

Report

Report to:	Planning Committee
Date of Meeting:	24 January 2023
Report by:	Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

Subject	National Planning Framework 4
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ advise the Planning Committee of the approval by the Scottish Parliament of National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)
- ◆ summarise the key issues contained within the document and its contribution to future decision making in relation to planning matters

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) Note the approval of National Planning Framework 4 by the Scottish Parliament and the implications for decision making in relation to planning matters.

3. Background

3.1. The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 introduced a statutory requirement for the Scottish Government to prepare and adopt a new National Planning Framework. The Act gives the document a new enhanced status compared to previous versions in that it will form part of the development plan alongside the Council's own Local Development Plan. As such, all planning decisions including the preparation of Local Development Plans and the determination of planning applications will have to accord with NPF4 and the six outcomes it is required to achieve, namely:-

- ◆ improving the health and wellbeing of the people
- ◆ increasing the population of rural areas
- ◆ meeting housing needs
- ◆ improving equality and eliminating discrimination
- ◆ meeting targets for emissions of greenhouse gases
- ◆ securing positive effects for biodiversity

3.2. Following a consultation on a draft document in early 2022 a revised version was laid before the Scottish Parliament on 8 November 2022 for a period of parliamentary scrutiny and, following a debate in Parliament on 11 January 2023, the document was approved. Scottish Ministers are now required to 'adopt' and 'publish' NPF4 as soon as practically possible (estimated to be February/March 2023). There is also a 6-week period from 11 January 2023 when a legal challenge can be made to the Courts.

4. National Planning Framework 4

- 4.1. Part 1 sets out the National Spatial Strategy for Scotland to 2045 and makes reference to the role the planning system has in achieving the target of net zero emissions by 2045; supporting nature restoration and recovery; and ensuring a just transition so that these outcomes are fair for everyone.

Part 2 is the National Planning Policy which comprises 33 policies on separate topics for the development and use of land which are to be applied in the preparation of local development plans; local place plans; masterplans and briefs; and for determining planning applications. All of the policies should be taken and applied as a whole.

Part 3 includes several annexes to the document including a guide to how to use the document; statements of need for each of the 18 National Developments (see 4.5); an explanation of the 6 qualities of successful places; and a glossary of definitions.

4.2. Spatial Principles to 2045

The NPF4 sets out six overarching principles in relation to where development should be located. These are:-

1. *Just transition* - rapid transformation is required across all sectors of our economy and society to meet climate ambitions. The journey to achieve this must be fair and create a better future for everyone. Local people will shape their places and transition to environmentally sustainable ways of living
2. *Conserving and recycling assets* - make productive use of existing buildings, places, infrastructure and services, locking in carbon, minimising waste, and building a circular economy
3. *Local living* - support local liveability and improve community health and wellbeing by ensuring people can easily access services, greenspace, learning, work and leisure locally
4. *Compact urban growth* - limit urban expansion in order to optimise the use of land and buildings to provide services and resources, including carbon storage, flood risk management, blue and green infrastructure and biodiversity
5. *Rebalanced development* - target development to create opportunities for communities and investment in areas of past decline and manage development sustainably in areas of high demand
6. *Rural revitalisation* - encourage sustainable development in rural areas, recognising the need to grow and support urban and rural communities together

The strategy aims for the planning system to support the place agenda by bringing together these cross-cutting priorities to support the delivery of:-

- ◆ Sustainable places where emissions are reduced and biodiversity is restored and better connected
- ◆ Liveable places where communities will live better, healthier lives
- ◆ Productive places where there will be a greener, fairer and more inclusive wellbeing economy

- 4.3. A series of Action Areas for Scotland are defined. In the context of South Lanarkshire, the urban areas and much of the rural area is included as part of what is described as “Central” aimed at transforming and pioneering a new era of low carbon urban living. This area broadly covers central Scotland from the Glasgow City Region and the Ayrshires in the west to Edinburgh City Region in the east, including the Tay Cities, the Forth Valley and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. The priorities for the Central area in relation to the place agenda are as follows:-

