

West Dunbartonshire Council response to the draft Fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4)

Part 1 – A National Spatial Strategy for Scotland 2045

Q1: Do you agree that this approach (Sustainable Places) will deliver our future net zero places which will be more resilient to the impacts of climate change and support recovery of our natural environment?

The Council supports Sustainable Places as part NPF4 National Spatial Strategy. The Council agrees with the draft NPF4 focus on the climate emergency and nature recovery, and the embedding of these priorities in every planning decision. Further comment is offered in the questions specific to that section of the document.

Q2: Do you agree that this approach (Liveable Places) will deliver our future places, homes and neighbourhoods which will be better, healthier and more vibrant places to live?

The Council supports Liveable Places as part of the NPF4 National Spatial Strategy. Further comment is provided in the questions specific to the Liveable Places section of the document.

Q3: Do you agree that this approach (Productive Places) will deliver our future places which will attract new investment, build business confidence, stimulate entrepreneurship and facilitate future ways of working – improving economic, social and environmental wellbeing?

The Council supports Productive Places as part of the NPF4 National Spatial Strategy. The Council notes that the draft NPF4 pre-dates the National Strategy for Economic Transformation and trusts that there will be alignment between the finalised documents. Further comment is provided in the questions specific to the Productive Places section of the document.

Q4: Do you agree that this approach (Distinctive Places) will deliver our future places which will be distinctive, safe and pleasant, easy to move around, welcoming, nature-positive and resource efficient?

The Council supports Distinctive Places as part of the NPF4 National Spatial Strategy. Further comment is provided in the questions specific to the Distinctive Places section of the document.

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

Yes, however, in practice it will be the National Planning Policy Handbook and the application of this that will determine whether these elements of the National Spatial Strategy are delivered.

The Council supports the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes set out in “Integrating Land Use Planning and Public Health in Scotland” and consider that these should be integrated into NPF4.

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

The Council agrees with the spatial principles set out in NPF4. Collectively, they provide a sound basis for plan makers to make the right choices about where development should be located. However, it is not clear how these principles are to be applied when making decisions on development proposals, so it is important that they are clearly embedded in Part 3 on the NPF (the National Planning Policy Handbook).

With regard to the ‘balanced development’ spatial principle, whilst the policy framework may help for this to be achieved locally, it is not clear how it will be achieved on a regional or national basis without stronger direction on where development and growth should occur.

Q7: Do you agree that these spatial strategy action areas provide a strong basis to take forward regional priority actions?

The Council welcomes this regional aspect of the National Planning Framework. There is a case for breaking these areas down further to reflect the indicative Regional Spatial Strategy or smaller combinations of these. The Central Urban Transformation area covers a significant area of Scotland, particularly with regard to population, challenges and opportunities. However, the Council also recognises that many of the actions identified are common for the full Central Urban Transformation area.

Questions 8-13 relate to other regions of Scotland.

Q14: Do you agree with this summary of challenges and opportunities for this action area (Central urban transformation)?

The opening paragraphs of this section which contrast the Glasgow and Edinburgh city-regions need to be revised. The challenges facing the Glasgow city-region are not denied, but the contrast between these city-regions is not as pronounced as described here, and the positive attributes of the Glasgow city-region should also be recorded in this opening section. Based on the contrast between housebuilding activity acknowledged in this section, it is clear that NPF4 has to be more pro-active in delivering the ‘balanced development’ spatial principle.

Whilst the draft NPF4 contains an action around the city centres of the Central Urban Transformation area, greater emphasis should also be given to the town centres in this area, many of which are significant economic drivers and the focus of large communities, as well as being of historic and cultural value.

It is noted that the section makes limited specific reference to the significant opportunities and potential that exist within the West Dunbartonshire area. The Council would draw attention to the following as examples of these:

- Clydebank town centre – a Town Centre Development Framework has recently (2021) been prepared and approved. The 15-year vision aims to re-establish a distinct town centre heart, including new residential development, a new transportation hub, community uses, and the redevelopment of key town centre streets.
- Dumbarton Town Centre – has been awarded £19.9m from the Levelling Up Fund. This will be used to: create a state of the art library, museum and community facility in the B-listed Glencairn House; part demolish the Artizan Centre and prepare it for redevelopment; complete the Connecting Dumbarton project to enhance active travel connections in the town centre.
- Alexandria Town Centre – a Town Centre Masterplan has recently (2021) been prepared and approved. Identifying 12 strategic projects, the masterplan will be used to guide and stimulate regeneration in the town centre over the next 15 years.
- Queens Quay, Clydebank – at 41 hectares, this is West Dunbartonshire’s largest regeneration opportunity and involves the redevelopment of the former John Brown shipyard and surrounding land. Already the location of a college campus, leisure centre, office buildings, an energy centre, a care home and a health centre. Residential development has commenced and there is planning permission for up to 1,000 homes and associated green infrastructure. This is an example whereby high quality development is being used to transform the economic and social prospects of the wider area.
- Esso Bowling – this is a Glasgow City Region City Deal site, with £27.9M of funding allocated to help deliver industrial and commercial floorspace, and a relief road on a former fuel distribution terminal on the Clyde Waterfront
- Carless, Old Kilpatrick – this 17ha Clyde Waterfront site is proposed for a mix of marine-related, business and industrial and residential uses.

