



National Planning Framework 4 consultation

Response submitted to Scottish Government 28 March 2022

This is a response to the Scottish Government consultation on the draft fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4). We have focussed on the questions most relevant to the development of homes and communities.

Consultation questions

Q5: Do you agree that the spatial strategy will deliver future places that overall are sustainable, liveable, productive and distinctive?

CIH Scotland believes the approach set out in NPF4 with regards to climate change, future place, homes and neighbourhood is positive but we consider the brevity in each of these sections in part 1 undermines the ambition of the spatial strategy. Instead NPF4 needs to link to existing strategies and policies that help deliver on this vision, such as the Heat in Buildings Strategy which sets out a clear vision for making Scotland's housing stock energy efficient. The spatial strategy would also benefit from a clear roadmap up to 2045 setting our expected milestones, budgetary considerations and outcomes. Without this overview on how the vision is achieved, the spatial strategy lacks the rigour that gives stakeholders confidence it will be implemented. This is particularly true given NPF4 includes priorities carried over from the previous NPF3 that have not been delivered. These specifics can be set out in detail throughout NPF4 but must be framed and introduced in part 1.

Q6: Do you agree that these spatial principles will enable the right choices to be made about where development should be located?

There is a risk of tension between some of the spatial principles set out in NPF4. For example, while more compact and local living can be seen as complimentary principles they will require the reclamation of public spaces for living, working and common usage that may undermine conservation or rural/urban synergies and rural living. These tensions can be overcome but it is important that NPF4 recognises they exist given the budgetary limits of public policy.

In addition, as the Government seek to incorporate human rights into Scots law we also consider that economic, social and cultural rights should be considered as a principle for development. Promotion of cultural diversity and enabling people to participate in the cultural life of their community is inseparable from respect for



human dignity and the enrichment of society¹ and outdoor space plays an important role in promoting cultural life and cultural rights².

This includes space that provides safe passage for pedestrians and cyclists plus the provision of open, green and accessible space to support different forms of recreational, sporting and other cultural activities as well as social interaction by (and between) different social groups. The importance of open and green space has been reiterated in the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which suggested that at least 15-20 percent of land in built up urban areas should be allocated to public open space and a further 30-35 percent to streets³. The UN-Habitat has also clarified that open spaces should be of good quality, accessible and enjoyable for all for free⁴.

We also note that the CESCR general comments and the reports by the Special Rapporteur on cultural rights⁵ indicate that in terms of cultural adequacy and housing, every state is obligated to ensure:

- Housing is planned, constructed or modernised in a way that conserves cultural life and identity.
- There is adequate provision of shared, safe and accessible open and free spaces for the enjoyment of cultural rights, including parks, recreational green areas and public playgrounds.
- Any limitations placed on the use of green spaces must be proportionate and should not uniformly prohibit children or adolescents from engaging in age-appropriate sport, leisure and other recreational activities.
- The cultural heritage in all its forms is protected, including the care, preservation and restoration of historical buildings, monuments and works of art.
- Communities have a strong voice in the planning of housing solutions, including traveller sites, that are suitable for their cultural identity, lifestyle and socio-economic needs.
- Cultural adequacy is not used to justify the provision of housing that is inadequate in terms of security of tenure, quality, accessibility, affordability or location.
- People are protected from having to live in housing that does not meet the norms of their community or would be considered unacceptable or degrading for the public at large.

¹ CESCR (2009) [General comment No. 21: Right of everyone to take part in cultural life](#), Geneva: United Nations and OHCHR

² Bennoune, K (2019) [Report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights](#), Geneva: United Nations and OHCHR

³ UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2018) [The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018](#), New York, UN

⁴ UN-Habitat (2015) [Global Public Space Toolkit: From Global Principles to Local Policies and Practice](#), Kenya: UN Human Settlements Programme.

⁵ See CESCR (2009), CESCR (1991) and Bennoune (2019) *ibid*



Q9, 11, 13, 15, 17: What are your views on these strategic actions for this action area?

These action areas within NPF4, while considerable in length, do not consider the range of issues facing these localities which could be improved through an updated and better resources planning environment. For example, when discussing the North and west coastal innovation action area, NPF4 makes reference to a “clear need for affordable housing provision across the region to improve choice and access to home” but fails to consider the impact of lack of housing and depopulation, the (welcome) enhancement of housing standards and the cost of delivery and the likely displacement impact on the private rented sector (PRS) of these higher standards. Rather it vaguely sets out desirable policy outcomes without reflecting on the existing and future policy changes that may support or inhibit these outcomes.

