substantially. Less heat loss = less energy used.
- As making the building more airtight conflicts with natural ventilation, we will consider fitting passive heat exchangers to hot air extracts and old air inlets.
- We note that grants are available for biomass heating which is especially favoured by the Government. However the high water table means that a ground source heat pump would operate to maximum efficiency. A choice of method will be made in the detailed design phase. A plant room is included which would accommodate either.

5.9 Daylight and solar gain strategy

- A large amount of glazing is to be fitted to the principal rooms, reducing the amount of electricity to be used for lighting.
- The canopy for outdoor seating will also limit the amount of heat from the summer sun in the Main Hall.
- Large areas of glazing to the Main Hall and a large roof overhang provide shelter, and open up the views for spectators inside and outside.
- Glazing sections of the roof of the Internal Street provides natural daylight into the middle of the building.
- Rooms which require less daylight are zoned together at the back of the building.

5.10 Water strategy

- There is potential for rainwater harvesting to be used for water to flush toilets. This will reduce the amount of fresh water used and so reduce Water Rates. The Government has just announced a 5 year extension to the water rate relief for charitable buildings, but this cannot be guaranteed for the long term.
- Rainwater run off from the roof, harvested to flush toilets, will reduce the volume of water requiring drainage and reduce the burden of meeting SUDS requirements.

5.11 Miscellaneous

- Areas of the building requiring large amounts of water (changing rooms, toilets and kitchen) have been clustered as close together as possible to minimise the materials used in pipe work. This will also limit the amount of heat lost in the hot water pipes, which in turn will save energy.
- Materials for the building will, where possible, be sourced from suppliers within a 50 mile radius of the site. This has benefits for the local economy and also lowers the energy used to construct the building.
- Where possible the use of materials which take a lot of energy to make, concrete for example, will be minimised or avoided in the building.
- We have already had a preliminary conversation with the Forestry Commission about potential for sourcing timber locally, for internal use or exterior finish.

- The metal standing seam roof illustrated on the sketch visualisation incurs low maintenance costs in comparison with other materials.

6 Operational viability of the new Community Centre

A potential operating budget for a new building has been worked up by the DADCA Committee. This was done using a best practice template provided by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO), and indicates:

- financial management ability
- an operating surplus equivalent to 21% of forecast revenue
- a range of marketing opportunities to support revenue growth
- a fund raising event strategy.

The budget includes provision for Governance and other necessary training for the management team, using the resources of Voluntary Groups east Sutherland.

The budget is not reproduced here but is available for inspection by funding bodies.

Most of the lines in the budget have to be estimated, but it is based on a firm understanding of current experience, and the assumptions for business expansion appear to be reasonable.

Although there has been talk of full time employment being created once the new building opens, we recommend that DADCA sticks to the current voluntary operating model with part time paid cleaning and maintenance. The requirements of full time staff create a revenue burden which DADCA's business forecasts would not support, which is typical of most village halls. Some paid assistance might possibly be provided later on, once business patterns from the new building are better understood, when revenue has grown enough to support it, and with advice from the enterprise agency.

7 Public consultation and analysis of support

Public consultation on the proposals was carried out by means of an exhibition and public meeting. These yielded a number of constructive suggestions for inclusion in the detailed design of a new Community Centre.

A vote at the public meeting indicated near unanimous support for the proposed content and location, as did responses to questionnaires distributed at the exhibition and public meeting.

A questionnaire (see Appendix I for proforma) was handed to all visitors to the exhibition and to everyone at the public meeting. By no means everybody filled one in, but 106 were completed, many by representatives of Community Organisations, and the analysis of feedback is as follows:

Users / Non-Users

42% were users of the Social Club

48% were not which supports the case for market growth opportunities

Age range

14% were under 18

27% were aged 19-50

56% were over 50

3% did not specify

This reflects the likely age mix of potential users and addresses the skew in the original survey towards younger respondents whose preferences were towards facilities provided by the Sports Hall.

Site preference

90% preferred Meadows Park as the site for the centre

5% preferred the School or Sports Hall (not possible, see Section 2.1)

1 person preferred Shore Road (not possible, see Section 2.1)

1 person preferred a more central site (none available, see Section 2.1)

1 person opted for Dornoch North

Does the proposal meet the Community's needs?