Q15: What are your views on these strategic actions for this action area?

Collectively, the strategic actions are relevant and comprehensive, and provide a strong framework for the Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Plans that will cover the area. It would be helpful to connect certain actions with the Regional Spatial Strategies that are likely to cover the area, to give direction as to where certain actions are most applicable across this large and varied action area. This could be done by adding the strategic actions to the Central Urban Transformation Area map. The version of the map in the draft NPF4 shows national developments only, and if presented at a larger scale focused on the Central Urban Transformation area, then the regional actions could also be added.

Questions 16-17 relate to other regions of Scotland.

Q18: What are your overall views on this proposed national spatial strategy?

The Council welcomes the structure of the draft NPF4. It is logical and flows well with the National Spatial Strategy to the front, followed by National Developments and then the National Planning Policy Handbook.

Part 2 – National Developments

Q19: Do you think that any of the classes of development described in the Statements of Need should be changed or additional classes added in order to deliver the national development described?

The classes of development described in the Statements of Need seem reasonable. It is noted that in some National Development areas, such as Clyde Mission, it could result in a significant number of development being classified as National Developments. For example on the Queens Quay site in Clydebank, separate applications for different phases of residential development on the 1,000 home site are likely to fall into the category of National Development. The Council questions whether this is an intended consequence?

Q20: Is the level of information in the Statements of Need enough for communities, applicants and planning authorities to clearly decide when a proposal should be handled as a national development?

Yes, for applicants and planning authorities, who are already familiar with the hierarchy of development types, but maybe not so for all communities, nor will it be clear to communities what it will mean if a development is to be handled as a National Development, and some text in the document to that effect would be helpful.

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

The Council welcomes the inclusion of the Clyde Mission as a National Development as its geography captures many of the key regeneration sites and areas along North Clydeside within the West Dunbartonshire area. The Council also welcomes the identification of other national and area specific National Developments that impact on the West Dunbartonshire area.

The Council notes that Strategic Airport Enhancements are no longer a National Development. However, the draft NPF4 offers no policy context for how airports are to be treated by the planning authorities they are located within or for adjoining authorities, which are impacted, both positively and negatively, by airports and aircraft.

Part 3 – National Planning Policy

The Council would make the following general points about the National Planning Policy section of the draft NPF4:

- The Council agrees with the HoPS response that there is loose and imprecise wording throughout the section, that must be tidied and tightened up before it becomes part of the development plan. Policy wording must be robust to enable decisions to be taken with confidence and to avoid legal challenge.

- The document would work better if the local development plan requirements were separated from decision-making policies. The local development planning requirements could either be grouped together in one section or precede the decision-making policy under each topic area.
- Some of the policies are too long and try to cover too much. The handbook would be improved if these were to be broken down into separate policies.
- There are several policies that indicate that a certain type of development 'should be supported' without reference to other policies of the document. This creates potential for conflict. An example would be Policy 14, in which criterion e) states that development proposals for, or including space or facilities for local community food growing should be supported. In theory, this could mean that a large scale green belt housing development, which would otherwise be contrary to the plan, should be supported if it includes space for community food growing or allotments. This is clearly not the intention, so a review of all the 'should be supported' policies is required.
- A review of all policies is required with regard to the use of 'and' and 'or' between policy requirements/criteria.
- Policies differ in style between sections, and sometimes within sections. A final review by a single author is required.

Q22: Do you agree that addressing climate change and nature recovery should be the primary guiding principles for all our plans and planning decisions?

The Council welcomes this shift in approach and agrees that climate change and nature recovery are the principles which should have priority in guiding planning decisions. The Council notes that the tension of balancing these priorities with strategic land use requirements is acknowledged in the Draft Guidance on Local Development Planning, however it is suggested NPF4 could provide more clarity that giving these principles primacy is intended to minimise any potential impacts, rather than prevent necessary and sustainable development.

Policy 1: Plan-led approach to sustainable development

Q23: Do you agree with this policy approach?

The Council supports this approach however believes that many of the National Outcomes and Sustainable Development Goals are beyond the scope of development planning and it is unclear how a plan could evidence its contribution to some of these outcomes and goals. The Council would suggest that this policy, and other LDP requirements, are identified as policy principles to differentiate them from the development management policies in NPF4.

Policy 2: Climate emergency

Q24: Do you agree that this policy will ensure the planning system takes account of the need to address the climate emergency?

Criteria a & b make clear the policy applies to all development, thus even minor development, such as garden rooms, extensions, hot food take-aways. It is difficult to comprehend how minor developments are to be assessed against this policy.