1. Support net zero energy solutions including extended heat networks and improved energy efficiency, together with urban greening and improved low carbon transport
 2. Pioneer low carbon, resilient urban living by rolling out networks of 20 minute neighbourhoods, future proofing city and town centres, accelerating urban greening, investing in net zero homes, and managing development on the edge of settlements
 3. Target economic investment and build community wealth to overcome disadvantage and support a greener wellbeing economy.
- 4.4. The southern part of the Council's rural area merges into the South Action Area covering the Borders and Dumfries and Galloway where the priorities are to:-
1. Protect environmental assets and stimulate investment in solutions to climate change and nature restoration while decarbonising transport and building resilient physical and digital connections
 2. Increase the population by improving local liveability, creating a low carbon network of towns and supporting sustainable rural development
 3. Support local economic development while making sustainable use of the areas environmental assets
- 4.5. NPF4 sets out the 18 National Developments which will support the Spatial Strategy. This designation means that the principle of the development does not need to be agreed during the planning application process. They include several Scotland-wide National Developments e.g. National Walking, Cycling and Wheeling; Digital Fibre Network; Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure; and Circular Economy Materials Management Facilities.
- 4.6. Within the South Lanarkshire context they include:-
- ◆ Central Scotland Green Network (in order to accelerate urban greening across Central Scotland through the creation of green infrastructure and the re-use of brownfield and vacant/derelict land)
 - ◆ Urban Mass/Rapid Transit systems – which includes the proposed Glasgow Metro
 - ◆ Urban Sustainable Green/Blue Networks (Metropolitan Glasgow Strategic Drainage Programme)
 - ◆ High Speed Rail
 - ◆ Clyde Mission which involves the redevelopment of the Clyde waterfront along its entire length by attracting investment and reusing brownfield land with a particular emphasis on improving the quality of places, generating employment and supporting disadvantaged communities
- 4.7. The National Planning Policy section (Part 2 of NPF4) is where the detailed policies are found. This includes both the issues that Local Development Plans and Local Place Plans are to address as well as the criteria to be used when assessing planning applications. The table below sets out the 33 policies which are split into the three 'place' headings referred to in 4.2 above.

Sustainable Places	Liveable Places	Productive Places
1. Tackling the climate and nature crises 2. Climate mitigation and adaptation 3. Biodiversity 4. Natural places 5. Soils 6. Forestry, woodland and trees 7. Historic assets and places 8. Green belts 9. Brownfield land, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings 10. Coastal development 11. Energy 12. Zero waste 13. Sustainable transport	14. Design, quality and place 15. Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods 16. Quality homes 17. Rural homes 18. Infrastructure first 19. Heat and cooling 20. Blue and green infrastructure 21. Play, recreation and sport 22. Flood risk and water management 23. Health and Safety 24. Digital infrastructure	25. Community wealth building 26. Business and industry 27. City, town, local and commercial centres 28. Retail 29. Rural development 30. Tourism 31. Culture and creativity 32. Aquaculture 33. Minerals

- 4.8 A new approach is also suggested to help the planning system support the delivery of more and better homes. Amongst other matters, this policy reflects the work undertaken by the Glasgow City Region Housing Market Partnership to provide a Minimum All Tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR) in the preparation of the draft NPF4. Local Development Plans will be required to identify a housing target for the area which should at least meet the 10 year MATHLR (7,850 for South Lanarkshire). A deliverable housing land pipeline for the Housing Land Requirement is to be provided setting out short, medium and long-term sites. Land to be identified to meet the housing land requirement (HLR) should be in sustainable locations.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1. At the present time the revised NPF4 has been approved by Parliament but it has not been formally adopted. The relevant legislation requires that it be adopted as soon as possible by the Scottish Ministers post approval by Parliament. Current timescales indicated for that are six weeks. In turn, NPF4 will become part of the Development Plan alongside the Council's adopted South Lanarkshire Local Development Plan 2 (SLLDP2). In the meantime, due to its advanced stage, the Revised Draft NPF4 is now considered to be a material consideration in the determination of all planning applications. It is expected that transitional arrangements and detailed guidance will be published by the Scottish Government to help the initial implementation of NPF4.
- 5.2. In the longer term, the Government has advised that the regulations for the preparation of Local Development Plans, Open Space Strategies and Play Sufficiency Assessments will be laid before the Scottish Parliament when the 6-week judicial review period for NPF4 has expired. It is currently estimated that they will come into force around Spring/early summer. At this point, work on the preparation of the Council's Local Development Plan 3 will start formally and a report will be brought to this Committee at the time outlining the steps and timescales involved.

