



Consultation Briefing: the draft National Planning Framework

About this briefing - This is a new type of briefing exclusively for CIH members. These briefings are designed to inform you about current consultations, highlight potential implications for the sector that you might want to consider in your own response and set out CIH Scotland's position.

Background

The draft [Fourth National Planning Framework](#) (NPF4) was laid in the Scottish Parliament on 10 November and will be subject to Parliamentary scrutiny for up to 120 days.

NPF4 is expected to be adopted by summer 2022 at which point it will have the status of the development plan for planning purposes.

The Scottish Government is inviting responses to the draft NPF4 until 31 March through the [online consultation portal](#).

What is the National Planning Framework?

The revised [Town and Country Planning \(Scotland\) Act 1997](#) dictates that the NPF must contribute to six outcomes:

- Improving the health and wellbeing of our people.
- Increasing the population of rural areas.
- Meeting housing needs.
- Improving equality and eliminating discrimination.
- Meeting targets for elimination of greenhouse gasses.
- Securing positive effects for biodiversity.

NPF4 sets out Scotland's national planning policies and designates certain developments, or classes of development as 'national developments' for which Ministers have established a need in principle. It also sets out the approach to planning and development to achieve net-zero. It is structured in four parts:

Part 1 sets out an overarching spatial strategy for Scotland which will be used to guide regional spatial strategies, local development plans (LDPs) and place plans.

Part 2 sets out proposed national developments that will support the spatial strategy.

Part 3 sets out policies for the development and use of land relating to LDPs, local place plans, masterplans and briefs, and for determining planning consent.

Part 4 gives an overview of how the Scottish Government plans to deliver the strategy.

Part 1 - A National Spatial Strategy for Scotland

The vision for the spatial strategy is for each part of Scotland to be planned to create **sustainable places** with reduced emissions and better biodiversity; **liveable places** promoting better health and reducing inequalities; **productive places** with a greener, fairer and more inclusive wellbeing economy; and **distinctive places** recognising and working with existing assets.

The spatial principles for Scotland 2045 are:

- **Compact growth** - limiting urban expansion where brownfield, derelict and vacant land can be used.
- **Local living** - creating networks of 20 minute neighbourhoods.
- **Balanced development** - managing development more sustainably in areas of high demand and actively supporting areas that are in decline.
- **Conserving and recycling assets** - focusing on making productive use of existing buildings, places, infrastructure and services.
- **Urban and rural synergy** - improving green infrastructure, bringing nature into urban areas and supporting biodiversity.
- **Just transition** - encouraging more involvement from local people in shaping places as we transition to net-zero and more sustainable ways of living.

NPF4 recognises challenges with **affordable housing provision across rural and island areas** and that a variety of solutions will be required to provide choices for people at different life stages. The plan makes links between the opportunities presented by the blue economy and green jobs to **support existing communities and potential to re-populate previously inhabited areas**.

For urban areas, the focus is on **making use of vacant and derelict land and buildings** and supporting low-carbon living through **20 minute neighbourhoods** and a move away from car-based place design. It is suggested that revitalising towns and cities also presents an opportunity to invest in heat networks and energy storage.



Part 2 - National developments

NPF 4 proposes 18 national developments to support the delivery of the spatial strategy. Designation as a 'national development' will mean that the principle of these developments would not need to be agreed in later consenting processes but does not remove requirements for relevant consents to be obtained.

The proposed developments include **national transport, walking and cycling networks**, support for renewable technologies that will **revitalise coastal areas and repurpose existing industrial** sites that rely on fossil fuels. A short summary of all 18 proposed national developments is included at Appendix 1.

Part 3 - National planning policy

NPF4 sets out 35 planning policies with a focus on supporting the net-zero target and with a primary guiding principle of addressing climate change and promoting nature recovery.

A **place-based approach** to creating more sustainable, fair communities should be supported through use of the [Place Principle](#) and developing 20 minute neighbourhoods to encourage **active travel and better wellbeing**. NPF4 sets out an **infrastructure first approach**, building on the recommendations of the [independent review of the planning system](#) published in 2016.

New housing developments should be good quality and contribute to creating good places to live. LDPs should **encourage the use of vacant and derelict land and buildings** with housing playing a key role in regenerating our town and city centres. LDPs will also have to identify the **housing land requirement** for the area based on the local housing need and at least meeting the Minimum All-tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR) specified in the final NPF4.

A short summary of all 35 proposed policies is included at Appendix 2.

Part 4 - Delivering the spatial strategy

The Scottish Government will work with a range of partners including the Infrastructure Delivery Group, Scottish Futures trust, local authorities and other agencies to develop a detailed delivery programme to accompany the final NPF4 publication. The draft document suggests that the delivery approach will be based on five key mechanisms.

1. Aligning resources - better joined up actions will be delivered through applying the Place Principle. National programmes and projects outlined in the Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP)

or through strategic processes such as the Strategic Transport Projects 2 and City Region Growth Deals will act as 'anchor' projects. Investment will be targeted towards the places where it will have the greatest impact.