Much of the policy strays into areas that could be better addressed through Building Standards regulations. Introducing emission measurements to planning considerations duplicates what can be achieved through the Building Standards process, and could result in conflicting conclusions e.g. a development meeting established Building Standards regulations but not meeting a more subjective planning assessment. Planning considerations with regard to emissions should relate to the location of the development, with building design and fabric being covered by Building Standards. This is already evidenced through Planning Authorities struggling to effectively and practically implement Section 3F requirements.

Criteria c - 'significant emissions' will need to be quantified. This is a new measurement for planning to consider. This should be quantified at a national level so developers do not have to work with different standards in each planning authority area.

It is doubtful that planning authority planners have the knowledge and skill to immediately meet the assessments required through this policy on the approval of NPF4 later in 2022. Consideration should be given to developers being able to provide independent accreditation that they are meeting the requirements of the policy.

Policy 3: Nature crisis

Q25: Do you agree that this policy will ensure that the planning system takes account of the need to address the nature crisis?

The policy does not require local developments plans to identify and protect nature conservation sites.

OECMs (Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures) is an unfamiliar term and will need further explanation beyond what is in the Glossary.

Wording such as 'safeguard the services that the natural environment provides' and 'ecosystem services' suggest that the natural environment is there to serve us and should be protected for that purpose, rather than being worthy of protection for its own sake.

Criterion e – This policy suggests that a wide range of local developments should only be supported if they include measures to enhance biodiversity. Whilst householder development is excluded, it needs to be considered whether other types of local development, for example town centre change of use applications should have to include biodiversity enhancement measures e.g. what type of biodiversity enhancement measures should be sought for the change of use of a ground floor tenemental property from a Class 1 to a Class 3 use. If it is considered appropriate to apply this requirement to that type of development, then it is considered appropriate for it to apply to householder development too. It is therefore considered that this

type of enhancement is best to be promoted through guidance rather than required through policy.

Policy 4: Human rights and equality

Q26: Do you agree that this policy effectively addresses the need for planning to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, seek to eliminate discrimination and promote equality?

The Council agrees that decision makers should exercise their duties in a way which protect and fulfil human rights, eliminate discrimination and promote equality, however raises concern about how this is to be addressed as a material consideration within the planning system. The Council already undertakes equality impact assessment for planning policy documents and developments it is bringing forward, as required by its equality duty. It is not clear if this policy would require every planning decision to undertake this process, or if it requires developers and applicants to provide evidence of the same. It is noted that no guidance is provided in this regard in the Draft Guidance on Local Development Planning. It is again suggested that this should be a policy principle which is differentiated from the development management policies in NPF4.

Policy 5: Community wealth building

Q27: Do you agree that planning policy should support community wealth building, and does this policy deliver this?

The Council agrees with the principle of this policy, however further guidance is required as to how this would operate in practice both in terms of development plans part a) as well as for national and major development proposals part b). Again it is noted that no guidance is provided in this regard in the Draft Guidance on Local Development Planning and it is suggested that this should be a policy principle which is differentiated from the development management policies in NPF4.

Policy 6: Design, quality and place

Q28: Do you agree that this policy will enable the planning system to promote design, quality and place?

The policy succinctly incorporates design, quality and place into a universal policy of NPF4.

Criterion b ties planning authorities to design guidance adopted by statutory consultees. This will include design guidance that has not yet been produced and which may be produced outwith a statutory process, and therefore through a process which planning authorities may have limited input to.. Statutory consultees include community councils. Is it the intention that any design guidance prepared by a community council is included in this requirement?

Policy 7: Local living.

Q29: Do you agree that this policy sufficiently addresses the need to support local living?

The Council supports the principles of local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods as set out in the policy. However further clarity would be welcomed with regard to the types and scale of development it is applicable to.

The Policy usefully sets out the types of facilities that 20-minute neighbourhoods assessment should consider, but a clearer definition of a 20-minute neighbourhoods is essential as the concept of 20 minute neighbourhood can differ between different, organisations, locations and communities. . It is noted that there will be a significant challenge to retrofitting areas to meet 20 minute neighbourhood requirements, and that they will be more difficult to deliver in non-urban areas. Local centres are an important feature of 20-minute neighbourhoods and more may need to be identified to deliver meaningful 20-minute neighbourhoods. Does the policy require the creation of new local centres?

In section b) of the Policy, the meaning of “should be safe” is unclear in this context.

Given that, once adopted, NPF4 will become part of the development plan, it is considered that the opening sentences of this, and other policies in the NPF4 would be more useful if rephrased to “This policy supports....” rather than “Local Development Plans should support”.

It is also considered that the policy will need to be more strongly worded in places (i.e. with possible use of ‘must’, instead of ‘should’) if planning obligations are to be based upon it.

Policy 8: Infrastructure First.

Q30: Do you agree that this policy ensures that we make best use of existing infrastructure and take an infrastructure-first approach to planning?

The Council is broadly supportive of the policy but would note that many of the details of how to and who should provide critical infrastructure are left unclear. Overall, the policy seems to place significant onus on Planning Authorities to identify, calculate and ascribe infrastructure requirements and funding arrangements. This in itself carries significant resource and funding implications for Planning Authorities that don't appear to have been addressed.

