Inverclyde council

Report To:	**Environment & Regeneration Committee**	**Date:**	**3 March 2022**
Report By:	**Interim Director, Environment & Regeneration**	**Report No:**	**ENV018/22/AH**
Contact Officer:	**Ash Hamilton**	**Contact No:**	**01475 712463**
Subject:	**Consultation on Draft National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)**		

1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of the Scottish Government consultation on the Draft National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) and to seek approval of the proposed response.

2.0 SUMMARY

2.1 Scotland's fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4) will, when adopted, set out the Scottish Governments priorities and policies for the planning system up to 2045 and how the approach to planning and development will help to achieve a net zero, sustainable Scotland.

2.2 NPF4 differs from previous NPFs as it will, for the first time, incorporate Scottish Planning Policy and the NPF into a single document, and form a part of the statutory Development Plan, which is the basis for determining planning decisions.

2.3 NFF4 provides a national spatial strategy, identifies national developments, sets out national planning policies and highlights regional spatial priorities.

2.4 The Scottish Government is undertaking a consultation on the Draft NPF4, which has a submission deadline of 31 March 2022.

2.5 A proposed consultation response is set out in Appendix 1. While the response is generally supportive, there are concerns about the spatial expression of regional priorities, with Inverclyde included within a large Central Urban Transformation area that covers the Edinburgh and Glasgow city regions, the Ayrshires and the Tay cities. There are also significant concerns over the clarity and robustness of the supporting policy framework, which will be key to delivery.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes the National Planning Framework 4 consultation and approves the proposed response set out in Appendix 1.

Stuart W. Jamieson
Interim Director,
Environment & Regeneration

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 National planning strategy and policy is currently set out in the National Planning Framework 3 and Scottish Planning Policy, which have been in place since 2014.

4.2 In order to update national policy, particularly in light of the Climate Emergency, work to produce the Draft NPF4 started in 2020. Preparation of the Draft has been informed by two stages of consultations – a Call for Ideas and a Position Statement. A Call for Ideas exercise was undertaken from January - April 2020, primarily to gather views on the four key questions listed below.

- How can planning best support our quality of life, health and wellbeing in the future?
- What does planning need to do to enable development and investment in our economy so that it benefits everyone?
- What policies are needed to improve, protect and strengthen the special character of our places?
- What infrastructure do we need to build to realise our long-term aspirations?

4.3 A Position Statement setting out the Scottish Government's current thinking on the issues that would need to be addressed in NPF4 was published for consultation in November 2020.

4.4 Having considered responses to the above consultations, the Scottish Government formulated the Draft NPF4 and laid it in Scottish Parliament on 10 November 2021, launching a consultation at the same time, which runs until 31 March 2022.

4.5 The Scottish Government aims for the Scottish Parliament to pass the finalised NPF4 in summer 2022. At that stage, NPF4 will, alongside Local Development Plans, form part of the statutory Development Plan for the first time.

5.0 Draft National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)

5.1 The Draft NPF consists of 4 parts, which are summarised below:

Part 1 – A National Spatial Strategy for Scotland 2045

5.2 The National Spatial Strategy for Scotland to 2045 is based around four themes; Sustainable Places, Liveable Places, Productive Places and Distinctive Places.

5.3 It also sets out the following six overarching spatial principles to guide where development should be located.

(a) Compact growth - limit urban expansion where brownfield, vacant and derelict land and buildings can be used more efficiently and by increasing the density of settlements we will reduce the need to travel unsustainably and strengthen local living.

(b) Local living - create networks of 20 minute neighbourhoods to support local liveability, reduce the need to travel unsustainably, promote and facilitate walking and cycling, improve access to services, decentralise energy networks and build local circular economies. Virtual connectivity and active travel links will also be important.

(c) Balanced development - create opportunities for communities in areas of decline, and manage development more sustainably in areas of high demand. In particular, enable more people to live and remain in rural and island areas, and to actively transform areas of past decline

(d) Conserving and recycling assets - protect and enhance the assets of each of our places with a focus on making productive use of existing buildings, places, infrastructure and services, locking in embedded carbon and minimising waste, and supporting Scotland's transition to a circular economy. This includes nationally significant sites for investment

which are well served by existing infrastructure and sustainable travel modes.

    (e) Urban and rural synergy - improve green infrastructure to bring nature into our towns and cities, connecting people with nature, building resilience and helping our biodiversity to recover and flourish.

    (f) Just transition - rapid transformation required cross all sectors of our economy and society with a need to reduce emissions and respond to a changing climate

5.4 Five 'action areas' are identified, with Inverclyde located within the Central Urban Transformation area, which 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.

5.5 The following nine priority actions are identified for the Central Urban Transformation area:

- 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.

Part 2 – National Developments

5.6 This part identifies 18 National Developments, which will help to support the delivery of the spatial strategy.

5.7 In addition to a number of Scotland wide National Developments such as the National Walking, Cycling and Wheeling Network, Digital Fibre Network, Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure, Inverclyde is supported by a number of other National Developments targeted at the Glasgow City Region. These are:

- Central Scotland Green Network;
- Urban Mass/Rapid Transit systems - 'Glasgow Metro';
- Urban Sustainable Green/Blue Networks - MGSDP;
- High Speed Rail; and,
- Clyde Mission – the river Clyde as an engine for economic success

Part 3 –National Planning Policy Handbook

5.8 The National Planning Policy Handbook consists of 35 policies, which provide a policy framework for the development and use of land. These are to be applied in the preparation of local development plans; local place plans; masterplans and briefs; and for determining planning applications.

5.9 There are six Universal policies (i.e. Sustainable Places) which should apply to all planning decisions, briefly summarised as:

- Policy 1: Plan-led approach to sustainable development - All local development plans should manage the use and development of land in the long term public interest.

- Policy 2: Climate emergency - When considering all development proposals significant weight should be given to the Global Climate Emergency.

- Policy 3: Nature crisis - Development plans should facilitate biodiversity enhancement and nature recovery

- <u>Policy 4</u>: Human rights and equality - Planning should respect, protect and fulfil human rights, seek to eliminate discrimination and promote equality. Planning authorities, applicants, key agencies and communities have a responsibility to consult and engage others collaboratively, meaningfully and proportionately.

- <u>Policy 5</u>: Community Wealth Building - Development plans should address community wealth building priorities by reflecting a people-centred approach to local economic development. Spatial strategies should support community wealth building; address economic disadvantage and inequality; and provide added social value. Proposals for development within the categories of national developments and major developments should contribute to community wealth building objectives.

- <u>Policy 6</u>: Design, quality and place - Development proposals should be designed to a high quality so that the scale and nature of the development contributes positively to the character and sense of place of the area in which they are to be located. Development proposals should incorporate the key principles of Designing Streets, Creating Places, New Design in Historic Settings and any design guidance adopted by planning authorities and statutory consultees.

5.10 The other 29 policies are grouped into three thematic categories, Liveable Places, Productive Places and Distinctive Places. These are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Liveable Places	Productive Places	Distinctive Places
20 Minute Neighbourhoods Policy 7 - Local living	Policy 16 - Land and premises for business and employment	*City, Town, Commercial and Local Centres* Policy 24 - Centres Policy 25 - Retail Policy 26 - Town Centre First Assessment Policy 27 - Town Centre Living
Policy 8 - Infrastructure First	Policy 17 - Sustainable tourism	Policy 28 - Historic assets and places
Policy 9 - Quality Homes	Policy 18 - Culture and creativity	*Urban Edges and the Green Belt* Policy 29 - Urban edges
Policy 10 - Sustainable Transport	Policy 19 - Green energy	Policy 30 - Vacant and derelict land
Policy 11 - Heating and Cooling	Policy 20 - Zero waste	Policy 31 Rural places
Policy 12 - Blue and green infrastructure, play and sport	Policy 21 - Aquaculture	Policy 32 - Natural places
Policy 13 - Sustainable flood risk and water management	Policy 22 - Minerals	*Peat and Carbon Rich Soils* Policy 33 - Soils
Policy 14 - Lifelong health, wellbeing	Policy 23 - Digital infrastructure	Policy 34 - Trees, woodland and forestry
Policy 15 - Safety		

<u>Part 4 – Delivering Our Spatial Strategy</u>

5.11 This part outlines how the Scottish Government will deliver the spatial strategy. This will be developed into a standalone, live delivery programme once NPF4 has been approved and adopted.

<u>Part 5 – Annexes</u>

5.12   The Annexes provides information on how statutory outcomes are being met, sets out the Minimum All-Tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR) for each planning authority, along with a Glossary of terms.

5.13   With regard to MATHLR, it should be noted that as part of the development of the Draft NPF4 all local authorities were asked to supply a 10 year Minimum All-Tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR). For the Glasgow City Region this process was undertaken by the Glasgow City Region Housing Market Partnership (HMP). The figure of 1500 for Inverclyde, as submitted by the HMP, is reflected in the Draft NPF4.

Reference to Inverclyde

5.14   Inverclyde is directly referenced three times in the Draft NPF4. Firstly, in the Central Urban Transformation area, it is noted that "performance is higher in the cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow and lower in surrounding areas including Inverclyde, Ayrshire, along parts of the Clyde Coast and Lanarkshire". Secondly, within the National Developments section it is stated that the Clyde Mission (a National Development) is "focused on the River Clyde and the riverside from South Lanarkshire in the east to Inverclyde and Argyll and Bute in the west and focusing on an area up to around 500 metres from the river edge". Thirdly, within Annex B – Housing numbers, Inverclyde is noted as having a proposed Minimum All-Tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR) target of 1,500.