2. - Infrastructure first - the principle will be embedded in the final NPF4 publication and forthcoming regulation and guidance will promote infrastructure first through LDPs and associated delivery programmes. NPF4 will also inform the next iteration of the IIP.

3. - Delivery of national developments - the Scottish Government has committed to working with partners to ensure delivery of all of the approved designated national developments in the final NPF4 publication.

4. Development plan policy and regional spatial strategies - alongside national planning policies. LDPs will have a key role in taking forward the MATHLR for their area, informed by an infrastructure first approach with the LDP delivery programme setting out responsibility for delivery of infrastructure and how it will be funded. Other mechanisms to support delivery will include Local Place Plans, planning obligations, land assembly, Masterplan Consent Areas and investment in the planning service.

5. Monitoring - proportionate, effective monitoring will be implemented at local and national level, but the process is still to be finalised. The Scottish Government will work with key stakeholders to develop an appropriate monitoring programme that will be published with the final NPF4.

The CIH view

We support the commitment to delivering good quality homes and places and the emphasis on a just transition to achieving net-zero emissions. Our homes and communities should be designed to support good health and wellbeing and to tackle inequalities.

However, the draft plan still lacks some detail on how the vision and principles for the planning system will be delivered. It will be essential to ensure that planning authorities have the skilled staff and resources required to deliver great places that people want to live in.

We would like to hear what CIH members think about the NPF4 proposals. You can share your thoughts by emailing scotland@cih.org or filling out a short [online survey here](#).



Appendix 1: Summary of proposed national developments

1. Central Scotland Green Network – focusing on a greener approach to development, improved place-making and 20 minute neighbourhoods. This will cover local authorities in central Scotland within a boundary set by the Green Action Trust.

2. National walking cycling and wheeling network – supporting projects promoting active transport covering the whole of Scotland.

3. Urban mass/rapid transport networks – providing low-carbon transport solutions for Aberdeen, Glasgow and Edinburgh.

4. Urban sustainable blue and green drainage solutions – to improve resilience to climate change with priority given to nature-based solutions, minimising engineered structures. This will apply to Glasgow and Edinburgh City and wider areas.

5. Circular economy materials management facilities – to maximise the use of materials in the economy, minimising the use of virgin materials with particular focus on the construction industry. Applies across Scotland.

6. Digital fibre network – to support the continued roll out of high speed broadband across Scotland.

7. Islands hub for net-zero – supporting the development of renewable energy production, supply chain fabrication, research and development across the Western Isles, Shetland, Orkney and surrounding waters.

8. Industrial Green Transition Zones – decarbonizing nationally important industrial sites at St Fergus, Peterhead and Grangemouth.

9. Pumped hydro storage – supporting capacity within the electricity network across Scotland with a focus on Cruachan. This will optimise electricity generated through renewables by storing and releasing as required.

10. Hunterston strategic asset – repurposing of Hunterston Port and power station, realising potential for renewable electricity generation.

11. Chapelcross power station redevelopment

– final use of the nuclear power station is to be agreed but it could act as an energy hub with an aim to create new jobs and grow the local population.

12. Strategic renewable electricity generation and transmission infrastructure

– supporting renewable electricity generation, repowering and expansion of the electricity grid across Scotland.

13. High speed rail – supporting improvements in rail capacity and connectivity with cross-border routes covering central and southern Scotland and the border with England.

14. Clyde Mission – repurposing vacant and derelict land and supporting local communities along the length of the Clyde (up to 500m from the river) with a focus on generating employment and addressing disadvantage.

15. Aberdeen Harbour – developing the south harbour for accessible offshore renewable energy research, manufacturing and support services, freeing up parts of the harbour in the city centre for mixed use development to reinvigorate Aberdeen city centre.

16. Dundee waterfront – continuing to support population growth, economic opportunities, skills and career development.

17. Edinburgh waterfront – focusing on Leith to Granton, development should balance and optimise residential, community, commercial and industrial purposes.

18. Stranraer gateway – focusing on high quality place-based regeneration to address socio-economic inequalities.



Appendix 2: Summary of proposed national planning policy

1. Plan-led approach to sustainable development

LDPs should manage the use and development of land in the long-term public interest.

2. Climate emergency – all developments should be designed to minimise emissions and be designed to be adaptable to the future impacts of climate change.

3. Nature crisis – developments should facilitate biodiversity and minimize any adverse impacts.

4. Human rights and equality – planning should take human rights into account, seek to eliminate discrimination and promote equality. This includes meaningful engagement and collaboration.

5. Community wealth building – developments should reflect a people-centred approach to local economic development, proving added social value.

6. Design, quality and place – all proposals should positively contribute to the character and sense of place of the area, taking into account key national and local design principles.

7. Local living – LDPs should support 20 minute neighbourhoods and proposals for residential developments will need to take into account access to local infrastructure, public and active transport options.