The use of ‘should be supported’ in Criterion c) is potentially confusing, read on its own, and could lead proposals which comply with this policy being approved, regardless of whether they comply with the rest of the development plan. The weight of this policy against, and relationship with, other policies should be clarified.

It would be valuable to reference the need for social infrastructure i.e. schools, community centres etc.

Policy 9: Quality homes.

Q31: Do you agree that this policy meets the aims of supporting the delivery of high quality, sustainable homes that meet the needs of people throughout their lives?

In general, the Council welcomes the new housing policy and the introduction of the Minimum All Tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR) to establish minimum housing land requirement. In common with a number of policies the Council would raise an overarching issue that each of the 'criteria'/ bullet points within the policy would merit being separate policies, given that they each relate to important but distinct matters. This may avoid confusion and referencing issues in the future.

In Criterion b) the Council would suggest that 'supply' should be used instead of 'pipeline', as it is a technical term that relates to established planning procedures and policies. It is important for robust policy and consistent practice across the country that 'short', 'medium' and 'long-term' supply is defined clearly.

Clarification is required of how the 'Statement of community benefit' in Criterion e) is to be assessed. What standards and criteria should these be measured against?

The council would again suggest that the use of the phrase 'should be supported' in relation to criterion f): "Proposals for new homes that improve affordability and choice should be supported" needs to be qualified, as it suggests that compliance with this policy could override other policy considerations and could lead to future challenges against planning decisions.

In Criterion g) while the greater support for gypsy/traveller sites is welcomed, it is unclear why homes for gypsy/traveller and travelling show people should be permitted on sites not identified for that use, when other new homes are specifically not supported on land not identified for housing.

Criterion h) appears to require all market sites to include at least 25% affordable housing. The policy provides examples of where a local authority can make exemptions, but these appear to be for limited exceptions to the requirement, not the ability for Local Development Plans to remove the requirement entirely for a Council area. The examples given for exemptions do not include evidence of a lack of need for an affordable housing contribution from market/private sites in the local authority (i.e. affordable need is already being met through Council/RSL delivery on other sites), yet this has been one of the key reasons why West Dunbartonshire has not required a contribution from market sites in recent years, along with the impact an affordable housing requirement can have on the viability of sites where the market is not as strong and where sites are complex. Further clarity on whether the 25% contribution is an absolute requirement, and justification for exceptions to this, would be welcomed.

Criterion (i), which states that new homes will not be supported on land not identified for housebuilding, will prevent windfall sites in acceptable locations. Existing uses fall out of use and housing is often an acceptable alternative. These windfall sites become the 'pipeline' of the future.

Criterion (j) Householder development – additional clarity would be welcome on whether all of the bullet point criteria are required to be met, for a proposal to be acceptable.

Policy 10: Sustainable transport.

Q32: Do you agree that this policy will reduce the need to travel unsustainably, decarbonise our transport system and promote active travel choices?

The Council broadly supports the policy but considers that the policy should reference Designing Streets.

A definition of “significant travel-generating uses” in criterion d) would be valuable to avoid inconsistency across Scotland.

In criterion (e) it is not clear what the strategic transport network is? The Council would suggest removing the word ‘strategic’ as it seems this policy should reasonably apply to all transport networks.

Criterion h), seeking to restrict development in locations that would increase reliance on the private car, is supported by the Council. However, additional clarity is suggested on whether the bullet-point criteria in h) and i) are and/or requirements.

Policy 11: heat and cooling.

Q33: Do you agree that this policy will help us achieve zero emissions from heating and cooling our buildings and adapt to changing temperatures?

The Council supports this ambitious policy; however, it is suggested that the repeated use of ‘should be supported’ within the various policy criteria is unclear and confusing. It does not provide clarity on whether developments must provide these infrastructure requirements and whether they are acceptable if they do not. In turn that may affect how enforceable they are for Planning Authorities.

Criterion (d) requiring developments to be on a heat network or have a zero emission heating system will be very challenging as the development industry will not be ready for this at time of publication.

For criterion (e) it is the Council view that requiring the co-location of a use with waste or surplus heat with uses that can use that heat, may not always be appropriate, and that each use should be considered on its own merits against a wider range of considerations.

The policy makes no reference to the Section 3F requirement of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 requiring local development plans to have greenhouse gas emissions policies. It is considered that the wording of this policy should be provided at a national level, so as to avoid each planning authority being required to develop its own interpretation of it.

Policy 12: Blue and green infrastructure, play and sport.

Q34: Do you agree that this policy will help to make our places greener, healthier, and more resilient to climate change by supporting and enhancing blue and green infrastructure and providing good quality local opportunities for play and sport?

The Council considers this to be a positive policy overall, but would note that it is a long policy – subdivision into separate policies may add clarity. Many of the criteria

leave much to interpretation and more consistent standards that can be applied nationally would be helpful.