5.15   In the Central Urban Transformation area, there are two references to Greenock Ocean Terminal. Firstly, it is noted that there are "opportunities for enhanced cruise facilities for the Forth as well as the Clyde where Greenock Ocean Terminal, supported by the Glasgow City Region Deal, can act as a key gateway". Secondly, this section states that "The Clyde Mission will stimulate investment in sites along the Clyde to build a wellbeing economy and achieve a step-change in the quality of the environment for communities. Key sites extend from Greenock Ocean Terminal to Queens Quay, Tradeston, the Broomielaw and Glasgow City Centre, to Clyde Gateway".

6.0   Proposed Consultation response

6.1   The proposed consultation response is set out in Appendix 1 and summarised below.

7.0   National Spatial Strategy

Thematic Areas

7.1   In general, the four themes of Sustainable Places, Liveable Places, Productive Places and Distinctive Places have many laudable aspirations and are welcomed and supported. However, there are concerns about a number of aspects, including the following:

- Some of the aspirations have not been carried forward, or fully reflected, in the supporting policy framework, which provides the basis for decision making.

- The supporting policy framework is not clear, precise and robust enough to enable planning authorities to require the fundamental changes required to deliver the spatial strategy.

- The strategy does not recognise and address the inherent tensions between some of the aspirations, such as economic growth and zero carbon/nature recovery. It is vital that NPF4 provides clear direction on how such tensions should be balanced and ultimately determined if a consistent approach is to be taken across all local authorities.

- The interconnected and reinforcing nature of all four strategy themes should be more fully recognised in the document. This would highlight the holistic and interacting approach needed to achieve delivery.

7.2   Specific comments on the individual themes are provided below:

7.3 *Sustainable Places - Our future net zero places will be more resilient to the impacts of climate change and support recovery of our natural environment.*

- Policy direction is needed on how certain aspects of rural development, e.g. car reliance, lower service provision and levels of brownfield land, are to be balanced with sustainability.
- More emphasis should be placed on re-using brownfield land and existing infrastructure
- It is recommended that the term 'biodiversity net gain' is used as development can have positive and negative effects and it is the net effect which should be the focus of planning assessment

7.4 *Liveable Places - Our future places, homes and neighbourhoods will be better, healthier and more vibrant places to live.*

- 20 minute neighbourhoods is a positive aim, but will be very challenging to implement within urban settlements which are experiencing a decline in local facilities/service provision. This approach is also likely to require significant redevelopment of vacant and derelict sites. Delivery will require a wider, multi-faceted approach, with private, public and third sector organisations working together in a place based approach. NPF4 should recognise the roles and responsibilities of wider stakeholders and be clear on what planning can and cannot do.

- It is not clear how 20 minute neighbourhoods would be achieved in rural areas with dispersed patterns of development. Direction is needed on how this concept is to be defined, e.g. broad principles, and applied in a rural context.

- References to the impacts of COVID-19 are welcomed, but these need to be expanded on, in terms of how this impacts on the liveability of spaces and what changes will be needed. e.g. work from home spaces, dwelling sizes etc.

7.5 *Productive Places - Our future places will attract new investment, build business confidence, stimulate entrepreneurship and facilitate future ways of working – improving economic, social and environmental wellbeing.*

- While the terms 'well-being economy', 'fair work' and 'good green jobs' are referenced in this approach and associated policies, we note that they are not defined in the glossary. It would be helpful if clear definitions were provided so that all stakeholders understand what is being asked of them.

7.6 *Distinctive places. Our future places will be distinctive, safe and pleasant, easy to move around, welcoming, nature-positive and resource efficient.*

- We welcome the continuing strong support for design led development, placemaking and the re-use of vacant and derelict land.

Spatial Principles

7.7 While these are supported, it is noted that:

- More clarity is needed on the status of the spatial principles, especially how they may be considered in the development management and development planning process and how they can be read across the other sections of the Framework.

- Terms such as "a Just Transition" and "Balanced Development" should be more clearly defined and direction provided on how planning can contribute to these.

Spatial Action Areas

7.8 While the principle of identifying Spatial Action Areas is supported, clarity and direction is needed on the following:

- How the actions for each area are to be incorporated into the assessment of planning

- applications
- How Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Plans are to reflect these actions in their strategies and policies

7.9 With regard to the Central Urban Transformation area, it is noted that:

- The scale of this area and the disparity within it, particularly across the central belt from west to east coast, cannot be effectively addressed by a single action area. It may also lead to some areas between Edinburgh and Glasgow being marginalized. It would be clearer, more focused and practical if the Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) were used as the spatial expression. This would also allow a more direct link between the Draft NFP4 and the Glasgow City Region draft RSS.

- There is agreement with many of the challenges identified.

- There is broad agreement with the statement that "we have made progress in restoring and reusing areas which were historically a focus for heavy industry and mining, and which left a legacy of disused sites and areas blighted by dereliction", but vacant and derelict land should be explicitly acknowledged as an ongoing and significant challenge.

- The challenge of low productivity in the Glasgow City Region, including economic inactivity due to ill health and residents with low skills, should be referenced. Enhancing productivity is one of the three Grand Challenges in the Glasgow City Region Economic Strategy (2021) and particularly relevant to Inverclyde.

- Tourism should be included as this is a key growth sector in Inverclyde and of significant importance to other local authority areas in the Glasgow City Region.

- Reference should be made to the role and opportunities linked to ports, docks and harbours along the Clyde.

- Action 1 - Pioneer low carbon, resilient urban living. Particularly welcome the focus on reducing inequality and improving health and well-being through the provision of affordable and warmer homes that are connected to services, and better access to natural spaces. However, there is a lack of direction, clarity and coherence on how this action is to be achieved.

- Action 2 – Reinvent and future proof city centres. This does not reflect the fact that towns, particularly larger towns, face some of the same issues as cities, a point acknowledged in the challenges section of the document. This action should be widened out to larger towns as not all areas within this geographic region, including Inverclyde, have cities but do have larger towns.

- Action 3 – Accelerate Urban Greening. As a partner in the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network Partnership and the Clyde Climate Forest project, this action is fully supported.

- Action 4 – Rediscover urban coasts and waterfronts. Support this action and believe it will, through the Clyde Mission project, contribute to the continued regeneration of the Inverclyde waterfront, particularly in relation to the re-use of vacant and derelict land. Welcome reference to the opportunities for enhanced cruise facilities on the Clyde and for Greenock Ocean Terminal to act as a key gateway.

- Action 5 – Reuse land and buildings. Support this action and particularly welcome the redevelopment of vacant and derelict land in the Glasgow City Region being a key priority.

- Action 6 - Invest in net zero housing solutions. Support this action and welcome reference to the role and work of the Glasgow city region in recognising the challenges for future adaptation and identifying sustainable solutions to sea level rise, urban overheating, and water management.

7.10   It is noted that the national developments covering the Inverclyde local authority area, listed below, are supported.

- Central Scotland Green Network
- National Walking, Cycling and Wheeling network
- Urban Mass/Rapid Transit Networks
- Urban Sustainable, Blue and Green Drainage Solutions
- Circular Economy Materials Management Facilities
- Digital Fibre Network
- Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure
- High Speed rail
- Clyde Mission

7.11   **National Planning Policy**

7.12   Comments are provided under the Sustainable Places (i.e. Universal Policies), Liveable Places, Productive Places and Distinctive Places themes.

Sustainable Policies (i.e. Universal Policies)

7.13   Support 'addressing climate change' and 'nature recovery' being the primary guiding principles for all our plans and planning decisions, but note that there is an obvious tension between these principles (and associated policies) and the aspiration for growth, as all development is likely to have an impact on climate and most will have an impact on nature. It is requested NPF4 acknowledge and address this tension in a nuanced way that considers the ongoing need for development, economy and homes.

7.14   Support Policy 1: Plan-led Approach to Sustainable Development

7.15   It is unclear why Policy 4 Human Rights and Equality requires to be a policy in NPF4, as currently worded, as it is covered elsewhere in statute. The development management process allows for all notified parties to presently engage in the planning process and a professional officer's assessment already addresses many areas this policy appears to be intended to cover. In addition, the policy, as currently worded, could leave many planning decisions open to challenge.

7.16   While the concept of Community Wealth Building is fully supported, it is not clear how Policy 5 Community Wealth Building could be realistically applied within the parameters of a statutory land use process. The concept needs to be more clearly defined.

7.17   Policy 6: Design, Quality and Place is strongly supported and reflects a similar approach in the Inverclyde Local Development Plan

Liveable Places

7.18   These policies are welcomed and broadly supported, but there needs to be more clarity and direction on how to define and apply 20 minute neighbourhoods, particularly in rural areas. Direction is also needed on what types of infrastructure the Infrastructure First approach applies to and how planning authorities are to cost infrastructure requirements during the preparation of the LDP.

7.19   Policy 9: Quality Homes, is broadly supported but note that the policy is lacking in the 'quality' aspect, with criteria (a) (b) and (c) focused solely on 'provision'. Request that there is a stronger and more explicit statement prioritising brownfield sites over greenfield sites.

7.20   The approach to Sustainable Transport is broadly supported, but it is noted that the policy seems oriented towards road transport, making no reference to alternative modes of travel such as rail. Request more clarity on how development will contribute to and connect with the active travel network.

7.21 The approach to Green Energy and Heat and Cooling is supported. With regard to the former, it is noted that the policy could be more ambitious. On the latter, there are concerns about the general lack of reference to Building Standards and the lack of direction on who has responsibility for designating heat network zones. More clarity and direction is needed on a number of issues relating to delivery.

7.22 The approach to Blue and Green Infrastructure is supported, Play and Sport. This reflects the Council's LDP policies on open spaces, outdoor space facilities and on delivering green infrastructure, going further to specify on play provision and blue infrastructure. While the policy provides strong and comprehensive coverage, the criterion (d) may make practical application more difficult, as it proposes a catch-all approach to a number of different designations. We suggest this either focusses on the statutory requirements for the designations listed, or uses terms that are more easily related to these designations.