- 5.3. As noted above, the approval of NPF4 represents a significant transformation for the way in which decisions on planning matters are to be made. It reflects many of the emerging themes and priorities already identified at a national level and the Programme for Government and it establishes a framework on how the planning system will deliver the Governments' aspirations. Tackling climate change and supporting sustainability is weaved throughout the document and emphasises that sustainable development must be the foundation if the climate emergency and the nature crisis are to be tackled. Topics that the planning system has not previously been asked to address (eg health and wellbeing and community wealth building) are given prominence and are clearly established as critical in terms of creating a just society and tackling longstanding inequalities and challenges. The emphasis on place making, the creation of 20 Minute Neighbourhoods and the role local people will have in shaping their areas is also established in the document.
- 5.4. Together with changes to the Building Regulations set to be introduced in 2023, the transformation of the planning system will have significant implications for the Council as landowners and developers. A more joined up approach involving planning and building standards will evolve. In order to support the delivery and application of NPF4, a range of awareness sessions and workshops will be programmed to inform elected members and officers across the Council. The upskilling of planning staff making decisions needed to deliver NPF4 outcomes is an important issue as is the continued resourcing of the planning service in terms of staff capacity and skills.

6. Employee Implications

- 6.1. The implementation of NPF4 will have implications for officers in the Planning Service in terms of preparing the next Local Development Plan and decision making on planning applications. A number of 'new' issues have been introduced that the planning system is required to address which will require appropriate skills and knowledge currently unavailable. Equally officers within other Council services will be required to understand any new requirements within the approved NPF4 for their projects and strategies.
- 6.2. The preparation of the Council's next Local Development Plan is likely to be more resource intensive based on the anticipated new procedures and guidance and additional topics that are required to be covered. Work has started on the Open Space Strategy in partnership with officers in Countryside and Greenspace and the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network Partnership, however, progress has been delayed due to resourcing issues. The preparation of the Play Sufficiency Assessment is likely to have similar issues.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. The costs of the preparation and production of the next Local Development Plan and Open Space Strategy/Play Sufficiency Assessment will be expected to be met from existing budgets. However, while the increase in planning fees introduced in April 2022 are intended to achieve full cost recovery for the planning application process, this fails to address the need to deliver the aims and ambitions of NPF4 and the next Local Development Plan / Open Space Strategy. This is a matter that is subject to separate discussion between CoSLA, Heads of Planning Scotland and Royal Town Planning Institute and the Scottish Government.

8. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

- 8.1. The theme of tackling the Global Climate Emergency, meeting the Scottish Government's targets for net zero emissions and the promotion of sustainable developments are central to the spatial strategy in NPF4 and, in turn, through the preparation of the Council's next Local Development Plan and in decision making on planning applications.

9. Other Implications

- 9.1. Once adopted, NPF4 will form the Development Plan for the Council as Planning Authority alongside its adopted SLLDP2. It will be a material consideration for determining all planning applications while the next Local Development Plan must accord with it. Where there is conflict between NPF4 and SLLDP2, the former will be given priority.

10. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 10.1. The original consultation on the draft NPF4 and the revised draft subsequently approved by the Scottish Parliament were subject to Equalities Impact Assessment, Child Rights and Wellbeing and a Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment.

- 10.2. Consultation by the Council is not required.

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Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

13 January 2023

Link(s) to Council Values/Priorities/Outcomes

- ◆ Good quality, suitable and sustainable places to live

Previous References

- ◆ Planning Committee - 29 March 2022 - report on Scottish Government Consultations:-
National Planning Framework 4
Local Development Plan Regulations and Guidance and Open Space
Strategies and Play Sufficiency Assessments Regulations

List of Background Papers

- ◆ Planning (Scotland) Act 2019
- ◆ National Planning Framework 4 approved by Scottish Parliament on 11 January 2023

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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