Criteria c,d,e and f all appear less strong in resisting net loss of blue and green infrastructure than previous policies. Use of 'should not' is a weaker and less consistent wording for policy application.

The Council also notes that the policy appears weighted somewhat towards play/recreation rather than other type of greenspace.

For criterion (a) it is suggested this should be nuanced with reference to size and type of greenspace

In criterion h) the use of 'Wherever possible' is considered too weak. Incorporating green/blue infrastructure should be a key starting point for design of developments, as exemplified for example by the 'Building with Nature' standards.

In criterion k), the wording "as far as possible and as appropriate..." is considered too weak and could be strengthened in order to make the policy effective.

Policy 13: Sustainable flood risk and water management.

Q35: Do you agree that this policy will help to ensure places are resilient to future flood risk and make efficient and sustainable use of water resources?

The Council supports this policy but would note that criteria (b), bullet point 3 is restrictive for new development in some key regeneration areas and there may be some conflict with the work of Clyde Mission to develop certain sites focused within 500 metres of the River Clyde.

Policies 14 and 15 – Health, wellbeing and safety.

Q36: Do you agree that this policy will ensure places support health, wellbeing and safety, and strengthen the resilience of communities?

While the Council supports the new policy approach on Health and Wellbeing it would note that this is a complex, cross-sectoral issue and it is clear that Planning Authorities, and planning policies, will not be able to tackle this alone. The precise role of Planning Authorities, and their resources, in this process needs further clarity as it may well require further upskilling of staff and new areas of expertise to be developed. Reference to the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes set out in "Integrating Land Use Planning and Public Health in Scotland" could be made here, as well as reference to connections to HSCP and public health professionals.

Policy 16: Land and premises for business and employment

Q37: Do you agree that this policy ensures places support new and expanded businesses and investment, stimulate entrepreneurship and promote alternative ways of working in order to achieve a green recovery and build a wellbeing economy?

The Council supports this policy and welcomes the approach, which broadly reflects the policy approach that has been used to assess industrial and business development proposals to date.

The Council particularly welcomes the flexibility which point d) allows for addressing new uses that may emerge through the transition towards a low carbon economy. The Council also welcomes the support for mixed employment use that both points d) and f) provide. It is considered that only supporting “employment uses” under point d) is too limited in scope, as it would not allow, for example, energy or data storage facilities. The Council would welcome clarification of what is considered an “employment use”, within the NPF4 Glossary or guidance as this is not otherwise defined. The Council does not believe that point g) is necessary, as the other policies which relate to these would be used to assess any proposal.

Policy 17: Sustainable tourism

Q38: Do you agree that this policy will help to inspire people to visit Scotland, and support sustainable tourism which benefits local people and is consistent with our net zero and nature commitments?

The Council supports this policy, but would request further guidance on how economic benefits of short-term letting are to be measured as compared with those arising from residential accommodation, as required by point e). The Council again does not believe that point g) is necessary, as the other policies which relate to these would be used to assess any proposal.

Policy 18: Culture and creativity

Q39: Do you agree that this policy supports our places to reflect and facilitate enjoyment of, and investment in, our collective culture and creativity?

The Council supports this policy. It is not clear that this policy gives support to new build or the permanent use of existing buildings for creative or cultural uses. It is recognised that this is partially captured under point a) however further clarification within the NPF4 or guidance would be beneficial. It is also unclear how such proposals should be assessed, if not already identified within local development plans. The Council would welcome this policy, and guidance, directing new cultural uses to town centres. The Council in particular supports the provision of public art under point b) and would welcome further guidance on appropriate thresholds and mechanisms for securing this. The Council supports the agent of change principle and would welcome further clarification of the uses which are to be categorised as “arts venues” within NPF4 for example does the term ‘arts venues’ cover music/performance venues?

Policy 19: Green energy

Q40: Do you agree that this policy will ensure our places support continued expansion of low-carbon and net zero energy technologies as a key contributor to net zero emissions by 2045?

The Council welcomes the ambition of this policy to provide a positive and supporting framework for delivery of renewable energy proposals, however it is considered that some clarification is required.

Points a) and b), giving support to all renewable development, should be distinguished from the development management policies as a policy principle. This would remove the possibility of them being interpreted as being contradicted by the other parts of the policy.

The Council would support the return to the spatial framework approach which has been the basis of decision making for wind farm development to date. Whilst it is agreed that National Parks and National Scenic Areas require a high degree of protection, adjacent areas are also sensitive with regard to the setting of, and views in/out of National Parks and National Scenic Areas. The Council notes that through criterion d), areas outwith National Parks and National Scenic Areas and wonders if this correlates with 'Areas identified for wind farms' as referenced in criterion g). For areas outwith National Parks and National Scenic Areas, it is considered to be beneficial for plans to provide certainty by indicating areas where there are higher potential for negative impacts or a greater requirement for mitigation. It is noted that there is no guidance in relation to the preparation of spatial frameworks, or for the identification of sites suitable for this use, however there is a reference to 'areas identified for wind farms' under part g) of the policy. It is suggested that further guidance is required in this regard.