7.23 The approach to sustainable flood risk and water management is also supported.

7.24 The emphasis placed on Health and Wellbeing through Policies 14 and 15 is welcomed and strongly supported, but it is noted that these would be more appropriately located in the universal policies section, under Sustainable Places. They should also be linked to policies on infrastructure first, housing and green infrastructure, local living and active travel.

7.25 The approach to business, tourism and employment is supported, but clarity is needed on how certain aspects of these policies would be applied in practice.

7.26 The approach to Culture and Creativity is broadly supported, particularly the principle of supporting public art and the provision of workspaces for the creative arts, including those make temporary use of vacant spaces and property. Further clarity and direction is needed on how this is to be delivered in practice.

7.27 The approach to Zero Waste and Digital Infrastructure is supported, but clarity is needed on a number of points relating to delivery.

7.28 Policies 24 – 27: Distinctive Places are supported. The positive approaches taken in Policy 24: Centres and Policy 27: Town Centre Living are particulary welcomed. Clarity and direction is needed on a number of issues relating to Policy 26: Town Centre First Assessment, and Policy 25: Retail.

7.29 The approaches taken to the Historic Environment, Urban Edges and the Green Belt are supported, but clarity and direction on a number of issues is requested.

7.30 Policy 30: Vacant and Derelict Land is welcomed and strongly supported. This will contribute to the aspiration for increased density of cities, towns and villages, and will enable more greenfield land to be protected and underused land to be developed in urban areas. However, there is concern that part of the policy provides unqualified support for the reuse of brownfield sites and could lead to inappropriate uses or development in unsustainable locations. More focus could be placed on low impact uses such as habitat restoration.

7.31 The approach to protection and restoration of natural spaces, including peat and carbon rich soils is supported. While these provide strong and comprehensive policy coverage, further clarity and guidance is needed on a number of issues.

7.32 With specific regard to Policy 34: Trees, Woodland and Forestry, there should be a greater emphasis placed on trees and landscaping within urban settings as these provide multiple benefits, including urban character, amenity, shade, biodiversity and water management etc. For example, we note that there is no mention of support for the protection of Tree Preservation Orders or trees within conservation areas, which account for a large amount of woodland, forestry and individual trees within built-up areas.

7.33 There are also a number of general concerns about the policy framework, which are likely to impact delivery if not addressed. These are set out below:

- The inclusion of LDP policies within development management focused sections is not helpful. It is requested that these are set out in separate sections.

- It is noted that clarity on a number of issues relating to LDPs is provided in the Draft Guidance on Local Development Planning. It would be very helpful if this guidance was referenced in NPF4, as appropriate.

- Many of the policies are not sufficiently clear, precise and robust enough to enable planning authorities, particularly at the development management stage, to deliver the significant level of change envisaged.

- Some policies refer to broad concepts or criteria, such as human rights, community wealth building and 'sense of joy'. While these are undoubtedly well intentioned, it is not clear how they would be fully assessed within the context of a planning application. To enable robust planning assessments and decisions to be made, it is vital that policies are clearly defined and there is sufficient direction on how assessments are to be carried out.

- With many of the policies being quite lengthy, Development Management planners are likely to find them impractical to use. This may also lead to unnecessarily overly lengthy reports.

- There are several instances where laudable aims are stated, but the ultimate arbiter of what is acceptable is not identified. For example, Policy 10 f) states that "while new junctions on trunk roads are not normally acceptable, the case for a new junction will be considered where significant prosperity or regeneration benefits can be demonstrated". In instances like this, policies need to clearly state that it will be for the Planning Authority to decide, otherwise it leaves decisions open to challenge more than they need to be.

- Clear direction is needed on the role and responsibilities of relevant stakeholders.

- More needs to be done to capture cross boundary and cumulative impact issues

- There are some sector-specific policies (tourism) but not others (farming, forestry).

- Supporting documents/legislation should be referenced

- There is a general need for further guidance.

7.34 Overall, it is suggested that a panel of experienced development management practitioners in local government be convened to review the policies and examine any changes made before the next stage of the process. The Heads of Planning Development Management Sub-Group is a ready-made forum to do this and their expertise should be used.

8.0 Delivering Our Spatial Strategy

8.1 It is noted that many planning authorities, including Inverclyde, are likely to require additional resources to deliver NPF4, particularly as many of the policy requirements set out in the document will need specialist skill sets and expertise. Even with additional upskilling of planners, there is likely to be a strong need for external expertise for a range of assessments, which could incur significant costs.

9.0 Annexe B – Housing Numbers

9.1 The Council's Housing and Planning officers worked in collaboration with Clydeplan to provide the updated Minimum All-Tenure Housing Land Requirement submission to the Scottish Government. Our preferred MATHLR figure of 1500 is informed by the 1903 completions (on sites with capacity of 4 or more houses) between April 2010 and March 2020; and reflects one of the priorities of the Inverclyde Outcome Improvement Plan - reversing population decline.

10.0 NEXT STEPS

10.1 If approved, the proposed consultation response set out in Appendix 1 will be submitted to the Scottish Government for consideration.

11.0 IMPLICATIONS

Finance

11.1 While there are no direct financial implications arising from this report, the requirements set out in the Draft NPF4 are likely to have significant long term resource implications, as additional skills sets and expertise will be required to implement a number of requirements. While NPF4 indicates that the Scottish Government will bring forward regulations to revise planning fees to move towards a full cost recovery system, it remains unclear as to whether this will fully cover the resources required to implement NPF4 and the new development planning functions.

Financial Implications:

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments

Annually Recurring Costs/(Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments

Legal

11.2 Whilst the draft NPF4 carries very little weight as a material consideration for decision making, the final NPF4 will form part of the Development Plan and its policies will be used for the determination of planning applications and provision of pre-application advice.

Human Resources

11.3 There are no personnel implications associated with this report.
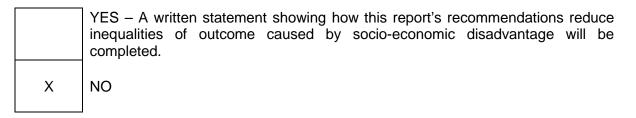
Equalities

11.4 Equalities

(a) Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

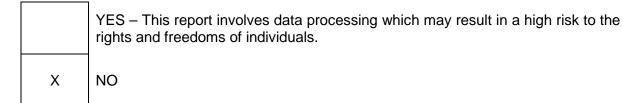|	YES – this will be published along with the Proposed Plan and updated through the Plan process.
X	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required

(b) Fairer Scotland Duty

If this report affects or proposes any major strategic decision:-

Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

	YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage will be completed.
X	NO

(c)   Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.
X	NO

Repopulation

11.5   There are no direct implications arising from this report.

12.0   CONSULTATIONS

12.1   Roads and Transportation, and Housing Strategy have been consulted.

13.0   LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

13.1   Draft of Scotland 2045: Our Fourth National Planning Framework: consultation - https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotland-2045-fourth-national-planning-framework-draft/

Appendix 1 – Proposed consultation response.

Appendix 1

Proposed response to Draft National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)

Part 1 – A National Spatial Strategy for Scotland 2045

Sustainable places. Our future net zero places will be more resilient to the impacts of climate change and support recovery of our natural environment.

Q1. Do you agree that this approach 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?

Delivery will depend on a number of factors, not just planning. However, we welcome and support this approach, which we believe will contribute to delivery. It is vital that we address the overarching climate and nature crises and deliver green growth, in particular following through on COP26.

As with all the strategy elements, a lot will depend on the supporting policy framework set out in Part 3, as this will direct the content of Local Development Plans and provide the main basis for determining planning applications. We have provided detailed comment on all policies in Part 3 of our response.

We would request that the interconnected and reinforcing nature of all four strategy themes should be more fully recognised in the document. This would highlight the holistic and interacting approach needed to address the issues.

As a local authority with both urban and rural areas, we would welcome policy direction on how certain aspects of rural development, e.g. car reliance, lower service provision and levels of brownfield land, are to be balanced with sustainability.

The benefits of re-using brownfield land and existing infrastructure should be referenced. Re-using what we already have promotes energy efficiency and is a key component of the Circular Economy and Sustainable Living. Buildings contribute to emissions throughout their whole lives: when we build, maintain, use and demolish them. Maintaining existing buildings is greener than building new and will be crucial for Scotland's net-zero targets.

While we note the use of 'positive effects for biodiversity', we would recommend that the term 'biodiversity net gain' is used as development can have positive and negative effects and it is the net effect which should be the focus of planning assessment. Clarity is needed on what is meant by 'nature-positive'.

Liveable places. Our future places, homes and neighbourhoods will be better, healthier and more vibrant places to live.

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

Delivery will depend on a number of factors, not just planning. However, we welcome and support this approach, which we believe will contribute to delivery.

While the 20 Minute Neighbourhoods is a positive aim, it will be very challenging to implement within urban settlements which are experiencing a decline in local facilities/service provision. This approach is also likely to require significant redevelopment of vacant and derelict sites. While planning can provide a supportive policy framework and allocate land to facilitate this, it cannot control where services locate e.g. dentists or doctors, or what sites actually get developed. In light of this, delivery will require a wider, multi-faceted approach, with private, public and third sector organisations working together in a place based approach. We believe NPF4 should recognise the roles and responsibilities of wider stakeholders and be clear on what planning can and cannot do.

While the Draft applies the 20 Minute Neighbourhood concept to all areas, it is not clear how it would be achieved in rural areas with dispersed patterns of development. Direction is needed on how this

concept is to be defined, e.g. broad principles, and applied in a rural context.

References to the impacts of COVID-19 are welcomed, but these need to be expanded on, in terms of how this impacts on the liveability of spaces and what changes will be needed. e.g. work from home spaces, dwelling sizes etc.