83% gave an unequivocal yes

3 people still wanted a swimming pool or a climbing wall (see Appendix F.3)

5% of respondents asked for a new Outdoor Bowling Green next to the Community Centre as the present pavilion is not improvable and on a cramped site. Bowls was not included as an activity in our scoping discussion with DADCA, though clearly it would provide another source of revenue. DADCA should engage with the Bowls Club to determine requirements. Bowls players could not readily cohabit with footballers during the Summer League. The Glebe Lands next to The Meadows Nursing Home might be a suitable location since bowls is a quiet sport. It would be sensible for construction of a new green to be pursued with separate sports funding. DADCA

should engage with the Bowls Club (50 members) to determine how the Club would use the Community Centre.

The remainder made constructive suggestions or asked constructive questions which are listed below.

The Community Garden should include a children's vegetable patch	Good idea. Could be included
A Wildlife garden running into the proposed Nature Walk	Good idea. Could be included
More Seating and picnic tables outside (2 requests)	Good idea. Could be included
Specific children's requests for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indoor football goals (small) • A summer house in the garden (in the secure play area?) • Space Invaders??? 	All things are possible when children are good
Request from Allsorts (children's activity scheme) for fitting out the Activity Room with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storage for specified items • 2 sinks, 1 for paints & 1 for food • Under counter fridge & hob for snacks ("mini-kitchen") • Children's cloaks "FANTASTIC" appeared twice.	Some of these are already included, and all can be. Properly equipped this room can become a strong hub for many children's activities which are currently split across inadequate locations in Dornoch
A Referees' Changing room is required	Agreed. This was discussed as an omission with Football Club representatives
Disability Changing needs access from the body of the Hall during performances	We spotted this too. Can be relocated to the main toilet area. The Cleaner's Cupboard can be switched with it.
Lunch Club / Post Match Tea Room / Counselling / Green Room should be switched to the South East corner of the building	Agreed. This has already been discussed by DADCA.
Highland Games needs a Control Point	Would be provided from the Lunch Club / Post Match Tea Room / Counselling / Green Room once switched
Snooker/ Billiards provision	Already proposed. The Social Club already possesses a snooker table.
A mirrored wall in the Main Hall for use as a Dance Studio	Good idea. Could be included
A Cupboard Kitchen in the Activity Room	Already proposed
Public Art outside or within the building	Good idea. Could be included. Has already been discussed for the Internal Street

A Cinema Club	Already about to start in the Social Club and included in the list of target uses
Request for more emphasis on drama	The proposed scope allows equally for dramatic and musical performances. The greater emphasis would be merely a matter of business planning and the suggestion is welcome because it would enhance revenue.
Coach Parking	Agreed. This was discussed as an omission with Football Club representatives
Sheltered Bike Parking	Already proposed with bike racks sheltered under the roof overhang by the front door
Storage in each room for each proposed purpose	Suitable storage is already proposed in each room
Cloakroom area in activity room for children's coats, boots etc	This is already proposed
Double doors at the entrance to keep draughts out and sound in	Good idea. Could be included. Works well at the highly sustainable SNH building at Golspie Links
An even bigger Main Hall	No user requirement was suggested to go with this. Can't justify the cost. Bigger premises generally support sporting activities destined for the sports hall.
Staging /seating needs to be durable during bad weather	Quite so. Identified as something to confirm in the next phase.
Will the staging/seating be easily available on the day after the Highland Games?	The equipment is stackable and mobile. Experience at Boat of Garten indicates theirs can be assembled / disassembled very quickly.
Will there be sides on the stand area for the Highland Games?	Good question. Requires clarification in the next phase.
Should the tiering on the outside viewing area be permanent?	No, if the building is sited as proposed, since it would obstruct the glazed wall of the Main Hall. . Yes, if the building is sited on the southern boundary, as the glazing would face south over the Firth.
Employed Caretaker for greater security	Employment model is not recommended at this point. See Section 6.
Astroturf or another All Weather pitch	A good idea best promoted by the Football Club with separate sports funding. See also Section 4.8.
How High is the building?	No higher than a two storey house, maximum 6/7 metres

How flexible will the stage be?	The Main Stage will be level with the floor with a non-slip surface for disabled performers. Portable staging can be used anywhere against the walls e.g. for Ceilidh Bands
Will the building use renewable energy ?	Yes, DADCA are committed to sustainability and it must be built to BREEAM standards
Will the building be too close to the Football pitch for safety?	A question for the detail design phase, but the hard standing beneath the roof overhang will be no nearer than the concrete blocks of the current stand.
Could we please relocate the Library and include a coffee shop?	A major enhancement requiring complex negotiations with the Highland Council. One could also include the Service Point. Neither is envisaged at this stage unless the Council indicates an interest.

