



National Planning Improvement

NATIONAL PLANNING IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

Improvement Action Progress Update 2025

East Renfrewshire Council



East Renfrewshire NPIF Annual Report (Year Two - 2025)

Foreword

This Year 2 update of the National Planning Improvement Framework marks an important point of transition for the East Renfrewshire Planning Service. It reflects a period of consolidation and progress, during which we have continued to adapt to a changing legislative and policy context while maintaining a clear focus on delivering a planning service that supports high quality places and positive outcomes for communities.

A significant milestone during the reporting period has been the completion of the Local Development Plan 3 Evidence Report and its successful passage through the Gate Check process. This represents a major achievement for the Service and provides a robust, evidence led foundation for the next stages of plan preparation. In parallel, the adoption of A Place to Grow, the Council's Community Plan, has firmly embedded the Place Principle at the heart of strategic decision making. Planning has played a key role in shaping this approach and will continue to champion place-based thinking through policy development, cross departmental working and development management.

The Service has also continued to modernise its ways of working. Increased use of digital tools, including online submission platforms and GIS based interactive mapping, has strengthened analytical capability, improved accessibility and supported more meaningful engagement with communities, stakeholders and elected members. Alongside this, clearer governance arrangements, improved performance monitoring and more structured collaboration across teams have helped to improve transparency, consistency and efficiency in how work is progressed. These advances have been delivered against a challenging backdrop.

Workforce capacity and recruitment pressures remain a significant issue, particularly within Development Management, and continue to impact service resilience. At the same time, increasing legislative requirements, national policy change and the scale and complexity of work associated with LDP3 place sustained demands on available resources. The Service has responded by prioritising critical workstreams, strengthening leadership and governance arrangements, and investing in skills development and knowledge sharing to build resilience where possible.

Looking ahead, the focus will remain firmly on continuous improvement and service modernisation. Maintaining momentum on LDP3, rebuilding capacity as opportunities arise, further embedding digital solutions and continuing to work constructively with communities, partners and stakeholders will be central to the next phase of improvement. This update demonstrates a Planning Service that is reflective and forward looking, clear eyed about the challenges it faces, and committed to addressing them in a planned, proportionate and transparent way.



Introduction

The National Planning Improvement Framework (NPIF) was piloted incrementally in three separate cohorts throughout the 2024/25 financial year. This was to test a new approach to measuring the performance of planning authorities. The pilot aimed to test the new framework, to explore what works and what doesn't. This resulted in each planning authority producing an improvement action plan and performance assessment.

Each improvement action plan sets out:

- What the planning authority has agreed as its priority activities
- Whether these have short-, medium- or long-term timescales
- The owner of the actions
- The resources needed

[Link to action plan for 2023/24.](#)

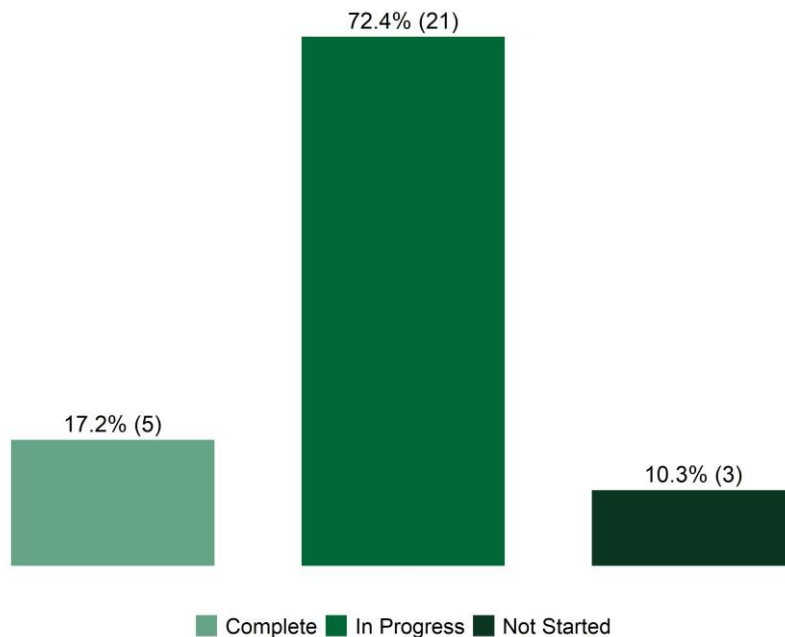
In year two of the NPIF the planning authorities are to update on their progress with the improvement actions. This report sets out the progress East Renfrewshire has made, detailing any updates to actions, any further actions and plans for further collaboration with peer partners.