Delivering liveable places requires a deep understanding of local context and we feel that the draft should be more explicit in stating that Local Development Plans will be the key to delivery.
Clarity is needed on how 'high quality' and 'great places' are to be defined.

In general, we would note that addressing the significant inequalities in health that our communities experience will take generations and, in some instances, a major societal shift that is outwith the remit of planning. More clarity and direction is needed on how the draft will achieve or influence these real-life issues, which will require the shifting of resources to support vulnerable communities through this evolution to a nature and social based economy.

Productive places. Our future places will attract new investment, build business confidence, stimulate entrepreneurship and facilitate future ways of working – improving economic, social and environmental wellbeing.

Q3. Do you agree that this approach 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?

Delivery will depend on a number of factors, not just planning. However, we welcome and support this approach, which we believe will contribute to delivery.

While the terms 'well-being economy', 'fair work' and 'good green jobs' are referenced in this approach and associated policies, we note that they are not defined in the glossary. It would be helpful if clear definitions were provided so that all stakeholders understand what is being asked of them.

Distinctive places. Our future places will be distinctive, safe and pleasant, easy to move around, welcoming, nature-positive and resource efficient.

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

Delivery will depend on a number of factors, not just planning. However, we welcome and support this approach, which we believe will contribute to delivery. We particularly welcome the continuing strong support for design led development, placemaking and the re-use of vacant and derelict land.

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

Delivery will depend on a number of factors, not just planning. However, we welcome and support the spatial strategy, which has many laudable aspirations. However, we have concerns about deliverability for the following reasons:

- *Some of the aspirations in the strategy have not been carried forward, or fully reflected, in the supporting policy framework, which provides the basis for decision making.*
- *The policy framework is not clear, precise and robust enough to enable planning authorities to require the fundamental changes necessary to deliver the spatial strategy.*

The strategy and policy framework do not recognise and address the inherent tensions between some of the aspirations, such as economic growth and zero carbon/nature recovery. It is vital that NPF4 provides clear direction on how such tensions should be balanced and ultimately determined if a consistent approach is to be taken across all local authorities.

Spatial principles.

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

We welcome and support the 6 spatial principles.

In general, more clarity is needed on the status of this section, especially how it may be considered in the development management and development planning process and how it can be read across the other sections of the Framework. For example, spatial principle (a) on compact growth does not significantly feature in part 3 and is not mentioned at all under policy 30 on Vacant and Derelict land and empty buildings. Other spatial principles such as the 'balanced development' principle, although we imagine is implicit throughout the Framework, has not been explicitly included anywhere else in the document and could form an important policy basis for development management decisions.

We would request that the terms "a Just Transition" and "Balanced Development" are more clearly defined and direction is provided on how planning can contribute to these.

As the spatial principles will require to be balanced on many occasions, direction is needed on the decision- making weight which should be given to each principle.

We have commented on the individual components below:

<u>Compact Growth</u>
We welcome and support the focus on brownfield and VDL redevelopment, building re-use, and the safeguarding of land for key services and resources. These are key issues for Inverclyde. Consistency of decision making by all stakeholders, not just local authorities but also the Scottish Ministers via the DPEA will be crucial to achieving this aim.

<u>Local Living</u>
While we strongly support this principle, we have concerns about deliverability - see comments on 20 minute neighbourhoods in the Liveable Places section above. The supporting policies are also not robust or clear enough. More guidance is required.

<u>Balanced Development</u>
While we support this principle, more detail is needed on the type of balanced approach envisaged and how planning can deliver this in practice. We would also request that it be made clear that it has to be the right development in the right place and not a free for all or development anywhere at any cost.

<u>Conserving and recycling assets</u>
We welcome the intention to focus on productive use of existing buildings, places, infrastructure and services.

<u>Just Transition</u>
We support the just transition principle which seeks to provide opportunities for local people to shape their places and transition to net zero. However, this needs to be translated across to policy and implementation. It is not clear how planning is supposed to achieve this.

Spatial Strategy Action Areas.

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

We welcome and support the principle of designating Action Areas, but have concerns about how the actions will be delivered in practice, particularly given that the draft includes a 'national' policy framework. Clarity and direction is needed on the following:

- *How the actions for each area are to be incorporated into the assessment of planning applications?*
- *How Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Plans are to reflect these actions in their strategies and policies?*

We feel that the titling of each grouping - Innovation, Transformation, Transition, Revitalisation and Sustainability – is artificial and in reality, some of these terms apply to multiple actions areas and perhaps all of Scotland.

With specific regard to the Central Urban Transformation Area, which Inverclyde lies within, we believe that the scale of this area and the disparity within it, particularly across the central belt from west to east coast, cannot be effectively addressed by a single action area. It may also lead to some areas between Edinburgh and Glasgow being marginalized. It would be clearer, more focused and practical if the Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) were used as the spatial expression. This would also allow a more direct link between the Draft NFP4 and the Glasgow City Region draft RSS.

Central Urban Transformation.

Q14.Do you agree with this summary of challenges and opportunities for this action area?

We agree with many of the challenges identified, with those listed below being particularly challenging for Inverclyde:

- *relatively high concentrations of poor health, economic disadvantage and population decline in parts of the Glasgow city region*
- *difficult to encourage the market to deliver new homes towards the west of the central belt where unemployment is also higher*
- *lower economic performance in Glasgow and surrounding areas, including Inverclyde.*
- *The growing risk of future flooding on key settlements and economic assets located on the Clyde.*

While we broadly agree with the statement that "we have made progress in restoring and reusing areas which were historically a focus for heavy industry and mining, and which left a legacy of disused sites and areas blighted by dereliction", vacant and derelict land should be explicitly acknowledged as an ongoing and significant challenge. This is certainly the case in Inverclyde.

Although this section does identify lower economic performance as a broad challenge, we would suggest that the challenge of low productivity in the Glasgow City Region, including economic inactivity due to ill health and residents with low skills, should be referenced. Enhancing productivity is one of the three Grand Challenges in the Glasgow City Region Economic Strategy (2021) and particularly relevant to Inverclyde.

In general, we feel that the Central Urban Transformation area is very urban focused and does not fully recognise and reflect the significant rural area in the Glasgow City Region, including within Inverclyde, and the specific land use challenges and opportunities this presents.

The urban focus of this area could also restrict the effectiveness and broader implementation of the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network as there is now a greater recognition of the importance of the rural area in supporting the delivery of strategic networks and the fundamental links between the urban and rural areas in terms addressing the Climate Emergency and Ecological crisis.

We believe that the Glasgow City Region's economic characteristics and its geography needs to be strengthened in the text given the national importance of the economy and the locations where multiple policy benefits can be delivered.

We agree with the opportunities identified and would request that tourism be included as this is a key growth sector in Inverclyde and of significant importance to other local authority areas in the Glasgow City Region.

Central Urban Transformation Area

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

We support this action and particularly welcome the focus on reducing inequality and improving health and well-being through the provision of affordable and warmer homes that are connected to services, and better access to natural spaces.

In general, however, there is a lack of direction, clarity and coherence on how this action is to be achieved.

While the shift to active travel and accessibility is to be welcomed, clarity is needed on ~~this~~ how this is to be prioritised and delivered. We would note that this approach has been in planning policy for several years and yet car dominated developments are still being built. Accordingly, we suggest that a fundamental re-think is required to move away from this.

Action 2 – Reinvent and future proof city centres
While we support this action, it does not reflect the fact that towns, particularly larger towns, face some of the same issues as cities, a point acknowledged in the challenges section of the document. We believe this action should be widened out to larger towns as not all areas within this geographic region, including Inverclyde, have cities but do have larger towns. Otherwise, there will be a disproportionate approach to cities and larger towns, which is at odds with the spatial principles.

Action 3 – Accelerate Urban Greening
As a partner in the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network Partnership and the Clyde Climate Forest project, we fully support~~s~~ this action.

Action 4 – Rediscover urban coasts and waterfronts
We support this action and believe it will, through the Clyde Mission project, contribute to the continued regeneration of the Inverclyde waterfront, particularly in relation to the re-use of vacant and derelict land. While we welcome reference to the opportunities for enhanced cruise facilities on the Clyde and for Greenock Ocean Terminal to act as a key gateway, we would note that the Ocean Terminal already serves this purpose in the west of Scotland and is set to significantly increase its capacity with a recently installed dedicated berthing ~~key~~ quay and a new visitor terminal/centre in development. Inverclyde has a proud tradition of ship building throughout its coastline. While many have now sadly disappeared or are vacant and derelict, we are working to re-use docks, harbours and jetties etc. in order to make a difference to our tourism offer and economic situation. In light of this, we are of the view that this section should contain a reference to the waterfront of Inverclyde and the ports and harbours contained within them.

Action 5 – Reuse land and buildings
We support this action and particularly welcome the redevelopment of vacant and derelict land in the Glasgow City Region being a key priority. We agree that redevelopment should include, but not be limited to, housing development. This action is written in such a way that only vacant and derelict land is within city regions and therefore it could be assumed that this part only relates to cities. Other areas, such as Inverclyde also have proportionally large amounts of vacant and derelict land within them and this section should be re-written to acknowledge that. It is not clear how the Council is meant to de-risk sites or where the funding is coming from to achieve this. We believe the draft NPF 4 should not put the onus on Council's to de-risk sites as this is a multi-agency responsibility and will require substantial external funding to achieve.

Action 6 - Invest in net zero housing solutions
We support this action and welcome reference to the role and work of the Glasgow city region in recognising the challenges for future adaptation and identifying sustainable solutions to sea level rise, urban overheating, and water management.