Travel to the new Centre

- 66% of respondents said they would sometimes walk to the centre.
- 5% would use public transport
- 57% would sometimes drive
- 13% would like to arrive by bicycle

These figures do not total 100% because some respondents indicated more than one mode of arrival. This will generally mean "I'll walk or cycle if it's dry, otherwise I'll get the car out".

Continuing interest

41 respondents asked to be kept informed of project updates by email (and one by post)

8 Compliance with Funding Criteria

8.1 Scottish Government Targets

The project contributes directly to the 5 stated Government Targets

Government Targets are concerned with economic growth, productivity and sustainability.

Two targets are supported by delivery a highly sustainable BREEAM compliant building, and releasing the former Social Club building for sustainable residential refurbishment:

- to reduce emissions over the period to 2011
- to reduce emissions by 80% by 2050

The three remaining targets which would be supported, by using space for enterprise courses and conferences with break out facilities, provided that these facilities are actively marketed, are:

- to raise the GDP growth rate to the UK level by 2011
- to match the GDP growth rate of the small independent EU countries by 2017
- to rank in the top quartile for productivity against our key trading partners in the OECD by 2017.

8.2 National Outcomes

The project contributes to 9 out of 15 National Outcomes for Scotland and Sutherland

- Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens

The Youth Development provision will assist the development of confidence, effective contribution to society and responsible citizenship.

- Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed

Pre-school to 11 year old provision, including during school holidays, using the hall, activity room, garden, nature walk and play area will give the best start in life and encourage success.

- We live longer, healthier lives

Research at UHI shows that people live longer and stay healthier when involved in Community activities such as sports, lunch clubs, shows and ceilidhs, arts and crafts, gardening and wildlife, all of which are proposed for the centre.

- We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society

Facilities that benefit disadvantaged families, youth counselling and the elderly will assist in mitigating such inequalities. The proposal has been prepared in consultation with the Sutherland Access Panel when we were told that if the Community Centre

incorporated all suggested features it would be the only fully disability-friendly community building in Sutherland.

- We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger

Dedicated Youth Development rooms, counselling by Youth Development Officer and facilities for a variety of activities provide a supervised alternative to petty vandalism and disorder. Secure, easily-run, well lit administration and community storage facilities reduce risk to volunteers.

- We live in well designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need AND
- We reduce the local and global impact environmental Impact of our consumption and production

Both these outcomes are met with sustainability as the bedrock of the proposals, including renewable energy, building orientation for natural light and solar gain, rainwater harvesting and sound insulation. Locally-sourced materials and multiple use of as many facilities as possible will reduce the environmental footprint. Surveys show that access by many people will be on foot or bicycle. A wide range of amenities and services has been identified and reconfirmed by public consultation, and the proposed centre has been designed to deliver this.

- We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others

The entire project has been initiated and driven by a broadly-based Community Association with well-defined plans for the future provision and volunteer management of new facilities to benefit the people of Dornoch and District.

- We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations

The Centre has been planned with careful reference to the special Dornoch Conservation Area with its Cathedral, Castle and many fine buildings. Proposed gardens and a nature walk with disability access will link it with the neighbouring landscape area of international importance (Natura 2000).

- National Identity

The proposed Centre has been designed to be used by the Dornoch Highland Gathering, Pipe Band, Feis and Ceilidhs attended by residents, the Scottish Diaspora and many visitors from all over the World who come to Dornoch every year. The Feis movement is at the heart of Gaelic language development in the Highlands. Groups involved in promoting exhibitions and classes in traditional skills such as dyeing, spinning and weaving are part of the Community Association.