In relation to point f) it is unclear what is considered "small scale" renewables development. It is considered that further guidance should be provided.

In relation to point h) it is unclear if this is referring to energy generation which is part of a manufacturing or industrial development, or if it is referring to energy generation as well as manufacturing or industrial developments.

It is considered that the assessment criteria in relation to solar arrays under point j), are largely covered by the assessment criteria for all renewable energy development under point k) it is suggested that moving the reference to "glint and glare" to the fifth bullet point under point k) would remove the need for this duplication.

Policy 20: Zero waste

Q41: Do you agree that this policy will help our places to be more resource efficient, and to be supported by services and facilities that help to achieve a circular economy?

The Council welcomes the ambition of this policy to achieve a circular economy. The Council is of the view that Achieving Zero Waste is cross boundary in nature and NPF or guidance should acknowledge that working at a regional level, including through Regional Spatial Strategies, will be required to ensure that appropriate sites are identified.

The Council would support some clarification and simplification of points b) c) and d) which include a degree of repetition and are not clear about which points relate to development process and operational waste. It is also suggested that some points

which are proposed for only national and major developments have relevance to smaller scale development. The following formulation is proposed:

- b) In the development phase, all proposals should aim to use materials with the lowest forms of embodied emissions and take into account circular economy principles. Proposals should aim to reduce, reuse or recycle waste in line with the waste hierarchy. The use of previously used, sustainable, local, recycled and natural construction materials that also store carbon, such as timber, is encouraged. Construction and demolition methods should minimise emissions as far as possible and where appropriate, they should:
- reuse existing buildings and infrastructure;
 - minimise demolition and salvage materials for reuse;
 - use design and construction measures to minimise waste, reduce pressure on virgin resources and enable building materials, components and products to be disassembled, and reused at the end of their useful life;
 - support maintenance, longevity, adaptability and flexibility;
- c) In the development phase, development proposals within the categories of national and major developments should:
- identify how much waste the proposal is expected to generate and how and where the waste will be managed in accordance with the waste hierarchy, including demonstrating the management of as much waste as possible on site;
 - set out how performance will be monitored and reported.
- d) Development proposals that are likely to generate waste when operational, including residential, commercial and industrial properties, should include provision to maximise waste reduction and waste separation at source, and minimise the cross-contamination of materials, through:
- appropriate segregation and storage of waste;
 - appropriate convenient access for the collection of waste; and
 - appropriate recycling and localised waste management facilities.

In relation to point e) the Council would support inclusion of a reference to impacts arising from transport of material to the site.

In relation to point f) the Council would support clarification that LDPs may wish to identify which business and industrial areas are suitable for a waste use and which are not. A number of industrial areas in West Dunbartonshire are specialised for particular industries and we would not be supportive of a waste use in these.

In relation to proposals for new or extended landfill development, point g), it is suggested that additional criteria based policy is required to assist with assessment of proposals. The criteria under point e) could be applied if the principle is established by the existing point g) criteria.

The Council supports the final point in relation to limiting the operation of existing waste facilities, and would support a strengthening of this policy to include criteria for assessment of proposals, such as requiring evidence that overall capacity is not lost

or is replaced elsewhere. It is noted that this is suggested by the Draft Local Development Planning Guidance, however the NPF should include clarification of this so that the two documents are in agreement. It is suggested that this point should have an identifier j).

Policy 21: Aquaculture

Q42: Do you agree that this policy will support investment in aquaculture and minimise its potential impacts on the environment?

The Council welcomes the intention of this policy, however has no experience or insights to offer in relation to this type of development.

Policy 22: Minerals

Q43: Do you agree that this policy will support the sustainable management of resources and minimise the impacts of extraction of minerals on communities and the environment?

The Council supports this policy and welcomes the approach which broadly reflects the policy approach which has been used to assess minerals development proposals to date.

Policy 23: Digital infrastructure

Q44: Do you agree that this policy ensures all of our places will be digitally connected?

The Council supports this policy and agrees it provides a positive framework for ensuring our places will be digitally connected. The Council would however suggest that criteria under d) should include a point which supports safeguarding of development sites for other uses.

Policies 24 to 27 – Distinctive places.

Q45: Do you agree that these policies will ensure Scotland's places will support low carbon urban living?

Overall the Council welcomes these policies but would note that each policy addresses a complex and rapidly evolving set of issues around the changing role of Town Centres and retail.

Policy 25 a) is welcomed as a strong and clear policy that supports town centres first. Clarification of 'significant footfall' would be useful, as would, in the second bullet point, whether Plans will need to define which areas constitute 'edge of centre', and if they need to specifically support, or preclude, development in these locations. It may also be useful to define what considerations should be applied to different scale(s) of development, and/or what scale is acceptable in different locations.

In the third bullet point it is considered that 'out-of-centre' should be used rather than 'out of town', in order to more clearly define a hierarchy of preferable locations.