While the section on Central urban transformation is a little more prescriptive it notes that “solutions, such as retrofitting energy efficiency measures to social housing across the city, **could** be extended to help improve the built fabric of the city centre’s commercial properties.” This unfortunately does not reflect the scale, urgency, cost or prioritisation of the challenges as was reflected in the Heat in Buildings Strategy. Instead, there is vagueness around potential policy interventions.

We also note a potential omission in the priorities set out in the action areas with NPF4 which states that, “emissions from our homes need to be very substantially reduced - by 2030, they must fall by 68% from 2020 levels”. This fails to acknowledge the progress made by the social housing sector to date and that for progress to be improved further, private housing for rent and in owner occupation must be prioritised for retrofit and energy efficient measures. Recognising the principal cause of carbon emissions in the housing sector comes from private housing prescribes different policy solutions than if progress had been even across all tenures.

Q21: Do you think there are other developments, not already considered in supporting documents, that should be considered for national development status?

CIH Scotland has no comment on the appropriateness of the classes of development as detailed in section 2 other than to say the wider consequences of each development have not been noted, in particular how each project may influence population movements, supply chain and where people work and live. In particular the fibre connectivity development *may* mitigate against expected population movements into Scotland’s cities as key jobs can be conducted more remotely. This need to be reflected in NPF4 and then in local housing plans.

With regards to each of the National Planning Policies we have noted the areas where CIH Scotland has the insight to contribute.

Policy 1: Plan-led approach to sustainable development

CIH Scotland supports inclusion of the purpose of planning in order to manage the use and development of land in the long-term public interest. However, these policies need to be reflected in the priorities of planning authorities in order to achieve the intention. We have seen some planning authorities declare a climate emergency but then seek to promote car/carbon intensive projects that run contrary to the principle of sustainable development or wellbeing. We need planners and planning authorities' staff to be of a sufficient level of skill and capacity to be able to make long term decisions, even where there are short term incentives to take the opposite decision.

Policy 2: Climate emergency

CIH Scotland supports the focus on the climate emergency. However, we believe that for NPF4 to have practical value in addressing both our climate and housing crisis in a complementary way, there is a need to set out how planning authorities and developers can minimise carbon emissions i.e. through using modern methods of construction (MMC) and strategic acquisition. A vision is important but it requires practical direction in order to be realised.

Policy 4: Human rights and equality

We set out the importance human rights should have within NPF4 decision making at question 6. See above

Policy 9: Quality homes

We welcome the concept of the Minimum All-Tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR) approach to housing numbers which is set out in Annex B. We hope that it can provide clarity on housing land supply figures and helps planning authorities identify the land required to meet Scotland's housing need.

In 2020 CIH Scotland, SFHA and Shelter Scotland jointly commissioned research that showed Scotland's affordable housing need to be 53,000 homes between 2021 and 2026. In response the Scottish Government set out a commitment to deliver 100,000 affordable homes between 2022 and 2032, increased to 110,00 in August 2021. We welcome the focus on providing suitable land for affordable housing options through a range of tenures and types. In addition we welcome the focus on housing to meet the needs of gypsy/travellers and for an equalities led approach to addressing housing need, although we note that in the list of households that may have specific housing need, there is no mention of those that are homeless or at risk of homelessness, such as those living in overcrowded accommodation or victims of domestic abuse which in turn is likely to lead to underestimates of housing land required as noted by MATHLR.



Q54: Do you agree with our proposed priorities for the delivery of the spatial strategy? Q55: Do you have any other comments on the delivery of the spatial strategy?

As highlighted at the top of this response the outcomes sought by NPF4 are laudable and ambitious. However to transform NPF4 from a policy framework to a vehicle for delivery we need clarity over timetable, milestones, resourcing, staff capacity, oversight and how policy tensions may be addressed. These are unfortunately absent from NPF4.

Q57: Do you agree with the Minimum All-Tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR) numbers identified above?

See section 9 on quality homes above



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Contact:

Callum Chomczuk
National director
CIH Scotland
Callum.Chomczuk@cih.org

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