8.3 Scottish Rural Development Programme Priorities supported

There are 32 Regional Priorities collected into 9 groupings. This project is covered by:

- Thriving Rural Communities Priorities
 - HIG31: Improved viability and well being of Scotland's rural communities, by:
 - a. the provision of access to high quality socially, environmentally and economically sustainable community buildings (such as multi-use community centres), and facilities (i.e. sport and leisure).
 - b. Helping communities address local community service needs.

In particular proposals that:

- reflect the priorities of the Community Planning Partnerships and Local Action Groups, and Highland Wellbeing Alliance Community priorities
 - demonstrably underpin rural communities, especially those which are remote and fragile, and enhance the quality of life across a wide spectrum of local inhabitants
 - support rural communities to build capacity within themselves to optimise the delivery of local needs.
- HIG32: Sustainable, resilient rural communities, which are empowered and encouraged to take a positive role in influencing issues affecting them and their communities, through improving skills, knowledge and capacity and supporting other community led initiatives.

In particular proposals:

- reflecting the priorities of the Community Planning Partnerships and Local Action Groups, and Highland Wellbeing Alliance Community priorities.
- HIG25: Improved public access provision through the creation, improvement and promotion of paths and other facilities,* with priority given to:

(*other facilities refers to bridges, toilets, car parking, dog walking areas, launch sites with changing areas, informal campsites, etc.)

- An increase in quality and provision of routes in and around communities (particularly where health and community need is greatest) – disability access
- An increase in quality and provision of routes to, through and along places of interest, e.g. coasts, woodland, inland water, uplands, viewpoints, river corridors, historical sites (access by Nature Walk to Natura 2000 and RAMSAR land)

- Improving users' understanding of outdoor access and land management issues in the context of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code through provision of interpretation signage, leaflets, presentations workshops and site visits (Design of Nature Walk and activities taking place around it)

9 Outline of project phasing

This is set out at a high level for guidance only, requires confirmation with stakeholders as the project gets under way, and does not constitute a formal project plan.

9.1 Start up phase

- Decides what the grant finding approach will be. The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs announced on 25th September 2009 that the SRDP and LEADER Programmes will be rolled into one scheme, under the LEADER banner, to simplify avenues to funding and eliminate the artificial choices people have had to make hitherto. For now we assume the SRDP two stage application process for large projects will remain, together with the requirement to collaborate with other projects to create additionality. The Government also announced an increase in the proportion of a project that might be funded to 90%.
- Secures funding for the Detailed Design and Build Procurement Phases, but not for the total project cost. The total project cost as understood so far should be stated for context only. This mitigates the risk in asking for grants when only order of magnitude costs are available. Preliminary conversations with LEADER and SRDP during the Feasibility Study suggests that this approach is preferred. This should be confirmed immediately.
- Decides which options to run forward and how to sequence them.
- Procures the necessary architectural and project management support.
- Establishes a strong project management regime from the outset. We recommend that DADCA follows PRINCE2 as the benchmark for best project management practice.
- Puts detailed plans in place, establishing milestones and the critical path(s).
- Creates a budgetary management framework.
- Creates a risk and issues register and the regime under which risks and issues will be managed expeditiously.

Short term actions already identified are to:

- Change the constitution of DADCA to become a Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee, without which grant applications will not be entertained
- Ask DADCA's legal advisor to confirm the right of way at the northern entrance to Meadows Park, and approach the Sutherland Estates office to negotiate an agreed access as required by Highways.
- Clarify with Licensing Standards the conflicting advice obtained during this Study
- Engage a consulting engineer to clarify soil condition on Meadows Park and the impact on design.
- Include Football Club representative on the Build Sub-committee
- Confirm grant application approach as described above.
- Join the collaborative network set up by known local community projects supported by SRDP:
 - Fountain Road Hall (SRDP Case No 3885427)
 - Portgower Hall (SRDP Case No 3883494)
 - Rosehall Village Hall (SRDP Case No 3903502).