In Policy 25 b) the Council suggests it may not be appropriate to group 'retail' and 'click and collect locker pick up points' together as similar or comparable uses. They have different characteristics and functions and are not interchangeable as uses within a town centre, as the policy seems to suggest.

Policy 26 a) appears to apply to non-retail uses and the Council suggests that for clarity this should be made explicit in both the title of the policy and its opening sentence. It is also suggested that a definition of 'significant footfall' is provided for this context, or clarity that it is for the judgement of planning authorities.

The Council welcomes Policy 26c) considering local centres to support 20 minute neighbourhoods

For Policy 27 the Council is supportive of greater residential development in town centres, however the type, location and proportion of residential units in relation to retail use needs to be carefully considered and balanced to ensure vibrant and viable centres.

Policy 27 a) The policy could benefit from a clearer understanding of what type of proportion of land supply in town centres is seen as suitable.

For Policy 27c) it is suggested that a requirement to consider both the residential amenity and loss of potential office space in upper floors should be added.

In 27e) it is suggested that entertainment venues are also included in the list of uses to consider future residential amenity, where the issue may not be drinking, but noise.

The Council notes there is no mention of seeking to create high quality design, greenspace/public realm, or amenity for new developments etc. Some concern that the policy may set a low bar for expectations for town centre living and residential proposals.

Policy 28: Historic assets and places

Q46: Do you agree that this policy will protect and enhance our historic environment, and support the re-use of redundant or neglected historic buildings?

While the Council supports the policy, it is suggested that for clarity and ease of applying the policy, each part of it should form a separate policy.

For criterion a) it is considered that NPF4 should identify international and national designations including World Heritage Sites, while LDPs can additionally identify local and regional designations. This would provide these sites the prominence, recognition and protection that their designation deserves.

Criterion b) whilst useful, would be more appropriate within accompanying guidance or as a sub-section of criteria c)-e).

In criterion c) it is suggested there needs to be a 'listed' inserted before the second reference to 'building'. Also, in line 7, replace "...has been adequately

demonstrated...” with “...has been demonstrated to the satisfaction of the planning authority...”, in order to strengthen the policy and provide planning authorities with the means to ensure that all steps have been taken to protect the sites.

In criterion d), in line 3 replace “should only” with “will”. The current wording is in a passive voice that is less appropriate and enforceable for a direct planning policy.

In criterion h) it is considered that it would be beneficial to clarify ‘exceptional circumstances’.

The repeated use throughout the policy of ‘should’, ‘reasonable’ and ‘adequate’ are considered too passive and subjective to be applied in a robust and consistent manner by planning authorities.

Policy 29: Urban edges and the green belt.

Q47: Do you agree that this policy will increase the density of our settlements, restore nature and promote local living by limiting urban expansion and using the land around our towns and cities wisely?

The Council supports the continued role and use of greenbelts and agrees that overall the policy will enable planning authorities to guide development effectively and limit urban expansion.

The Council would comment, however, that the 29a) could include reference to carrying forward existing greenbelts into new Development Plans; the current wording may make this more difficult.

In criterion 29b) bullet point 1, the support for new accommodation for ‘workers’ is considered too general and permissive, and would be strengthened by the addition of criteria on whether the type of business the worker is employed in is an appropriate and viable rural business, and to distinguish between established uses a versus new use.

Also in 29 b) bullet point 10, the support for “one-for-one replacements of existing permanent houses” seems rather ‘carte blanche’ and too permissive if the Government is encouraging a net-zero approach. It is suggested that it needs to be qualified with a requirement to justify the replacement of the house, together with criteria to control the scale/size/character of proposals in order to avoid widespread replacement of smaller cottages with large houses.

29 b) bullet point 5 – “development meeting a national requirement or established need” needs to be more closely defined- especially established need.

Policy 30: Vacant and derelict land.

Q48: Do you agree that this policy will help to proactively enable the reuse of vacant and derelict land and buildings?

The Council would comment that it would be useful if there was clarification on where this policy applies –does it include greenbelt and rural areas as well as urban areas?

In Criterion b) the relationship with other principles of the NPF4 need to be clarified e.g. it appears to contradict Policy 25 regarding retail proposals on an out-of-centre brownfield site.

Criterion e) potentially contradicts Policy 29b) in terms of the replacement of existing houses.

Policy 31: Rural places.

Q49: Do you agree that this policy will ensure that rural places can be vibrant and sustainable?

The Council supports the policy, but would suggest that to avoid policy conflicts, clarification of 'rural areas/rural places' should be made, i.e. can they include green belt sites, or countryside areas close to large urban areas?

31 c) bullet point 5 appears unduly vague in supporting potentially any development that reuses "vacant and derelict land or brownfield where a return to a natural state is not likely". Needs to be clarified in context of other policies.

Policy 32: Natural places.

Q50: Do you agree that this policy will protect and restore natural places?

In criterion 32a) the phrase "in a way which corresponds with the level of their statutory status" is not sufficiently clear in its meaning. It would also be helpful if NPF4 identified nationally and internationally valued natural assets, landscapes, species and habitats.

