



Seminar – National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)

Date	Time	Venue
Tuesday 1 March 2022	10.00 am	Via Microsoft Teams

Present:

Councillor Imrie (Chair)	Councillor Alexander
Councillor Cassidy	Councillor Curran
Councillor Hackett	Councillor Lay-Douglas
Councillor McKenzie	Councillor Milligan
Councillor Muirhead	Councillor Parry
Councillor Small	Councillor Winchester

In attendance:

Grace Vickers	Chief Executive
Kevin Anderson	Executive Director: Place
Fiona Robertson	Executive Director
Derek Oliver	Chief Officer: Place
Peter Arnsdorf	Planning, Sustainable Growth and Investment Manager
Marc Bedwell	Executive Business Support Manager
Neil Wallace	Lead Officer Development Plans
Alison Challis	Planning Officer
Mike Broadway	Democratic Services Officer

1 Introduction and Apologies

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillor Russell.

2 Seminar

(a) Background

By way of background, the Planning, Sustainable Growth and Investment Manager made reference to the report advising of the publication of the fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4) and providing a brief overview of the key issues and current consultation process which had been considered by the Planning Committee on 11 January 2022. The Committee, in noting the update and that a further report would be submitted to the March meeting seeking approval to submit a formal response to the public consultation on draft NPF4, had agreed to hold a Seminar for Elected Members in advance of the further report coming back to Committee.

(b) Presentation

Thereafter, Neil Wallace, Lead Officer Development Plans provided a presentation offering an introduction to the fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4); its likely implications for the next Midlothian Local Development Plan (MLDP2); and the five main sections of draft NPF4 document (Appendix 1 hereto).

In considering the presentation, Members discussed the following –

- The potential impact of the proposed action areas and how responsive they would be to the particular needs of different parts of the country given that very different levels of growth were being experienced across Scotland. It being anticipated that this focus would be something that would be addressed in more detail at a local level in Local Development Plans (LDPs);
- The means by which any conflicts would be resolved and whether there would continue to be a role for the Scottish Reporters service. In this regards, it was acknowledged that whilst NPF4 was still at the consultation stage, indications were that the later adopted Plan would take precedence in such instances, and that there would still be a role for the Reporters service;
- That whilst the policies in NPF4 would influence the form and content of the next MLDP, there would be flexibility based on evidence to reflect local circumstances and then test the policies at Inquiry;
- That the concept of ‘Twenty minute Neighbourhoods’ would require a fundamental rethink of services and infrastructure and how they were provided not just by the public sector but right across the board.
- That whilst the current development at Shawfair offered a unique example in the form of a planned new build community of what a ‘Twenty minute Neighbourhood’ might potentially look like the real challenge would be to replicate this within existing communities.
- The role of Community Groups in preparing the new Local Place Plans and the means by which they would be seen to be used to inform the development of LDPs;
- The fact that the revision of previous SPP and their incorporation into NPF4 included policies on Green Belt, Conservation Areas was acknowledged but Members remained to be convinced that these policies had sufficient profile and priority as part of the proposed plan.

(c) Conclusion

That following today's Seminar, Member could feedback any comments on issues arising from the presentation and/or the proposed consultation response. A report would then be submitted to the Planning Committee meeting on Tuesday 15 March 2022 and there would be an opportunity for further comment before the Council's agreed consultation response would be submitted via ScotGov Portal by the required date of 31 March 2022.

The Seminar concluded at 11.22 am

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Planning (Scotland) Act 2019

An introduction to the Fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4) & implications for the next Midlothian Local Development Plan (MLDP2)

Midlothian Council, February 2022



Draft National Planning Framework (4)

Process so far:

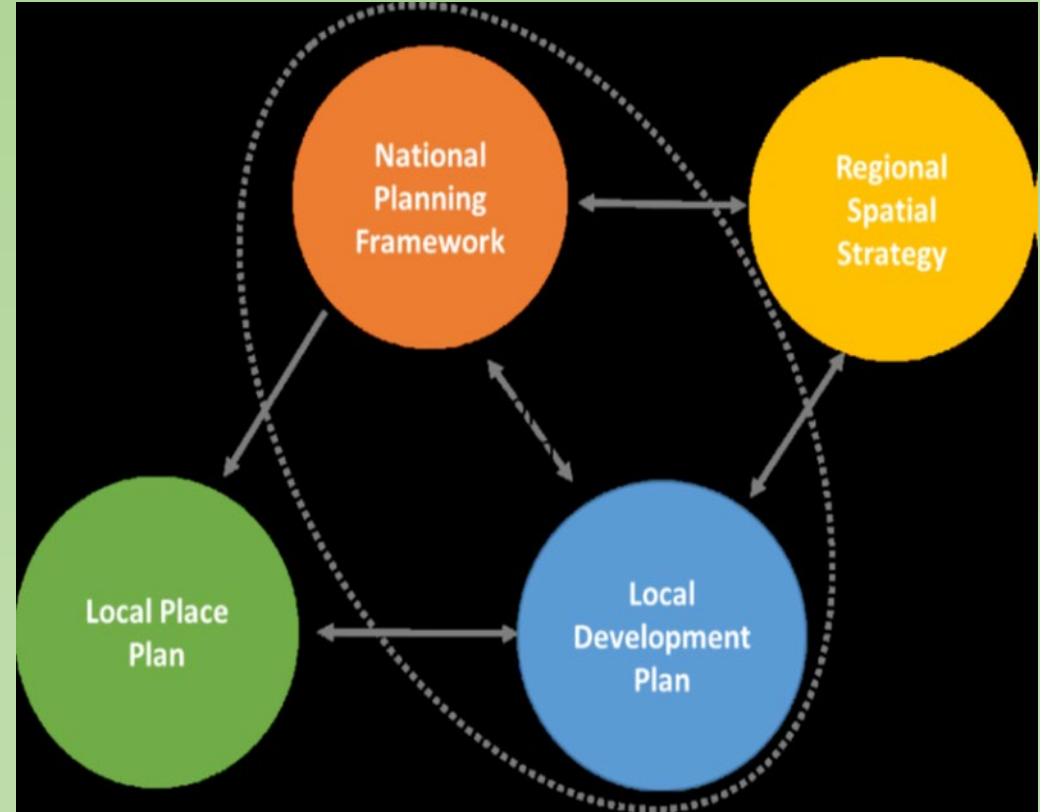
- Planning (Scotland) Act receives Royal Assent July 2019;
- ScotGov implementation programme – section by section, in consultation with stakeholders covering necessary secondary legislation and guidance (<https://www.transformingplanning.scot/>);
- Progress delayed approximately 12 months – Covid-19 lockdown restrictions;
- Draft NPF4 published for consultation – 10 Nov 2021;
- Planning Committee 11 January 2022 – Initial Report & copy of Draft NPF4;
- Planning Committee 15 March 2022 - Proposed Consultation Response for Approval;
- Consultation Deadline - 31 March 2022.



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Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 - key driver for changes to the development plan process;

- NPF4 now part of the statutory development plan – NPF + MLDP;
- Regional priorities & housing numbers to be set through the NPF;
- Regional Spatial Strategies replace SDPs - not part of the statutory development plan but will inform the NPF & MLDP processes;
- New style LDPs to be reviewed every 10 years instead of 5 years;
- New Evidence Report & Government Gate-check - replaces Main Issues Report stage;
- New Local Place Plans – prepared by Community Groups to inform the LDP;
- Other new duties - include OSS and Play Sufficiency Statements, forestry & woodland strategy, more inclusive engagement.



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NPF4:

- Is a long term plan for development & investment across Scotland to 2045 (ScotGov Net Zero Carbon target date);
- It has five main sections setting out –
 - Part 1 – National Spatial Strategy for Scotland to 2045;
 - Part 2 – National Developments (18);
 - Part 3 – National Planning Policies (35) (formerly Scottish Planning Policy);
 - Part 4 – Delivering Our Spatial Strategy;
 - Part 5 – Annexes (NPF4 Outcomes Statement; Housing Numbers and Glossary of Definitions); and
- Is a reasonably short but accessible document, written in a concise and clear style. Colour coding usefully assists the reader to easily cross reference between each of the sections of the document.



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Part 1 - National Spatial Strategy Identifies:

Strategy Themes

Sustainable Places;
Liveable places;
Productive Places;
Distinctive Places.



Development Principles

Compact Growth;
Local Living;
Balanced Development;
Conserving & Recycling
Assets;
Urban & Rural Synergies;
Just Transition.



Action Areas

North & West Coastal
Innovation;
Northern Revitalisation;
North East Transition;
Central Urban
Transformation;
Southern Sustainability.



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Central Urban Transformation Action Area (Midlothian)

Key Priorities Include:

- Pioneer low-carbon, resilient urban living;
- Reinvent and future-proof city centres;
- Accelerate urban greening;
- Rediscover urban coasts and waterfronts;
- Reuse land and buildings;
- Invest in net zero housing solutions;
- Grow a wellbeing economy;
- Reimagine development on the urban fringe; and
- Improve urban accessibility.



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Questions on Part I – National Spatial Strategy ?



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Part 2 - National Developments (18):

“National Developments are significant developments of national importance that will help to deliver our spatial strategy”



In NPF4 some are continued over from NPF3, some are site specific others Scotland wide and some are large Masterplan sites.



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There are 18 Proposed National Developments:

- Central Scotland Green Network;*
- National Walking, Cycling & Wheeling Network;*
- Urban Mass/Rapid Transit Networks – Aberdeen, Edinburgh & Glasgow;*
- Urban Sustainable, Blue & Green Drainage Solutions;*
- Circular Economy Materials Management Facilities;*
- Digital Fibre Network;*
- Island Hubs for Net Zero;
- Industrial Green Transition Zones;
- Pumped Hydro Storage;
- Hunterston Strategic Asset;
- Chapelcross Power Station Redevelopment;
- Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation & Transmission Infrastructure;
- High Speed Rail;
- Clyde Mission;
- Aberdeen Harbour;
- Dundee Waterfront;
- Edinburgh Waterfront;
- Stranraer Gateway.