Planning Improvement Actions Progress Update

This section details each of the improvement actions and the progress the planning authority has made.



East Renfrewshire has 29 improvement actions. The status of the actions is shown below:



Action 1: Encourage new systems and processes to reduce recruitment difficulties in development management and strategy teams. This includes contributing to work force planning efforts across the Council e.g. Service Improvement Planning, participating in career fairs in schools working with Heads of Planning and the Scottish Government to attract more planners

In Progress

Progress against this action: The issue of workforce planning challenges is being considered by Departmental Management (DM) Team. East Renfrewshire Council (ERC) has now established a departmental Workforce Planning Group to capture current issues, including difficulties with recruitment, and seeking solutions. Reporting and actions to follow by February 2026.

The following next steps are proposed: Report to Corporate Management Team February 2026.

Action 2: Create a project board for LDP3

In Progress

Progress against this action: A project board has been established to oversee LDP3 preparation, ensuring clarity around key tasks, milestones, and responsibilities. A Gantt chart



tracks progress and expands upon the timetable and stages outlined in the approved Development Plan Scheme. A structured meeting framework is in place to monitor progress and coordinate activity: Fortnightly strategic meetings are held between the Head of Place, Chief Planner, Principal Strategy Officer (LDP Lead), and Principal Strategy Officer (Planning Obligations Lead), with the Director of Environment attending as required. The Director and Head of Service regularly brief the Council Leader and the Leaders of each Political Party on LDP3 and its related workstreams. Weekly LDP Strategy Team meetings focus on LDP preparation and current workstreams and tasks. Regular engagement with other Council services ensures input across departments. A cross-party Member Officer Working Group (MOWG) has been established to facilitate discussion with elected Members on the development of LDP3. Meetings have been held in May, June, and September 2024, as well as January, April, June, and August 2025. The MOWG also includes senior officers from other Council Services such as Education, HSCP, Community Services, and Get to Zero. All members of the LDP team attend to ensure full awareness of discussions.

The following next steps are proposed: Continue progressing the LDP in line with the timetable set out in the approved Development Plan Scheme. Approach SG Planning Hub for assistance in areas where ERC specialism is lacking.

Action 3: Undertake a review of current pre-application service

Not Started

Reason(s) action has not been progressed:

- We do not have the resources we need to do this.

The following next steps are proposed: Build new capacity within the Development Management Team.

Action 4: Improve planning officers' commercial awareness and understanding of development viability

In Progress

Progress against this action: This is a complex area that is challenging for planning officers. At present, ERC Planning Service has focused on training and awareness raising with those planning officers managing affordable housing and Section 75 agreements via planning applications. ERC Planning Service has a new senior member with significant commercial experience who can assist in capacity building in this issue in Year 3.

The following next steps are proposed: By the end of Year 3, utilise in-house experience to develop knowledge of commercial development viability across the planning team.



Action 5: Seek innovative ways in which to increase staff access to relevant training and knowledge sharing

In Progress

Progress against this action: To support staff development and embed a culture of continuous learning within the Planning Service, we have introduced a range of initiatives to improve access to training and knowledge sharing. Officers are encouraged to share feedback from events and webinars with colleagues, either through informal lunchtime sessions or via email summaries. The Strategy Team has hosted dedicated knowledge-sharing sessions to provide updates on LDP activities, affordable housing, planning obligations and promote wider understanding across the service. Officers from both services have attended relevant team meetings of other teams. In line with the Council's commitment to continuous professional development (CPD), staff are supported to engage in regular CPD through internal e-learning courses, external courses, and webinars. Additionally, formal and informal cross-service networking events have been organised to share information and strengthen collaboration between services.

The following next steps are proposed: Continue to ensure staff have access to relevant training. Monitor staff training.

Action 6: Undertake internal CPD events and opportunities for staff to meet as a wider team

In Progress

Progress against this action: To support staff development and embed a culture of continuous learning within the Planning Service, we have introduced a range of initiatives to improve access to training and knowledge sharing. Officers are encouraged to share feedback from events and webinars with colleagues, either through informal lunchtime sessions or via email summaries. The Strategy Team has hosted dedicated knowledge-sharing sessions to provide updates on LDP activities, affordable housing, planning obligations and promote wider understanding across the service. Officers from both services have attended relevant team meetings of other teams. In line with the Council's commitment to continuous professional development (CPD), staff are supported to engage in regular CPD through internal e-learning courses, external courses, and webinars. Additionally, formal and informal cross-service networking events have been organised to share information and strengthen collaboration between services.