In 32c), d) and e) the Council considered that it is not helpful, or user friendly, to simply refer to "legislation" for assessment. It would be more useful for the Policy to include these tests or at least provide a direct link/reference to the part of the source legislation that applies.

The Council considers that in criterion g) the use of "should be supported" appears to place the emphasis in favour of development on these locally important nature sites and landscape area, and this seems misguided in light of the ongoing nature and climate crisis. It is suggested that the wording should instead make clear that development would 'only be acceptable if in compliance with policy criteria'. Reference to other principles of the NPF would be useful to determine whether proposals are acceptable. Also, a definition of "local importance" is essential to help apply the policy consistently.

Policy 33: Peat and carbon rich soils.

Q51: Do you agree that this policy protects carbon rich soils and supports the preservation and restoration of peatlands?

The Council supports the policy but would suggest that nationally/international soils should be identified in NPF4.

Policy 34 – Trees, woodland and forestry:

Q52: Do you agree that this policy will expand woodland cover and protect existing woodland?

The Council is strongly supportive of measures to protect and expand woodland cover and trees. However it is suggested that, as well as protecting ancient and native woodland, the policy should make explicit reference to protecting trees of amenity, historical, ecological, landscape and shelter value. These are often the trees that are important at a local level and within settlements.

The Council also strongly suggests that there is reference to and support for Tree Preservation Orders and trees within conservation areas. There appear to be no references at all to Tree Preservation Orders in NPF4, which is concerning as they are often the primary tool available to planning authorities to protect trees and woodland of value and amenity to local areas and are important planning mechanism for local communities.

Policy 35:

Q53: Coasts. Do you agree that this policy will help our coastal areas adapt to climate change and support the sustainable development of coastal communities?

It would be useful to have clarity on where this policy applies to e.g. does it apply along inland firths?

Part 4 – Delivering our Spatial Strategy

Q54: Do you agree with our proposed priorities for the delivery of the spatial strategy?

Yes, and would offer the following comments:

Aligning Resources – This section should recognise the resources challenge that the requirements of NPF4 will place on planning authorities, key agencies and the development industry with regard to specialist skills and knowledge that will be required to prepare and evaluate the range of assessments that will be required to support development proposals. Resources will need to be directed at upskilling current staff and ensuring an increased number of newly qualified planners have the knowledge and skills that will be required in the workplace.

Infrastructure First – The Infrastructure First approach is welcome in principle, but will be ineffective without funding to deliver the infrastructure required to enable development. Whilst some parts of the country face growth pressure and have land values that will result in a co-ordinated approach to delivering infrastructure between private and public sectors, in others, including West Dunbartonshire, it is the provision of upfront infrastructure and potential remediation costs that can make sites unviable for the private sector to develop. This makes an Infrastructure First approach more difficult.

Development Plan Policy and Regional Spatial Strategies – The finalised NPF4 should offer greater clarity for the role of Regional Spatial Strategies and how these

are to relate to the new development plan system. The removal of regional planning documents from the planning system and the publishing of associated regulations and guidance at a later date than the draft NPF4 and local development planning regulations and guidance create a suggestion that the role of these documents is less valued and not integral to the new planning system. The logical chronological approach of preparing national plan>regional plan>local plan may be undermined by an impression being given that regional spatial strategies are less important, meaning that planning authorities with limited resources will be less able to support that process.

Q55: Do you have any other comments on the delivery of the spatial strategy?

It is noted that Part 4 of the draft NPF4 is, at this stage, more a statement of intent on how NPF4 will be delivered rather than a draft delivery programme.

Q56: Do you agree that the development measures identified will contribute to each of the outcomes identified in Section 3A(3)(c) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997?

The Council has concerns that a policy-based approach has been taken to meeting some of the outcomes, e.g improving inequality and eliminating discrimination, and that this is to be applied to all planning applications as a universal policy. This approach appears to be a simple way for the Government to meet the outcome but places a significant requirement on planning authorities to make a human rights and equality assessment with regard to all planning decisions. By necessity, given knowledge and resources, any assessment made will be light touch, but will also be open to legal challenge. It is considered that respecting human rights and equality should be a plan-making principle, rather than part of the assessment of every planning application decision.

The requirement to meet Section 3F of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 regarding greenhouse gas emissions is not addressed by the draft NPF4.

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

Having carried out further analysis through the draft Glasgow and Clyde Valley Housing Needs and Demand Assessment (HNDA3) and monitoring of housing delivery, the Council wishes to submit a revised housing land requirement estimate for the MATHLR figure from the figure of 2,100 for 10 years in the Proposed NPF4. The working draft HNDA 3 presents a maximum scenario housing need for West Dunbartonshire of 350 units in total from 2021-2040. This is similar to the figures presented in the draft NPF4. The Council considers that a revised MATHLR figure of 1,750 units for the 10 year Plan period is a more realistic minimum HLR, which takes into account the estimated housing need, but also reflects annual all-tenure housing completions over the past 5 years as a robust indicator of local demand and what the housing development industry can deliver.