9.2 Detailed design phase

- Conducts a formal pre-application consultation with the Highland Council Planning Department to establish how the Feasibility Study proposals might need to be clarified to be acceptable.
- Reviews the Feasibility Study proposals, agrees modifications arising from the Council and public consultations
- Finalises the outline design, layout and elevations, how fixtures and fittings are incorporated and how important details of construction will work.
- Confirms that the design proposals are within the expected budget and in harmony with the stated objectives as regards quality, long term maintenance and performance. Revises the proposal as necessary.
- Prepares the information to accompany the planning application.
- Collates information of a legal nature required by a local authority, e.g. site boundary, rights of access etc., with the help of DADCA's legal adviser.
- Formally approves the design drawings
- End stage review, revising the budget and project plan as required. Note that full project costings are not confirmed as tenders have not been obtained.
- Review with LEADER Case Officer

9.3 Planning Application & Building Warrant

- Negotiates the planning application through the Highland Council process until approved.
- Prepares drawings and calculations showing how proposals comply with the current Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations.
- Formally approves the design drawings.
- Submits the drawings and negotiates the Building Warrant application through the Highland Council process until approved.
- End stage review, revising the budget and project plan as required. Full project costings are still not confirmed as tenders have not been obtained.
- Review with LEADER Case Officer

9.4 Build procurement

- Prepares tender documents comprising the contract drawings, the specification of materials and components, the Bill of Quantities and the Conditions of Contract.
- Conducts a formal tender process in line with best practice and EU requirements for large value contracts.
- Selects a contractor. A single contractor is advisable for a project of this nature.
- Revises the budget and project plan as required.
- Submits a funding application with full project costings. The regular update meetings with the LEADER Case Officer in earlier stages will be essential for this process not to be avoidably delayed.
- Enters into a contract

9.5 Construction

Agrees the content of work packages and a schedule with the contractor.

Supervises the work, package by package, to achieve satisfactory completion on time, manage the quality of delivery, and snag issues as soon as they arise.

Handles unforeseen circumstances on site.

Applies change control to budget or schedule as necessary, while preventing scope creep.

Issues periodic certificates for release of stage payments due to the contractor.

Delivers the building.

Accounts to LEADER for the project in total.

Appendix A Parties consulted during the study

Meadows Park Trustees
Dornoch Football Club
Dornoch Highland Gathering
Dornoch Sports Hall Project
North Highland Curling Trust
Royal Dornoch Golf Club

Community Association Member Organisations
by invitation to exhibition and public meeting
by some individual consultations
Community Association individual users
by invitation to exhibition and public meeting
by some individual consultations

The Sutherland Access Panel
Royal National Institute of Blind People
Royal National Institute for Deaf People
On-Site Generation Limited
Community Energy Scotland
Energy Saving Trust

The Highland Council
Ward Management
Planning
Highways
Strategic Planning
Contaminated Land Unit
Leisure and Tourism
Licensing Standards
Youth Development

Councillors
Jim McGillivray
Deirdre Mackay
Ian Ross

MSPs (in alphabetical order)
Rob Gibson
Mary Scanlon
David Stewart
Jamie Stone

Scottish Environmental Protection Agency
Scottish Natural Heritage (both on policy, and sustainable building design by reference to the new SNH building at Golspie Links)
Scottish and Southern Energy
Scottish Water

University of the Highlands and Islands
Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations

Village Halls for best practice and lessons learned
Boat of Garten
Balintore
Fountain Road, Golspie

The Scottish Government
The Highland LEADER Programme
Scottish Rural Development Programme
Sutherland Estates
Pat Munro (Alness) Ltd
North Highland Curling Trust (through their consultants)
Husson International SA
Dilks Plant and Construction

Appendix B Relevant Trustees

Note the potential for confusion arising from the use of the term Provost in this Appendix. The title of Provost is currently used by the Chair of Dornoch Community Council, but in the context of trusteeships below the functions of Provost and Town Clerk have been assumed by the Highland Council under Local Government reorganisation.

The information below is derived from a report of the Chief Executive presented to the Highland Council on 18 December 2008.

Trustees of Dornoch Social Club

On behalf of the residents of Dornoch, the Trustees of Dornoch Social Club own the land and buildings that form the Dornoch Social Club, School Hill, Dornoch. In 1929, when they acquired the property, the Trustees were the Provost and Town Clerk of the Royal Burgh of Dornoch and the Sheriff Substitute. In 1980, when a 30 year lease was granted to Dornoch and District Community Association, the Trustees were the Dornoch Member and Chief Executive of Sutherland District Council and the Sheriff.