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Questions on Part 2 – National Developments ?



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Part 3 - National Planning Policies (35):

- Previous SPP Revised & Incorporated into NPF4;
- Intended to provide more consistency in planning decisions & allow LAs to focus on delivering good quality development;
- Seek to avoid duplication @ LDP level but provide flexibility to reflect local circumstances;
- Policies will influence the form & content of next MLDP but will also be a primary consideration in determining planning applications (and any subsequent appeals);
- Policies grouped under strategy themes (similar to SPP approach);
- Lack of clarity in some Policies due to wording/definitions – i.e. significant emissions/community wellbeing etc.



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Part 3 - National Planning Policies Continued:

Universal policies (1-6) highlight key policy priorities including:

- Plan led approach to sustainable development;
 - climate emergency;
 - Nature Crisis;
 - Human Rights & Equality;
 - Community Wealth building;
 - Design Quality & Place;
- Remaining policies are topic specific;
 - Some quite lengthy & lose some of the direction/focus from SPP - More clarity if broken up into shorter/separate policies.



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Part 3 - National Planning Policies Continued:

New Policies to support Strategy themes and spatial principles –

- Local Living (7) – Introduces Concept of 20MN;
- Infrastructure First (8) - Acknowledges need to align Development with existing capacities and planned investment strategies, including ScotGov Infrastructure Investment Plan;
- Quality Homes (9) – Minimum All Tenure Housing Land Requirement & deliverable housing land pipeline for a range of sectors – affordable, market, elderly, disabled etc. MLC figure unchanged from 2021 consultation (8050) but approved HNDA3 raises marginally to 8,088;
- Sustainable Transport (10) – Puts the sustainable travel hierarchy at centre of appraisal & assessment of development proposals but is quite lengthy. Subdivision/separate policies may provide greater clarity on objectives;



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Part 3 - National Planning Policies Continued:

- Heat & Cooling (11)/ Green Energy (19) – Linked to climate emergency action. In principle support for developing/extending low/zero carbon heat networks (MEL Shawfair) & all forms of green energy development;
- Business and Employment (16) – Focus on a green recovery & support for business, industry & innovation including home-working/live-work units/micro-businesses and proposals on non allocated sites where compatible with surrounding uses. Broad reach will allow local policies tailored to MLC circumstances;
- Zero Waste (20) – Stronger focus on recycling and circular economy and limiting scope for new or extended landfill sites/proposals;
- Minerals (22) – Removes support for fossil fuel extraction and reinforces opposition to Fracking;



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Part 3 - National Planning Policies Continued:

- Distinctive Places (24 – 27) – Covers Town Centres & takes similar approach to previous SPP but Policy 27 Town Centre Living supports Planning authorities to proactively identify opportunities to meet part of their housing land requirements in City & Town Centres;
- Peat & carbon rich soils (33) – Similar policy in MLDP, presumption against extraction and development on these areas – MLDP2 will map these sites to give spatial perspective to the policy & indicate extent of these soil types across the County;
- Trees, Woodlands and Forestry (34) – Similar policy in MLDP, protect & enhance existing stock/presumption against loss. Also aligns closely with new PSA19 requirement to publish a Forestry & Woodland Strategy.



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Questions on Part 3 – National Planning Policies ?



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Part 4 - How Government will Deliver the Strategy:

- A detailed Delivery Programme (DP) is essential to achieve wider collective ambitions of the strategy;
- Ongoing work with Scottish Futures Trust/Infrastructure Delivery Group & also further engagement with Local authorities, Key Agencies & other stakeholders to inform final programme once NPF4 approved & adopted;
- Will be a shared delivery programme - Increased emphasis on collaboration/partnerships across the public & private sectors and wider communities;
- Aligning resources with existing programmes, processes & public funding – ScotGov IIP, STPR2, City Growth Deals - focused on the “Infrastructure First” principle (embedded into NPF4 & promoted through future LDP process);
- New guidance on LDPs will bridge the gap between the National Strategy & implementation at a local level;
- Additional mechanisms include LPPs, Planning Obligations, Masterplan Consent Areas, Land assembly (CPO) & investment in the planning service - initially new fee structure & potentially new charging system for other planning services;



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Questions on Part 4 – How Government Will Deliver the Strategy ?



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Part 5 – Annexes:

Annex A - NPF4 Outcomes Statement:

- A procedural requirement principally for information – no comment on the statement;

Annex B - Housing Figures:

- Sets out the Minimum All Tenure Housing Land Requirement for all local planning authorities – referenced under the National Policies slides;

Annex C - Glossary:

- Proposed consultation response sets out a number suggested changes and additions to the Glossary as well as requesting clearer definitions of existing words and terminologies.



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Questions on Part 5 – Annexes ?



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Next Steps:

- Consider Member feedback from seminar and to proposed consultation response;
- Report to Planning Committee – 15 March 2022;
- Submit MC Consultation response via ScotGov Portal – by 31 March 2022.



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Any Final Questions ?