Action 7 – Grow a wellbeing economy
The Council supports this action. We particularly welcome the aspiration to build a wellbeing economy, where opportunities for investment and development are designed to maximise economic, social and environmental wellbeing, and the emphasis given to targeting economic development in areas of significant economic development. We believe this will provide a supportive context for tackling high levels of multiple deprivation found in the area, particularly Inverclyde.

We support the inclusion of The Clyde Mission as a means of stimulating investment in strategic sites along the Clyde, including Greenock Ocean Terminal.

Action 8 – Reimagine development on the urban fringe
Consideration should be given to referring to the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park, which straddles Inverclyde and Renfrewshire and is an important biodiversity asset.

Action 9 – Improve urban accessibility
While we support this action, there is no information on how the rail network in Inverclyde could also be strengthened in relation to high speed rail, which would offer a reduction in journey times and therefore expanding the attraction of Inverclyde for a range of purposes and investment.

Part 2 – National Developments

Q.19 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?

Inverclyde Council fully supports the national developments which cover the local authority area, namely:

- *Central Scotland Green Network*
- *National Walking, Cycling and Wheeling network*
- *Urban Mass/Rapid Transit Networks*
- *Urban Sustainable, Blue and Green Drainage Solutions*
- *Circular Economy Materials Management Facilities*
- *Digital Fibre Network*
- *Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure*
- *High Speed rail*
- *Clyde Mission*

While we generally agree with the classes of development described, in the Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure, the classes of development section is misleading as a) and b) would be determined under Electricity Act not the Town and Country Planning Act.

Q.20. 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?

Only on the basis that they are to be regarded as a very succinct summary.

Part 3 – National Planning Policy

General Considerations

Before addressing specific policies, we would like to make a number of general points about the policy framework which we believe need to be addressed if it is to be effective in practice.

The inclusion of LDP policies within development management focused sections is not helpful. We would request these are set out in separate sections.

It is noted that clarity on the link between NPF4 and LDPs is provided in the Draft Guidance on Local Development Plan. It would be very helpful if this guidance was referenced in the NPF4, as appropriate.

Many of the policies are not sufficiently clear, precise and robust enough to enable planning authorities, particularly at the development management stage, to deliver the significant level of change envisaged. For example, words like "should" and "could", which are used throughout the policy section document, are imprecise and provide scope for legal challenges on whether 'should' actually constitutes a policy requirement. In light of this, we suggest words like "should" be replaced with 'require'; 'shall'; or 'must'.

Some policies refer to broad concepts or criteria, such as human rights, community wealth building and 'sense of joy'. While these are undoubtedly well intentioned, it is not clear how they would be fully assessed within the context of a planning application. To enable robust, defendable, planning assessments and decisions to be made, it is vital that policies are clearly defined and there is sufficient direction on how assessments are to be carried out. The policies should be explicitly clear on what developers are being asked to provide and demonstrate, and how authorities will assess the information submitted in a way that can be consistently applied.

With many of the policies being quite lengthy, Development Management planners are likely to find them impractical to use. This may also lead to unnecessarily overly lengthy reports - all policies have to be addressed - which will decrease the efficiency of the planning system leading to either increased delays in decision making or a poorer quality of reports as assessments are abbreviated, thereby leaving more decisions open to challenge. The policies should be more succinct and perhaps presently proposed individual policies could be subdivided into separate policies. As presently proposed, not all elements of individual policies would necessarily be relevant to a proposal. The more unwieldy the policy, the greater chance of misunderstandings or misinterpretations. It would almost certainly lead to more challenges on decisions either through the Court of Session or through hearings and public inquiries leading to an overall inefficient and bureaucratic system slowing down economic investment. In light of this, it is suggested that much of what is shown as "policy" in the draft may more properly be reproduced as narrative in the lead up to the policy. All of this may also lead to public disengagement and disillusionment in the planning system.

There are several instances where laudable aims are stated, but the ultimate arbiter of what is acceptable is not identified. For example, Policy 10 f) states that "while new junctions on trunk

roads are not normally acceptable, the case for a new junction will be considered where significant prosperity or regeneration benefits can be demonstrated". In instances like this, policies need to clearly state that it will be for the Planning Authority to decide, otherwise it leaves decisions open to challenge more than they need to be.

Clear direction is needed on the role and responsibilities of relevant stakeholders. Who is responsible?

More needs to be done to capture cross boundary and cumulative impact issues

There are some sector-specific policies (tourism) but not others (farming, forestry).

Supporting documents/legislation should be referenced

Overall, it is suggested that a panel of experienced development management practitioners in local government be convened to review the policies and examine any changes made before the next stage of the process. This is particularly crucial as the subsequent Local Development Plans will have to adhere to the broader policies of the National Planning Framework. The clarity and integrity of policies contained within the NPF is therefore absolutely crucial. The Heads of Planning Development Management Sub-Group is a ready-made forum to do this and their expertise should be used.

Sustainable Places. We want our places to help us tackle the climate and nature crises and ensure Scotland adapts to thrive within the planet's sustainable limits.

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

We welcome the focus on addressing climate change and nature recovery and agree that these should be the primary guiding principles for our plans and planning decisions. This is entirely appropriate and timely after COP26.

We would highlight the obvious tension between these principles and the aspiration for growth, as all development is likely to have an impact on climate and most will have an impact on nature. For example, if the guiding principle is climate change and nature recovery, then it would be difficult for any greenfield release to be justified. How can these principles be squared with, for example, the high MATHLRs for some areas in the document? This tension should be acknowledged and addressed in a nuanced way that considers the ongoing need for development, economy and homes.

We would request that these principles are supported by guidance to planning authorities, in terms of Local Development Plan preparation and how the Scottish Ministers wish these to be addressed in development management decisions. Would they just be taken to be a factor that is an underlying consideration in the policies set out in Part 3 of this document?

Policy 1: Plan-led approach to sustainable development

Q23: Do you agree with this policy approach?

While we support a plan led approach to sustainable development, it is not clear that this requires to be a policy in NPF4 because it generally duplicates a requirement that is already set out in statute and would appear to be more of an underlying and guiding principle than a policy. As such, it could simply be referenced in the supporting text.

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?

We welcome reference to the Global Climate Emergency, broadly support this approach and agree that the policy will ensure that planning take account of need to address the climate emergency, but we have concerns about how the policy is to be delivered in practice.

We believe this policy should be more concise, with criteria (a) – (d) more appropriately set out as separate policies.

Comments are provided on specific criteria below:

(a)and (b) - These criteria apply to all development, even minor development, such as garden rooms, extensions, and hot food take-aways. It is difficult to see how minor developments are to be assessed against this policy.

We would suggest that these criteria include a listing of the specific planning-related factors to be taken into consideration. To not identify specific factors would open decisions to challenges on a potentially very wide range of factors, which could severely compromise the efficiency of the planning system and increase the likelihood of challenge to decisions.

(c) This criteria makes no reference to Building Standards, which is primarily responsible for assessing emissions from buildings, thus duplicating controls. It is not clear why planning is being asked to assess the emissions of buildings when this is already being undertaken elsewhere.

Clarity is needed on what is meant by 'significant emissions'? As carbon emissions are measurable, we believe standards for different types and scales of development should be provided to support the assessment of this criterion if it is to be brought within the Planning remit. While we appreciate this may not be an easy task, it would be more efficient and equitable if this was done centrally rather than 32 planning authorities defining 'significant emissions'.

Clarity is needed on what tool is to be used to assess this emissions consistently, by both Planning Authorities and applicants.

This criteria requires planning officials to be the arbiters of evidence submitted on the emissions of development proposals. Whilst we consider the aims of this criterion to be laudable, consideration needs to be given to the practicality of how planning staff are going to assess and verify the information submitted. Many planning authorities, including Inverclyde, do not have the required skill set and expertise to assess this information. While some planning authorities may seek external support with this task, the costs associated with such an approach will make it prohibitive for many, including Inverclyde. We would request further information and detail on how the additional skills and resource are to be delivered and funded. A possible solution could be to set up an independent accreditation scheme, with developers submitting their proposal to a body skilled in assessing development emissions, who would then verify that a proposal has or has not met the required standard. This accreditation would then be submitted to the planning authority.

(d) As a Universal policy, the importance of climate resilience and adaptation planning should be stronger and provide more detail on how this is to be achieved in practice.

In general, we would note that while planning has an important role to play in tackling the climate emergency, it is not the sole or indeed principal player.

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?

We welcome reference to the nature crises and fully support the introduction of a new national policy, in principle. We agree that the policy will ensure that the planning system takes account of the need to address the nature crisis, subject to some amendments.

While we are generally happy with the policy content, we would again note that the policy is overly long and would benefit from being divided into separate policies. We have commented on specific criteria below:

(a) It would be helpful if the policy provided more direction on how LDP's are to deliver the creation of new, or the restoration of degraded, habitats and increase populations of protected species. While this criteria is repeated in the Draft Guidance on Local Development Planning, no further direction is provided, which seems like a missed opportunity. It is important to note that while some planning authorities may have the in-house expertise to inform and support delivery, this is not the case in some authorities, such as Inverclyde.

(b) We note the publication and consultation on NatureScot's Developing with Nature Guidance. While this is specifically aimed at supporting delivery of criterion (e), we believe it will also be generally helpful in delivering against this criterion.

It would be helpful if clarity is provided on whether the policy is restricted to development sites or also allows off site works and contributions.

(c) It is not clear that this criterion is needed in light of criterion (b). If adverse impacts are unacceptable planning permission should be refused.

(d) This is unfeasibly long to be a policy. It should be narrative with a more succinct following policy outcome. Clarity and direction is needed on how to measure and assess when a proposal will demonstrate that it will conserve and enhance biodiversity so that they are in a demonstrably better state than without intervention.

(e) We would question the use of "only be supported" as there may be circumstances where such measures may not be appropriate. The wording here does not allow for professional judgement.