The following next steps are proposed: Continue to ensure staff have access to relevant training. Monitor staff training.



Action 7: Adopt a Place Principal approach to inform the preparation of an Environment Department-wide strategy and ensure place principles are part of the thinking in the Environment and any revisions to Vision for the Future

In Progress

Progress against this action: The former corporate “Vision for the Future” has now been reviewed and replaced by A Place to Grow - East Renfrewshire Council our Community Planning Partnership’s vision to reduce inequality across groups and communities in East Renfrewshire. The Place Principle is a founding concept of A Place to Grow, and this is now cascading through strategies policy documents of ERC and our community planning partners.

The following next steps are proposed: Reword this Attribute to reflect change of strategy.

In response, the following changes to the action are proposed: Please reword as follows: Building on the successful integration of place making within A Place to Grow, the Council’s Community Plan, we will continue to embed the Place Principle across cross departmental working and departmental strategies to shape future planning activity.

Action 8: Create, review and update customer guidance on the website

In Progress

Progress against this action: To improve accessibility and ease of use for customers, we have updated the LDP information on the Council’s website and on our engagement platform. This work has focused on ensuring that information is clear and up-to-date. The Council’s new engagement platform, ‘Get Involved’, will be used to promote progress on LDP3. Content from the previous Commonplace platform will be transferred to ensure continuity.

The following next steps are proposed: Update online information in relation to Development Management in Year 3.

Action 9: Create Uniform dashboards to monitor Development Management performance and workloads

Complete

What was the outcome of completing this action?

Ongoing monitoring of performance and workload.



Action 10: Review the working relationship between Development Management and Strategy teams to assist in the preparation of LDP3

In Progress

Progress against this action: As outlined in Attribute 2 above, the Strategy Team has hosted dedicated knowledge-sharing sessions to provide updates on LDP activities and promote wider understanding across the service. The DM Team has hosted lunchtime sessions to share formal learning from CPD training and events.

The following next steps are proposed: Continue to host knowledge-sharing session between Development Management and Strategy teams.

Action 11: Review the working relationship between the Planning Service and key customers and establish regular meetings with key customers including community councils, environmental health and roads, SEPA, developers

In Progress

Progress against this action: We have continued to strengthen collaboration between the Planning Service and key customers. Regular meetings have been held with Key Agencies such as Scottish Water and SEPA, alongside ongoing engagement with the Development Industry and Council services including Roads, Housing, Health & Social Care Partnership (HSCP), and Education. Community Councils are kept informed throughout each stage of the LDP process, and an online meeting with all active Community Councils is planned for later in 2025. The Strategy Team participates in relevant Local Housing Strategy (LHS) working group workshops to inform the development of LDP3 strategy and policy, and to support the Council's efforts in addressing the housing emergency.

The following next steps are proposed: Continue to host meetings between internal and external partners. Host Developer Forum type events with key stakeholders in Year 3.

Action 12: Continue to record planning complaints/comments which is accessible to all the service

In Progress

Progress against this action: An ERC-wide system tracks planning complaints and comments, alongside elected member enquiries and FOI / EIR requests.

The following next steps are proposed: Continue to contribute to ERC-wide system in Year 3.



Action 13: Submit for planning awards where appropriate

Not Started

Reason(s) action has not been progressed:

- We have not had the time given other priorities.

The following next steps are proposed: Identify opportunities to submit for planning awards where appropriate.

Action 14: Implement Elected Member training in accordance with legislation

In Progress

Progress against this action: Through the Member Officer Working Group, the Strategy Team has delivered regular updates on key topics including the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), the Local Development Plan (LDP), nature and biodiversity, the Green Belt, and relevant planning guidance, both current and emerging. These updates have been shared via presentations and interactive discussion workshops. Additionally, Members have engaged in a site assessment exercise using the Site Assessment/SEA framework to deepen their understanding of this key process. Identify specific training needs for Elected Members in relation to live planning issues within ERC e.g. battery energy storage.

The following next steps are proposed: Continue to provide regular training sessions for elected members.

Action 15: Continue to investigate opportunities to enhance service delivery through sharing good practice, skills and knowledge with our internal and external partners

In Progress

Progress against this action: We have continued to strengthen collaboration between the Planning Service and key customers. Regular meetings have been held with internal and external partners.

The following next steps are proposed: Continue to host meetings between internal and external partners. Consider establishing an annual development forum when DM Team is at full complement.