Present Trustees are:

- Cllr Jim McGillivray as one of the three East Sutherland and Edderton Ward Members
- Ian Hargrave, Highland Council Corporate Manager for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross
- David Sutherland, Depute Sheriff

Trustees of Recreation Ground in Royal Burgh of Dornoch

On behalf of the residents of Dornoch, the Trustees of Recreation Ground in Royal Burgh of Dornoch manage the Meadows Park games field which has been leased from Sutherland Estates since 1909 and owned by the Trustees since 1970. The title lists the following as Trustees:

- The Provost of the Royal Burgh of Dornoch
- The Town Clerk of the Royal Burgh of Dornoch
- The Minister of the Parish of Dornoch
- The Rector of Dornoch Academy
- The President of Dornoch Football Club
- The President of the Dornoch Highland Gathering

Present Trustees are:

- Cllr Jim McGillivray as one of the three East Sutherland and Edderton Ward Members
- Ian Hargrave, Highland Council Corporate Manager for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross
- Rev Susan Brown for the Parish
- John Garvie for Dornoch Academy
- Graham Ross for Dornoch Football Club
- Willie MacKay for the Dornoch Highland Gathering

Appendix C Alternative sites within Dornoch envelope, considered and discarded

Inside the Settlement Development Area, Dornoch is compact and generally built up, limiting the options for siting a new Community Centre.

The most attractive option, in terms of pure development feasibility, is on land to the rear of Dornoch Academy. Two other locations are identified for future development on the Map:

- Dornoch North
- Dornoch North Expansion.

All are potentially viable but have material drawbacks. Given the clear steer in the Local Plan towards the Meadows, it would be perverse to opt for any of them unless developing on Meadows Park were not feasible.

Other possible locations were identified within the Dornoch envelope, have been reviewed for the sake of completeness, and have been dismissed:

- a site adjoining the Meadows Nursing Home
- a site on Shore Road.

C.1 Site at Dornoch Academy

The site first suggested to us is in fact occupied by the planning application for the Dornoch Sports Hall. This has been moved slightly to the east since the application was first submitted, because soil conditions make the original location difficult and expensive to develop. Leaving cost aside, the site vacated by the Sports Hall would be unsuitable for a new Community Centre because, being landlocked behind other buildings, there would be no access for emergency vehicles.

This leaves the possibility of development on the Academy sports field. Any building on the area occupied by football pitch and running track would be unacceptable. However the school could operate effectively if a Community Centre were built on land opposite Rowan Avenue with access from Poles Road.

- **Planning considerations:** the site is currently allocated as Open Space on the Map, and the Council is very keen to ensure that open space provision in Dornoch is not reduced. Notwithstanding this, in the first draft of the Local Plan this site was originally identified for community use, and Meadows Park was allocated as Open Space. The switch in allocations only took place after the Community Council, on DADCA's behalf, asked for provision at Meadows Park for a new Community Centre.

If proposals to develop at Meadows Park failed for some reason, one could argue that the allocations might logically be reversed. The window has closed for suggesting changes to the Plan, and it is to be submitted to the Reporter as published. Once the Plan has been approved, the Council would find it difficult to change site allocation, both psychologically and in process terms. That is not to say that it should not be pursued.

The Council also considered selling this piece of land for housing, as a way of funding the Sports Hall. This proposal was abandoned at some point.

Residents made objections to the site's inclusion in the first draft of the Local Plan.

- **Legal consideration:** one representation objecting to development on this site alleged that the land was previously gifted on terms which would preclude a Community Centre. We do not know whether the objection would be upheld.
- **Highways considerations:** the site is close to a complex junction and there would certainly be issues to resolve, which is not to say they could not be resolved.
- **Development issues arising:** The site is fairly level and would not appear to suffer from the raised water table issues affecting the Meadows Park. Informal enquiry of the Contaminated Land Unit indicates that a small piece of neighbouring land was once used for gravel extraction but there is no history of land contamination.
- **Conclusion:** Potentially the most easily developed site in Dornoch, leaving aside the possible legal objection and residents' representations. However reverting to this location would involve complex negotiations with the Council, who also own it and may have other plans for it, and it should only be contemplated as a fallback if the preferred site falls through for some reason.