Reference to NatureScot's Developing with Nature Guidance would be helpful. In general, external links to related guidance, plans and strategies needs to be more explicit and the use of diagrams to connect these strategies would be helpful. This is vital as not all users of this document, including planners, will be familiar with the array of supporting material.

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?

While we respect and support human rights and equality, it is unclear why this requires to be a policy in NPF4, as currently worded, as it is covered elsewhere in statute The development management process allows for all notified parties to presently engage in the planning process and a professional officer's assessment already addresses many areas this policy appears to be intended to cover. In addition, the policy, as currently worded, could leave many planning decisions open to challenge.

If this policy is to be carried forward into NPF4, it will require to be subject to further clarification and guidance if it is to be relevant to planning processes.

Policy 5: Community wealth building

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

We fully support the concept of community wealth building, but it is difficult to directly reconcile it with the planning process. For example, Policy 5b refers to all national and major applications contributing to community wealth building, but it is not clear how this could be achieved within the parameters of a statutory land use process.

In general, we would request further clarity and direction on how Community Wealth Building is to be defined and implemented in a planning context.

Policy 6: Design, quality and place

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

We are support this policy, which reflects a similar policy in our Local Development Plan. We agree that it will enable the planning system to promote design, quality and place.

Criterion (b) ties planning authorities to the design guidance of statutory consultees. As some of these may be non-governmental bodies, the Scottish Government may have little influence over the content of certain guidance.

We would request that some of the wording in the Six Qualities of Successful Places is amended to be less ambiguous. For example, how would 'a sense of joy' and 'feeling positive about being playful' be assessed at the planning application stage?

It would be helpful if the policy included reference to design tools, as set out in paragraph 57 Scottish Planning Policy.

Consideration should be given to the Place Standard Tool being a requirement for major pre-application consultations. This would support a people centred approach.

Policy 7: Local living

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

We welcome and support this policy which, through the creation of resource efficient communities where people can live, work and relax within '20 Minute Neighbourhoods', has the potential to play a key role in meeting climate change targets and making urban areas much more sustainable. However, we have concerns about how it will be delivered in practice.

More clarity and direction is needed on how the "20 Minute Neighbourhood" concept is defined and applied within a planning context. This is particularly the case in relation to rural areas, given that this is an urban focused concept.

There also needs to be a stronger approach to encouraging the retrofitting of existing neighbourhoods and providing an opportunity to bring in community views and demonstrate how Local Place Plans can fit in to the planning system.

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?

Inverclyde Council welcomes and supports the inclusion of the Infrastructure First principle as a policy, but we have concerns about how it will be delivered in practice.

To enable delivery, we believe that 'Infrastructure First' needs to be further defined, i.e. does it cover all of digital/roads/water/community/energy/green? Further clarity is also required on the types of infrastructure that should be prioritised.

We have commented on specific criteria below:

(a) While we agree that LDP's and delivery programmes should be based on an infrastructure first approach, this needs to be supported by improved collaboration, co-ordination and data sharing between relevant statutory bodies.

Further direction is needed on how planning authorities are to cost infrastructure requirements at this stage.

We would note that there remains significant uncertainty about how large projects will be funded when costs are beyond the scope of Councils and developers. Is there a risk of development sites being blighted as they wait for Scottish Government funding for the required infrastructure where it isn't identified in LDP delivery programmes.

As the evidence base will be an evolving set of information, there is a danger that LDP's and delivery programmes could quickly become out of date. More clarity on the level of detail required would be helpful.

(c) There should be a caveat to 'should be supported' as this runs the risk of blanket acceptability which could result in piecemeal development of divided or phased sites, which could make sites only partially viable.

More generally, we believe the policy should do more to reflect the balance between the provision of new infrastructure and the need to make best use of capacity in existing infrastructure.

While we support the linkages to other national infrastructure strategies e.g., the Infrastructure Investment Plan and the National Transport Strategy 2, there needs to be better and more focussed integration at a national level. This is a critical area where the lack of a Capital and Revenue Delivery Plan is detrimental.

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?

Inverclyde Council is generally supportive of this policy. We particularly welcome the concept of Quality Homes, the move to a more flexible and locally based approach to the new Minimum All Tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR), reference to an equalities led approach and consideration of specialist provision homes in addressing the needs of the population and improving affordability and choice.

However, there remains a disparity in guidance where the LHS is required to state a cross tenure target for delivery of wheelchair accessible housing and the LDP is not. It is important to remember that the LDP is the key document to encourage and reinforce inclusive design principles. As such Inverclyde have included a new policy in our revised Proposed LDP

requiring market housing on sites of more than 20 units to provide 5% wheelchair accessible homes.

We welcome the caveat to the stipulation that "Proposals for market homes should generally only be supported where a contribution to the provision of affordable homes on a site is at least 25% of the total number of homes". NPF4 proposes that "Local authorities can also determine in local development plans the locations or circumstances where a lower contribution may be appropriate." This will allow discussion to continue in Inverclyde on the validity of our current Affordable Housing Policy prior to consulting on our revised Proposed LDP.

In general, the policy is lacking in the 'quality' aspect, with criteria (a) (b) and (c) focused solely on 'provision'.

(b) 'Pipeline' should be replaced with 'supply'. Short, medium and long-term needs to be defined.

(c) While this does refer to 'sustainable locations', we would like to see a stronger and more explicit statement prioritising brownfield sites over greenfield.

(d) We are supportive of this.

(e) This criteria either needs to be a requirement or needs to be removed from the policy. It seems unnecessary to request statements for allocated housing sites in this regard. It is not clear what the statement of community benefit would be assessed against to determine acceptability. It would be more useful to encompass f) in this if it is a requirement.

(f) The majority of this criterion is a list of suggestions which would be a more appropriate fit in a narrative introduction to the policy. We do not consider this suitable as policy.

(i) Notwithstanding the exceptions criteria, this is likely to stop windfall sites in acceptable locations. We would note that windfall sites become the 'pipeline' of the future.

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?

We welcome and support the requirement for developments that generate a significant increase in the number of person trips to improve accessibility and safety. We also welcome the presumption against developments which increase reliance on the private car and references to 20-Minute Neighbourhoods in this section. We do, however, have some concerns about the extent to which this policy will, in practice, reduce the need to travel unsustainably, decarbonise our transport system and promote active travel choices.

In general, while the policy seems to be oriented towards road transport, making no reference to alternative modes of travel such as rail, there appears to some inconsistency in how sustainable transport is defined.

A focus on designing streets and cycle by design should be included to prioritise and encourage the lowest polluting forms of travel.

It would also be beneficial to include the transport hierarchy diagram alongside the policy to highlight the focus of this policy.

(a) This is key to reducing carbon emissions and should be reflected in Policies 7, 8 & 9.

(b) We would note that the DPTAG guidance is considerably out-of-date, having been published in 2011 with references made within it to the NPF2. To reflect the changed policy context focused on decarbonisations and to improve how the transport appraisal process can contribute to the preparation of the next generation of LDPs, it would be helpful if the DPTAG was reviewed and updated in due course.

We would also note that DPTAG is an expensive process, especially for small authorities such as Inverclyde, which has limited resources to employ consultants. A greater degree of flexibility may be more appropriate.

(c) & (d) These are considered under Roads guidelines. Clarity is required on how 'significant increase in the number of person trips' is defined?

(e) & (f) These should be assessed by Transport Scotland. We would suggest that these are not needed as planning policy. We suggest reference is made to the transport network, rather than just the Strategic network.

(g) The sentence "proposals should put people and place before unsustainable travel where appropriate, and respond to characteristics of the location of the proposal" - is clumsy and doesn't relate to the rest of this criterion

(h) – (m) We welcome these positive elements of the Policy, but believe they should come first to highlight their importance and make for more positive reading. (h) would be strengthened with the inclusion of 'and' between bullet points to emphasis that developments should comply with all the set-out criterion.

We would request more clarity on how development will contribute to and connect with the active travel network.

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?

We agree that this policy will help achieve zero emissions from heating and cooling our buildings and adapt to changing temperatures. We welcome and support the policies alignment with Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies, the requirement for proposals to be designed to connect with existing or future heat networks and where there is no effective solution available, an alternative low or zero emissions heating system be provided. We also welcome the role of Heat Networks Partnerships (HNPs) in co-ordinating support and delivery across the built environment professions.

We would, however, again highlight the resource intensive nature of implementing this policy, particularly given the limited resources, skills and knowledge within the planning and wider public sector on energy related planning matters, especially in terms of assessing district heating feasibility proposals. This is likely to result in the costly use of external consultants.

We also have concerns about the general lack of reference to Building Standards and the lack of direction on who has responsibility for designating heat network zones.

(c) Consideration should be given to requiring development to be designed to be connected to a heat network in future, whether one is "planned" or not, unless there is absolutely no chance of a future network development, e.g. smaller scale, remote developments.

(d), (g) & (i) – These criteria would be more appropriately delivered through Building Standards

(g) - This conflicts with existing permitted development regulations on biomass burners for dwellings

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?

We agree. Inverclyde Council welcomes and strongly supports the emphasis placed on blue and green infrastructure and the outdoor spaces for play. This reflects the Council's policies on open spaces and outdoor spaces facilities and on delivering green infrastructure, going further to specify on play provision and blue infrastructure. We view these as key strands in the protection of natural resources and investment in new facilities which will provide opportunities for improving health and wellbeing.

The policy seems to primarily focus on green infrastructure and gives no context as to what would be considered as blue infrastructure. Further clarity in this regard would be useful.