Action 16: Continue work on the Proposed LDP3 in accordance with emerging legislation and guidance

In Progress

Progress against this action: Work continues on the Proposed Local Development Plan 3 (LDP3) in alignment with current and emerging legislation and national guidance. The plan is being developed in accordance with the requirements outlined in the Scottish Government's Local Development Planning Guidance (May 2023). Preparation of the LDP continues to progress in line with the approved Development Plan Scheme, with adoption scheduled for October 2027, in advance of the Scottish Government's deadline of May 2028.

The following next steps are proposed: Continue progressing the LDP in line with the timetable set out in the approved Development Plan Scheme.

Action 17: Submit LDP3 Evidence Report for approval at Full Council in accordance with DPS timeline

Complete

What was the outcome of completing this action?

The LDP3 Evidence Report was approved by Full Council in September 2024 and subsequently submitted to the Department of Planning and Environmental Appeals (DPEA) in October 2024 for Gate Check. In December 2024, the Council received confirmation that the Evidence Report had successfully passed the Gate Check process. This formal approval enabled the Planning Service to progress to the next stage, preparation of the Proposed Local Development, Plan which is scheduled for Autumn 2026.

Action 18: Continue to develop the use of digital technology to deliver the planning service e.g. online submission, data governance, interactive mapping etc

In Progress

Progress against this action: The Planning Service continues to increase its use of digital technology to enhance service delivery and support more efficient working practices. Key processes include Online Submission: The Strategy Team launched its Call for Sites using GOSS software, enabling users to submit site proposals along with supporting technical documentation. This platform also facilitated easier collaboration and management of submissions. Interactive Mapping Tools: ESRI GIS software has been used to develop storymaps and spatial planning layers that visually present planning data in an accessible and interactive format. These tools have enhanced analytical capabilities and supported community engagement by providing a user-friendly method to explore information - particularly through their extensive use in the LDP3 Evidence Report. The LDP3 'Call for Ideas' and Open Space engagement exercises were launched using an ESRI-based model to enable residents, community groups and other stakeholders to submit site-specific



proposals in a spatial format, providing an interactive engagement method. ESRI has been extensively used during Member Officer Working Group meetings to spatially present site proposals and illustrate the associated infrastructure benefits that each site could offer.

The following next steps are proposed: As part of an ongoing programme of continuous improvement and service modernisation, the Service will continue to expand and embed digital solutions to improve accessibility, data quality, engagement and the efficiency of planning processes.

Action 19: Identify opportunities and new ways of working using GIS, to enable the Planning Service to be more efficient and effective. This will include sharing good practices via Heads of Planning and other GIS specialised groups and attending training courses

In Progress

Progress against this action: To strengthen the Planning Service's use of GIS technology, officers have participated in external training courses delivered by the Scottish Government and other organisations. This has enhanced their technical knowledge and confidence in using GIS tools. In addition, ongoing informal support is provided by the Council's Digital Team, which has further improved the team's capabilities and particularly with LDP3 preparation. ESRI GIS software has been used to develop storymaps and spatial planning layers that visually present planning data in an accessible and interactive format. These tools have enhanced analytical capabilities and supported community engagement by providing a user-friendly method to explore information - particularly through their extensive use in the LDP3 Evidence Report.

The following next steps are proposed: Continue to increase the use of GIS digital technology to enhance service delivery and support more efficient working practices.

Action 20: Continue recruitment process to achieve full staff complement

In Progress

Progress against this action: Strategy Team: A Natural Environment and Biodiversity Officer post was filled in July 2024. There are no current vacancies within the Strategy Team. DM Team continue the recruitment process to achieve full staff complement.

The following next steps are proposed: Recruitment process will continue.



Action 21: Hold engagement events in preparation of the Evidence Report

Complete

What was the outcome of completing this action?

The LDP3 Evidence Report's Engagement Statement outlines the Council's engagement activities and how the evidence and responses gathered have shaped both the Evidence Report and the emerging strategy of LDP3. Its preparation was supported by collaborative data and spatial analysis with Key Agencies and other stakeholders, alongside engagement with a broad range of organisations and the wider community.

Action 22: Continue to offer pre-application advice and review process on annual basis

Complete

What was the outcome of completing this action?

The LDP3 Evidence Report's Engagement Statement outlines the Council's engagement activities and how the evidence and responses gathered have shaped both the Evidence Report and the emerging strategy of LDP3. Its preparation was supported by collaborative data and spatial analysis with Key Agencies and other stakeholders, alongside engagement with a broad range of organisations and the wider community.