C.2 Dornoch North

This is a 19.5 ha site on rising ground, located between Rowan Avenue/Crescent and the Embo Road:

- **Planning considerations:** the site is allocated primarily for housing use with associated business and commercial uses, which may be argued to include community use.
- **Highways considerations:** two access points are indicated on the Map. To be within walking distance for most Dornoch residents, access would be through Station Square (the alternative access is far enough from the centre of Dornoch to require car travel). Access on foot through Cnoc an Lobht is marked on the Map, but it involves a steep, constrained incline and is unsuitable for traffic. Road access here would be ruled out by Highland Council in any event. Cnoc an Lobht is the main access to the new UHI building at Burghfield House and would be unable to sustain the additional volume of traffic likely to arise from Community Centre development.

The Station Square access is shown on the SEPA flood map as having a 0.5% or greater chance of flooding each year from the Dornoch Burn. This is the probability used in Scottish Planning Policy 7, Planning and Flooding, to identify locations where new development should not take place if it would be at significant risk of flooding from any source or would materially increase the probability of flooding elsewhere. SEPA have made a flood risk representation on the Local Plan and, for now, the Plan requires a formal flood risk assessment before any planning application could be approved.

- **Development issues arising:** we have not evaluated the engineering work required to overcome the flooding issue. Given the commercial development value of the

Dornoch North site, it is reasonable to suppose that a large scale house builder might absorb that cost; but it is also fair to assume that the cost would render Community Centre development impractical, if it were to be borne by DADCA.

- **Conclusion:** a potentially viable site but only after a developer has resolved the flooding issue and access is in place. Should only be regarded as a fallback if the preferred site falls through for some reason.

C.3 Dornoch North Expansion

This is a 12.4 ha site, located between Dornoch North and Poles Road described on the Map as for longer term development; in this context, “longer term” means after 2014:

- **Planning considerations:** the site is allocated for longer term development as part of the masterplan of Dornoch North, which again would be expected to include community use. There are no surface water issues other than standard requirements to avoid flooding caused by run-off from new developments
- **Highways considerations:** access would be either from Poles Road or from the previously developed Dornoch North area. The Poles Road access would be at the extreme range of walking distance for many Dornoch residents, and further out than the Meadows Park site.
- **Development issues arising:** no significant issues are identified.
- **Conclusion:** a potentially viable site but unlikely to come into play within the timescale of this project. Should only be regarded as a fallback if the preferred site falls through for some reason.

C.4 Site adjoining the Meadows Nursing Home

This site is located opposite Sinclair Court, immediately to the north of the Meadows Nursing Home:

- **Planning considerations:** we understand that there was an earlier consent, now expired, for a mixed development of houses and flats. Community Centre development would be a different Use Class from housing, and the earlier consent cannot be taken as a precedent. There would be strong residential amenity objections to a development here because of the impact on residents of the Nursing Home.
- **Highways considerations:** the road is adopted as far as Sinclair Court and should not need upgrading. Potential for Highways objections that the cramped nature of the site would lead to overflow parking on neighbouring streets; also because there is no direct traffic flow from Castle Street. A footpath which runs diagonally across the site would have to be realigned.
- **Development issues arising:** a compact site which would not accommodate the building and the necessary parking.

- **Conclusion:** unlikely to be acceptable to the Planning Authority, likely to be widely unpopular with Dornoch residents, not recommended for further consideration.

C.5 Site on Shore Road

This is a cramped site located towards the end of Shore Road, to the rear of the abattoir:

- **Planning considerations:** the area is shown on the SEPA flood map as having a 0.5% or greater chance of flooding each year from the Dornoch Burn. This is the probability used in Scottish Planning Policy 7, Planning and Flooding, to identify locations where new development should not take place if it would be at significant risk of flooding from any source or would materially increase the probability of flooding elsewhere..
- **Highways considerations:** potential for Highways objections that the cramped nature of the site would lead to overflow parking on neighbouring streets, and obstruction to the movement of articulated lorries entering and leaving the abattoir.
- **Development issues arising:** the flooding issues are beyond DADCA's ability to resolve economically and building here would be unwise.
- **Conclusion:** impractical to develop, unlikely to be acceptable to the Highways Authority, likely to be widely unpopular with Dornoch residents because of its location close to the abattoir, not recommended for further consideration.