The provision and quality of green and blue infrastructure differs greatly across areas. To enable a consistent approach to be applied, it would be helpful if the policy identified standards and set out a clear approach to assessing requirements and ensuring/monitoring delivery on the ground. Consideration should be given to an independent accreditation scheme, with developers submitting their proposal to a body skilled in assessing provision, who would then verify that a proposal has or has not met the required standard. This accreditation would then be submitted to the planning authority.

Given the cross cutting nature of this policy, it should be cross referenced to other relevant policies in the document. Relevant regulations and guidance should also be referenced.

It would be helpful if the elements of the policy were grouped together by subject.

(a) It may be helpful to refer to size and type of greenspace

(g) This could, potentially, be tied in with Policies 8 & 9 on densely packed sites or for flatted development

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?

We agree. Inverclyde Council welcomes and supports this updated policy on flooding and water management. The management and control measures for mitigating future flooding episodes is critical for Inverclyde, with its waterfront location, and addressing the wider Climate Emergency issues.

It would be helpful if the policy referenced relevant SEPA guidance and measuring tools.

Policy 14 Health and Wellbeing
Policy 15 Safety

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

While we strongly support these policy topics, which are important for creating sustainable places, we believe they would be more appropriately located in the universal policies section, under Sustainable Places.

Health and wellbeing should be linked back to policies on infrastructure first, housing and green infrastructure, local living and active travel.

In general, the role of Planning Authorities in delivery these policies needs further clarity as it may well require further upskilling of staff and new areas of expertise to be developed.

Policy 14

(a) While the ambition to tackle inequality is welcomed and strongly supported, clarity and direction is needed on the expectations, duties and responsibilities to be placed on planning authorities. Areas with inequalities are often unlikely to be areas with development land or interest.

(c) It would be helpful if reference was made to air quality assessments. We note that noise impact assessment is mentioned in criterion (d)

Policy 15

We would request that this policy is strengthened, with the opening sentence amended to state that proposals "must take into account the potential impacts".

We note the approach to proposals involving hazardous substances follows existing practices.

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?

We broadly agree. We welcome the focus on a green recovery and a wellbeing economy. In practice, the policy does not appear to be significantly different to existing national policy and we believe there is scope for a more ambitious approach to be taken.

We welcome the inclusion of a brief framework for addressing home-working, live-work units and microbusinesses, and the content relating to site restoration.

(a) Terms such as 'greener', 'fairer' and 'inclusive wellbeing economy' need to be defined, with direction and guidance provided on how these are to be supported by LDP's.

(b) Clarity is needed on how net economic benefit is to be measured and assessed at the development management stage. "Should be taken into account" is not strong enough and could be subject to challenge.

(c) While this is a positive step forward, live/work units should be a policy on its own and not grouped with working from home.

(e) Clarity is needed on what "appropriate instances" are. Are some permissions to be time limited?

It is not clear how this criterion captures cross boundary and cumulative impact issues.

There is a risk that this criterion will undermine site allocations in the LDP.

(g) It is not clear how "health and wellbeing, including inequalities" would be assessed in practice. Who would a planning authority consult on this?

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?

Broadly agree. Tourism is key growth sector in Inverclyde and we support the emphasis on sustainable tourism.

The introduction of the short-term lets policy is likely to have significant resourcing challenges, especially in enforcement and monitoring terms.

(c) Clarity and direction is required on what is considered 'adverse affects' and how these would be measured and monitored. It is also not clear what would be considered a "satisfactory measure" to alleviate effects.

(d) This criterion is not area specific and therefore brings in considerations such as accessibility by sustainable transport.

(d) This is very negative. Clarity is needed on how the second point would be assessed in practice.

(f) Clarity is needed on how the requirement for alternative tourist facilities would be measured and assessed.

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?

Broadly agree. We welcome and support this policy, particularly the principle of supporting public art and the provision of workspaces for the creative arts, including those make temporary use of vacant spaces and property. We do, however, have some concerns about deliverability.

In general, we believe museums, and leisure in the broadest sense, should be covered.

(a) Direction is needed on the role which LDPs have in recognising and supporting opportunities for jobs and investment in the sector and how this is to be achieved.

(b) It is very difficult to recognise a need for public art or when there is enough public art. It is not an essential component such as infrastructure. Should a decision be based on public art provision? In what case? This criterion seems quite restrictive. More clarity and guidance is needed.

(c) Further guidance/policy on this criterion would be welcomed as well as incorporation within the use classes order to make this easier. It would be helpful to have a locational test for this in terms of site allocation, along with criteria for development management to assess applications.

(d) We support the agent of change principle to protect arts venues where development is proposed in the vicinity.

Would the onus to provide this information be put on the applicant? How would the loss or damage to assets or objects of significant cultural value be defined, measured and assessed? Phrases such as "as evidenced by consultation" are too vague. The use of the word "should" here is not strong enough and would be open to challenge.

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?

Broadly agree. Inverclyde Council supports the role of green energy in reducing carbon emissions.

In general, we do not view the policy as ambitious enough. We also note that the policy does not provide green energy development targets.

While the recognition of other energy sources is welcomed, the policy is still very focused on wind, particularly at large scale. There is no mention of hydrogen, peat, forestry or farming.

There is a conflict of wording between paragraphs a) and f), which state that developments should be supported (no qualification), and paragraphs b) –e) which then qualify where they would be acceptable. We would suggest that they should all say supported in principle.

(a) Direction is needed on how LDP's are to ensure that "the area's full potential for energy from renewable sources" is achieved. Does "area" refer to the LA area? This appears to be more of a narrative introduction to a policy, than a policy criteria. This will require resources, including staff skills sets that some planning authorities, such as Inverclyde, do not have.

(b) Clarity is needed on how "low carbon fuels" are defined, along with further guidance and criteria assessment.

(e) We would request that assessment criteria is provided

(h) Clarification is needed on who will assess the decarbonisation strategy. We would note that planners don't have the skill set for this. Training or out-sourced consultation would be required.

(i) Further guidance needed on what this means in practice

(j) The detail provided here is welcomed.

(k) While the detail provided here is welcomed, it is not clear why this level of detail is not reflected in some other policies. We suggest links should be made to related policies within NPF4.

We note that there are other policies in the Framework which appear to be set against this approach and, as such, we would like to see better integration of relevant policies.

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?

Broadly agree. While we welcome and support this policy, we have some concerns about the deliverability, in general, clarity is needed on the roles and responsibilities of planning, applicants and other relevant agencies/bodies.

(a) While we support the requirement for LDPs to identify appropriate locations for new waste infrastructure, we would note that this will require resources to research and identify these requirements. This is another area where cross-sector and cross-agency working will be crucial and there is a key co-ordination and leadership role for the Scottish Government to assist Councils.

(b) Clarity is needed on how the minimisation of waste is to be measured and assessed.

(c) Clarity is needed on what information is available/will be provided to allow matters, such as the volume of materials in building components that can be re-used, to be considered in the assessment of applications. This may be difficult to implement in practice.

(d) Terms such as "maximise" waste reduction at source and "minimise" the cross-contamination of materials and "appropriate" are too broad. What are the measures and how are they to be empirically measured?

(e) Clarity and direction is needed on assessing offset emissions, "adequate" buffer zones, and "financial mechanisms". It is not clear how these will be achieved in practice.

(f) Further guidance/criteria/policy is required to implement this in practice. Will other services and policies be linked to this at a regional/local level?

(g) We would question whether a zero waste policy should support landfill sites at all.

(h) It is not clear that Planning has a role in monitoring this.

(i) It would be helpful to include a requirement for Waste Management Plans. Would other services such as building standards be involved in implementing this? Other relevant policies/documents/legislation should be referenced.

(j) It is not clear why the requirement for community benefit only applies to energy from waste proposals.

Policy 21: Aquaculture

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

Broadly agree.

(a) Reference should be made to role of national/regional marine plans in guiding the location of aquaculture development and informing Local Development Plans

Clarity is required on what development can be permitted in the other areas. Every other type?

(c) There may be merit in aquaculture proposals being supported where they comply with the National Marine Plan and the Regional Marine Plan, without assessment against planning policy. This is an area of specialism which not many authorities have.

(d) The criteria mostly relate to siting and design. Assessment of impacts on local communities and natural heritage etc. should be included.

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?

Broadly agree. That the extraction of fossil fuels is generally not supported, except in exceptional circumstances, welcomed.

Overall, it is noted that this is an area of specialty which not a lot of authorities have expertise in. To place this policy and planning's role in context, it would be helpful to include references to other relevant legislation and policies.

Policy 23: Digital infrastructure

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

Ensuring all of our places will be digitally connected will depend on a number of factors, not just planning. However, we support this policy and believe that it will 'contribute' to enhanced digital connectivity. Digital infrastructure is essential to take forward other policies such as 20 Minute Neighbourhoods and to bring connectivity and economic benefits to outlying areas.

We would suggest reference is made to the quality of connection and the Digital Planning Strategy for Scotland.

(b) Clarity is needed on what constitutes "appropriate, universal and futureproofed" digital infrastructure. It is also not clear how planning is to assess this in practice. We would suggest this is the role of service providers.

(c) This should be an overarching policy in NPF4, rather than within LDPs. This criterion appears to support development proposals without consideration of adverse impacts, such as on amenity or landscapes.

(d) We would note that in many cases, this would be covered by permitted development.

(e) Clarity is needed on what appropriate mitigation measures would be.

Policies 24 to 27: Distinctive places

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

Ensuring Scotland's places will support low carbon urban living will depend on a number of factors, not just planning. However, we support this suite of policies and believe that they will 'contribute' to the above.

In general, we note there is no mention of the importance of preserving, enhancing and creating new green space and green infrastructure (including trees) within city, town, commercial and local centres. We believe this should be referenced as greening makes a significant contribution to heathier urban living.