8. Infrastructure first – LDPs should be based on an infrastructure first approach and development proposals should show how they will contribute to or mitigate their impact on infrastructure.

9. Quality homes – LDPs should identify a housing target for the area in the form of a Housing Land Requirement and establish a deliverable housing land pipeline. Proposals for more than 50 homes (or a lower number by local agreement) must have a statement of community benefit and proposals for new homes that improve affordability and choice should be supported. Proposals for Gypsy/Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites where a need has been identified should be supported even where the land has not been identified in the LDP. Market homes should generally only be approved with an affordable housing contribution of at least 25 percent of the total number of homes.

10. Sustainable transport – LDPs should aim to reduce the need for unsustainable transport and should not support developments that increase reliance on private cars.

11. Heating and cooling – LDPs should take into account the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES), potential areas for heat networks and designated heat network zones (HNZs). Domestic biomass energy systems should not be supported where networked systems are available and buildings should be designed to promote sustainable temperature management, prioritising natural or passive solutions.

12. Blue and green infrastructure, play and sport

– such as green spaces, urban drainage, trees and green roofs should be identified and protected by LDPs. Play opportunities for children should be promoted and loss of outdoor sports facilities should be avoided.

13. Flooding – LDPs should strengthen resilience to current and future impacts of climate change.

14. Health and wellbeing – LDPs should create vibrant, healthier and safe places and seek to tackle health inequalities. Developments should not be supported where significant adverse health effects are likely to occur taking into consideration air quality and noise. Proposals for community food growing and allotments should be supported.

15. Safety – developments in the vicinity of accident hazard sites or where hazardous substances are present should take account of the impact on the local population and the environment.

16. Business and employment – LDPs should meet requirements for employment land, infrastructure and investment to support a greener, fairer and more inclusive wellbeing economy.

17. Tourism – LDPs should support the resilience of the tourism industry but not where this will adversely affect the environment or local community. Repurposing existing buildings as short-term holiday lets should not be supported where it will have an unacceptable impact on the local area or result in the loss of residential accommodation without significant economic benefits for the local area.

18. Culture and creativity – the expansion of creative industries should be supported, creating opportunities for jobs, culture, heritage and the arts. Provision for public art should be made and temporary use of vacant spaces for creative or cultural uses should be supported.

19. Green energy – LDPs should exploit the area's full potential for electricity and heat from renewables with proposals for all forms of renewable energy with enabling works to be supported in principle.

20. Zero waste – all developments should aim to use materials with the lowest forms of embodied emissions. Materials should be suitable for reuse where possible and the use of recycled and carbon neutral construction materials should be encouraged. Developments (including residential) that will generate waste must take into account how it will be stored and collected and include appropriate recycling facilities.

21. Aquaculture – should be supported to sustain economic success in rural and coastal communities, particularly in the north and west.



22. Minerals - make an essential contribution to the economy but extraction should be managed to minimize the impact on the environment and local communities.

23. Digital infrastructure - LDPs should support the delivery of digital infrastructure, especially in areas with gaps in connectivity. This is especially important in supporting investment and population growth in remote areas.

24. Centres - sustainable futures for city, town and local centres should be supported and reflect principles of the 20 minute neighbourhood and town centre vision.

25. Retail - retail developments that will encourage footfall in town centres should be prioritised over edge-of-town developments and out-of-town locations should not be supported.

26. Town centre first assessment - developments that will generate significant footfall or visitors should only be considered for out-of-centre locations if they cannot be accommodated in the town centre or edge-of-town. 20 minute neighbourhood principles should be applied with consideration for active travel.

27. Town centre living - should be encouraged with planning authorities providing a proportion of housing land requirements within town and city centres. New residential development and conversion of vacant upper floors should be supported, as should conversion of a vacant building where it can be demonstrated that the existing use is no longer viable. Residential use of ground level units should also be supported where appropriate.

28. Historic assets and places - should be identified, protected and enhanced.

29. Urban edges - LDPs can consider use of green belts where appropriate in accessible or pressured rural or peri-rural areas to prevent the growth of car-based commuting or suburbanisation of the countryside but evidence must be provided as to why this location is essential.

30. Vacant and derelict land - should be prioritised for temporary or permanent reuse. Demolition of existing buildings should be regarded as the least preferable option.

31. Rural places - LDPs should support the sustainability and prosperity of rural communities and economies including the resettlement of previously inhabited areas and provision of homes.

32. Natural places - locally, nationally and internationally valued natural assets, landscapes, species and habitats should be protected. New developments should deliver positive effects for biodiversity.

33. Soils - peat and carbon rich soils should be protected and contribute to net-zero goals through carbon sequestration and storage.

34. Trees, woodland and forestry - existing woodland should be protected and options for enhancement or expansion should be considered.

35. Coasts - need to be adapted to mitigate the impact of climate change and build long term resilience to support coastal industries and communities.