Action 23: Build on existing tools and develop new ways to improve customer service, utilising digital technology where possible

In Progress

Progress against this action: The Planning Service continues to increase its use of digital technology to enhance service delivery and support more efficient working practices. Key processes include Online Submission: The Strategy Team launched its Call for Sites using GOSS software, enabling users to submit site proposals along with supporting technical documentation. This platform also facilitated easier collaboration and management of submissions. Interactive Mapping Tools: ESRI GIS software has been used to develop storymaps and spatial planning layers that visually present planning data in an accessible and interactive format. These tools have enhanced analytical capabilities and supported community engagement by providing a user-friendly method to explore information - particularly through their extensive use in the LDP3 Evidence Report.

The following next steps are proposed: Continue to increase the use of digital technology to enhance service delivery and support more efficient working practices.



Action 24: Contribute planning service-related questions to annual Citizens Panel survey

In Progress

Progress against this action: The 2025 Citizens' Panel survey included five targeted questions focused on the Local Development Plan (LDP), specifically addressing the need for additional housing and preferences around housing type and tenure for LDP3. The survey was launched in February 2025, with the final report completed by April. To build on these insights, two focus groups - one in each side of the Council area - were held in September 2025 to explore the responses in greater depth. Findings from these focus groups are expected in November 2025. The findings of both exercises will be used to inform the development of LDP3 strategy and policy, and to support the Council's efforts in addressing the housing emergency.

The following next steps are proposed: Use the findings of the Citizens Panel and Focus groups to shape and inform the Proposed Plan.

Action 25: Continue to work together with communities to encourage the development and delivery of Local Place Plans

In Progress

Progress against this action: Although no notes of interest have been received to date, the webpage remains active, and any future enquiries will be welcomed and responded to positively. Through the Member Officer Working Group, Members have been encouraged to promote Local Place Plans during their engagement with Community Councils and local residents.

The following next steps are proposed: Send a follow-up email inviting notes of interest from potential groups, including Community Councils and Community organisations, and to discuss ideas further.

Action 26: Contribute to corporate and community strategic planning including ERC Community Plan, Glasgow City Region Regional Spatial Strategy

In Progress

Progress against this action: The Planning Service continues to contribute to corporate and community strategic planning, including input to the East Renfrewshire Vision for the Future and its emerging replacement 'A Place to Grow'. The Planning Service also contributes to Glasgow City Region Regional Spatial Strategy through Steering Group/Heads of Policy and Topic Group meetings, ensuring alignment with wider regional and local priorities.



The following next steps are proposed: Continued involvement with the preparation and implementation of the East Renfrewshire 'A Place to Grow' and the emerging Glasgow City Region Regional Spatial Strategy.

Action 27: Continue to plan and prioritise of Planning Obligation spend across various ERC departments through streamlining a project pipeline. This will ensure timely identification of suitable projects and, where possible, avoid the need to return non-committed funds to developers

In Progress

Progress against this action: The Planning Service continues to closely monitor and manage planning obligation collection and spend; working with various ERC departments to ensure planned delivery of identified projects. Regular bimonthly reports are provided to the Environment Capital Board and shared with relevant departments, tracking progress of all current planning obligation projects and contributions yet to be committed for spend. Regular meetings are also held with finance teams to ensure planning obligation projects are planned and accounted for in the Council's Capital Programme. Work is ongoing to review the Development Contributions policy and to determine how future development costs and planning obligations will be reflected in the emerging LDP3 Delivery Programme.

The following next steps are proposed: Continue to increase engagement with relevant departments via regular scheduled meetings to monitor project delivery and spend.

Action 28: Revising existing LDP2 Action Programme to Delivery Programme in accordance with Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2019

Complete

What was the outcome of completing this action?

A new style Delivery Programme was submitted to Scottish Government in April 2025 in accordance with requirements.

Action 29: Consider the benefits of introducing a Design Panel

Not Started

Reason(s) action has not been progressed: We have not had the time given other priorities.

- We do not have the resources we need to do this.



The following next steps are proposed: The Planning Service will continue to explore the potential benefits of introducing a Design Panel to enhance the quality of development proposals, support placemaking, and strengthen design-led decision-making.

Peer Collaborative Review Follow Up

As part of the pilot, each planning authority held a peer collaborative review workshop. This brought together key stakeholders and customers to discuss and provide constructive feedback on the improvement action plan.

Status of the peer review follow-up meeting: We already held a peer collaborative follow-up meeting.

The peer review collaborative follow-up meeting was held on: 2025-09-19. The following organisations/groups/individuals were invited: David Suttie, Shona McCoy, Dumfries and Galloway, Michelle McGuckin, Richard Greenwood, Derek Scotti, East Renfrewshire Council.