Policy 24

We welcome this positive policy, which takes into account recent changes to our town centres and provides positive solutions to encouraging growth of town and local centres

Policy 25

(c) This will be difficult to achieve as there are currently no immediate means to provide blanket controls to limit certain uses described, such as betting offices and moneylending premises, which are not sui generis. This is likely to result in challenges over applying this part of the policy – the clustering of non-retail uses in disadvantaged areas.

It is not clear that the clarification 'particularly in disadvantaged areas' is necessary. We are of the view that it should apply equally across communities. If this phrase is meant to imply areas where there are already many examples of this type of development, where they are causing issues. then it should say so instead of using 'disadvantaged areas' as short hand as not all will fall into this category.

(d) Clarity is needed on what scales of development are acceptable

Policy 26

(a) This seems to conflict with the Policies on local living. We would suggest that a town and local centre first assessment would be more appropriate. A number of the uses listed would be better suited in local centres where people can access facilities. Alternatively, this should be amended to only include uses which should be directed to town centres and not local centres.

(a) This should be covered in Policy 7

Policy 27

We generally welcome this positive policy, which should reduce vacancies in town centres and encourage more sustainable living.

This policy would assist the achievement of the objectives of the 20 Minute Neighbourhoods. Is there scope to require a proportion of town centre housing to be available for those who have mobility issues and can't easily make use of the sustainable transport options to get access to facilities?

(c) This could create amenity clashes between established ground floor and upper floor uses. The Planning system does not allow for the retrofit, for example, of extraction equipment to ground floor uses such as cafes or hot food take aways where such equipment does not already exist.

Reference should be made to creation of amenity, e.g. through the provision of greenspace etc.

Policy 28: Historic assets and places

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

We would suggest that this policy would be more appropriately spilt up into a number of separate policies.

(h) Clarity is needed on what constitutes 'exceptional circumstances'

(o) Clarity is needed on what is to be considered a non-designated historic environment asset. This could apply to anything fixed in the built or natural environment and would arguably conflict with any development proposal

(p) Is there already a requirement for this under other legislation? If not, this raises concerns over how this could be monitored to ensure discoveries are reported

In addition to reporting archaeological discoveries made in the course of developments to the planning authority, we would suggest that this should also be the case for potential archaeological findings discovered elsewhere.

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?

Broadly agree.

As the use of green belt policy is often misunderstood as a planning tool by the general public, clear identification of areas of value such as blue/green networks, biodiversity rich areas, local nature sites, connectivity etc. would offer a clearer tool to direct where development should be located.

The policy fails to mention biodiversity improvements, which would restore and improve habitats. We believe this is a missed opportunity and the policy should look to achieve biodiversity net gain in areas on the outskirts of settlements.

a) This criterion should be tied in with Policy 9. We are concerned that this would result in challenges to proposals in the green belt and which sites are considered most accessible and what locations are pressured rural or peri-urban areas. This may also make it more difficult to carry green belt forward in future plans.

(b) There is need to tighten up on 'or' and 'and' at the end of listed types of development otherwise all the items listed would have to be satisfied by the development. E.g.:
Development should not be supported unless for:
*Recreation, outdoor sport, leisure **and** tourism uses…..*
*Recreation, outdoor sport, leisure **or** tourism uses…..*

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?

Agree. We welcome and support this policy. It will contribute to the aspiration for increased density of cities, towns and villages, and will enable more greenfield land to be protected and underused land to be developed.

(b) We are concerned that this provides unqualified support for the reuse of brownfield sites and could lead to inappropriate uses or development in unsustainable locations. More focus could be placed on low impact uses such as habitat restoration.

(a) Sustainability should be considered as a factor rather than simply stating that demolition should be least preferred.

(e)This appears to contradict policy 29(b)

Policy 31: Rural places

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

We would note that there is a tension between the resettlement of previously habited areas compromising overall sustainable place making.

Policy 32: Natural places
Q50: Do you agree that this policy will protect and restore natural places?

The protection and restoration of natural places will depend on a number of factors, not just planning.

While the policy provides strong and comprehensive coverage, the criterion (d) may make practical application more difficult, as it proposes a catch-all approach to a number of different designations. We suggest this either focusses on the statutory requirements for the designations listed, or uses terms that are more easily related to these designations.

There is no guidance beyond the initial statement on restoring natural places. We would request that further guidance is provided.

There is a need to align the designations covered by the policies on natural places and those on green energy as they do not appear to match up at present.

(a) (d) The relevant legislation should be explicitly referenced.

(f) This needs to be strengthened. We would suggest that "should take into account" is replaced with "must take into account".

(g) We are not convinced that this can work in practice as any development of a protected site will have significant adverse effects on the integrity of the site and would subsequently conflict with point b) of the policy.

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?

Agree.

We believe the policy is comprehensive and strong, but would request a definition of carbon rich soils.

The policy raises questions over how valued soils are to be identified. Should nationally important soils be identified in NPF4? This also has resource implications as this is another specialist planning area which requires expertise and skill sets which are currently not available within some planning authorities, including Inverclyde.

(d) Clarity is needed on what would be considered an industry of national importance to Scotland.

Policy 34: Trees, woodland and forestry

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

The expansion of woodland cover will depend on a number of factors, not just planning. However, we agree that the policy will contribute to expansion and protect existing woodland.

The policy complements the overall policy direction for increased protection and promotion of biodiversity interests and habitats and nature in general.

We believe there should be a greater emphasis placed on trees and landscaping within urban settings as these provide multiple benefits, including urban character, amenity, shade, biodiversity and water management etc. For example, we note that there is no mention of support for the protection of Tree Preservation Orders or trees within conservation areas, which account for a large amount of woodland, forestry and individual trees within built-up areas.

We feel that there is an opportunity to split this policy into two, with the first policy covering the protection and principle of development within woodland, with a second policy to cover the site-specific mitigation, with reference to British Standard 5837.

While the policy mentions expanding woodland cover, it would be helpful if specific targets were identified and guidance provided on how this should be achieved/encouraged.

Given the emphasis on enhancing biodiversity, it would be helpful if direction was provided on whether native or non-native species are to be provided.

(b) This should reference TPOs

(c) It would be helpful to clarify what is meant by additional public benefits that would justify removal and what its relationship is to the Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal Policy. Potential examples might be tree removal to enhance functional peatland, but other examples would be useful.

Part 4 – Delivering our Spatial Strategy

Broadly agree.

Aligning Resources
The alignment of resources is key. NPF4 needs to set out a clear Capital and Revenue Investment Programme, the monitoring processes involved and what additional resources are to be invested in planning services, particularly as many of the policy requirements set out in the document will require additional specialist skill sets and expertise. We would note that even with additional upskilling of planners, there is likely to be a strong need for external expertise for a range of assessments set out in the Draft, which will also require funding. Any capital investment must be aligned with the associated revenue expenditure, particularly at a time when local authority budgets are challenging, with diminishing investment in planning resources.

We would note that timescales and timing issues are key elements in a successful delivery programme as well as clarity on the respective roles and funding streams available from central government, multi- agency, private sector, and partnership arrangements.

It is important that NPF4 aligns with the Programme for Government and relevant legislative frameworks.

We are concerned that Part 4 – Delivering the Spatial Strategy is the shortest section in the Draft NPF4 and its omission at this stage in the process is serious and even if budgets are not finalised an estimate of costs and funding would have been helpful.

Infrastructure First
While we strongly support the "Infrastructure First" approach, discussions on this issue and the related work on the possibility of introducing an "Infrastructure Levy" in the Planning Act, or

similar, have not yet been completed and this lack of clarity on funding is critical. We remain concerned that this has been an outstanding aspect of Government policy for many years, and yet delivery of infrastructure is often the key challenge to delivering development, particularly in areas of lower land values. Critical questions still remain such as where is the incentive? How will this be imposed? Who pays? Who delivers? Very often the quantum of infrastructure funding required can only be provided by the Scottish Government and the funding criteria for this needs to be set out. This is clearly a matter which requires a real partnership approach and particularly with the private sector who need certainty in advance of what is required from them and when. Many different local solutions have been applied to this question and it is essential that all the best practice and experiences from both public and private sectors are brought together when this matter is finalised by Scottish Government.

Delivery of National Developments
This will require significant collaboration between all the key partners within local and central government, key agencies, investors and developers. The precise delivery mechanisms need to be set out in the next Draft NPF4.

We are concerned that the Delivery Programme for National Developments appears to be a bit of an afterthought at this stage in the process.

We support delivery of the National Developments covering the Inverclyde area in a planned and coordinated way, providing there is an agreed set of roles for the different stakeholders, funding and timing is put in place and there are clear monitoring and updating procedures put in place for the Scottish Government to implement.

Development Plan Policy and Regional Spatial Strategies
This section does not provide the clarity needed on the role of Regional Spatial Strategies, in terms of their relationship to the delivery of the NPF aims and Local Development Plans, we do not believe this is provided in this section.

With regard to Local Place Plans, it will be a challenge to encourage as many different members of the community as possible to get involved in producing a Local Place Plan.

Monitoring
We believe that monitoring is an essential part of the NPF process and one which must be led and undertaken by the Scottish Government as the coordinating authority. Whilst planning authorities will engage, their resources will be focused on Local Development Plan monitoring processes. In light of this, we would request the reference made in Draft NPF4 to "local monitoring" is clarified.

Part 5 – Annexes

Annexe A: Outcomes Statement

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?

Inverclyde Council generally agrees 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.

Annexe B: Housing Numbers

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

Our Housing and Planning officers worked in collaboration with Clydeplan to provide the updated Minimum All-Tenure Housing Land Requirement submission to the Scottish Government. Our preferred MATHLR figure of 1500 is informed by the 1903 completions (on sites with capacity of 4 or more houses) between April 2010 and March 2020; and reflects one of the priorities of the Inverclyde Outcome Improvement Plan - reversing population decline.