

SPSO decision report

Case: 201202845, The Highland Council
Sector: local government
Subject: handling of application (complaints by opponents)
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C raised a number of issues about the council's strategic environmental assessment (SEA) for a proposed road development. He was concerned about the environmental report used in public consultation. He considered it to have been unclear and inaccurate, and said that the council should re-run the consultation. Mr C was also concerned that the environmental report did not take into account issues such as potential flooding and noise. He said that the council had also exaggerated the negative impact of one of the options to ensure that it was not selected.

We found that the council had taken Mr C's comments into account. They amended the report to reflect his comments about inaccuracies and corrected typographical errors. They also took steps to ensure clearer map information in the revised report. The council consulted with the appropriate agencies before preparing the report and we were, therefore, satisfied that they had included the necessary environmental issues in it. We also noted that the SEA was only one part of a process of environmental reviews to be carried out. While we noted the option Mr C favoured, and the amendments to this option that he suggested, we also took account of the council's statement that a number of options were selected at an earlier stage, using similar processes. We found no evidence to support his view that the council deliberately tried to ensure that this option had a higher environmental impact than necessary.