

# East Ayrshire Council Planning Services

## National Planning Improvement Framework Performance and Improvement Assessment

Cohort 1

September 2024

## Contents

East Ayrshire Council Planning Services .....	3
Introduction .....	4
Attribute 1: The Planning Authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity .....	5
Attribute 2: The Planning Authority has a valued and supported workforce .....	15
Attribute 3: The Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement .....	21
Attribute 4: The Planning Authority has Sound Governance .....	25
Attribute 5: The Planning Authority has effective leadership .....	28
Attribute 6: The Planning Authority has a robust policy and evidence base .....	35
Attribute 7: The Planning Authority makes the best use of data and digital technology .....	39
Attribute 8: The Planning Authority has effective and efficient decision making processes .....	41
Attribute 9: The Planning Authority has good Customer Care .....	45
Attribute 10: The Planning Authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities .....	48
Attribute 11: The Planning Authority supports the delivery of sustainable, livable and productive places .....	51
Attribute 12: The Planning Authority supports the delivery of consented development .....	60
<b>Case Study:</b> Supporting Our Planners .....	65
<b>Case Study:</b> Producing and delivering the Hagshaw energy cluster development framework .....	69
<b>Case Study:</b> Achieving results through joint working with elected members and officers across the Council .....	74
<b>Case Study:</b> Chief Planning Officer .....	77
<b>Case Study:</b> Producing a robust evidence base to resolve infrastructure constraints in Stewarton .....	80
<b>Case Study:</b> Compliance monitoring of large scale environmental projects and Major developments .....	84
<b>Case Study:</b> Open for business: Minimum All Tenure Housing Land Requirement & LDP2 allocation of housing sites .....	93

# East Ayrshire Council Planning Services

<b>Planning Authority:</b>	East Ayrshire Council
<b>Chief Planning Officer:</b>	Pamela Clifford
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:Pamela.Clifford@east-ayrshire.gov.uk">Pamela.Clifford@east-ayrshire.gov.uk</a>

The Planning Service has used the below matrix when determining what score we have given each attribute.

<input type="checkbox"/>	1	Making excellent progress	Consolidate Share learning with others
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	Making good progress	Build upon Increase ambition in targets Share learning with others
<input type="checkbox"/>	3	Making fair progress	Develop Increase ambition in targets Review and improve implementation
<input type="checkbox"/>	4	Making limited progress	Review Review ambition Review approach taken Inform NPI Learn from others
<input type="checkbox"/>	5	No progress	Prioritise Prioritise fundamental review and revisit approach taken. Engage with NPI Learn from others

# Introduction:

Welcome to our first National Planning Improvement Framework as part of a national pilot along with nine other Planning Authorities from across Scotland as part of Cohort 1. East Ayrshire Council through this pilot has been paired with Renfrewshire Council which has provided an opportunity to support and learn across Councils.

The National Planning Improvement Framework replaces the annual Planning Performance Framework which was submitted to the Scottish Ministers with feedback provided by performance markers.

The National Planning Improvement Framework is based upon what have been identified as the attributes of a high performing planning authority with collaboration key to improving planning. The new framework aims to better measure how planning authorities improve through incorporating attributes that better assess impacts, outcomes achieved, and the quality of the service provided and by recognising that planning authorities depend on others to deliver a good quality service.

This report has been developed through self-assessment through a Peer Review group. The Peer Review will be externally facilitated by Irene Beautyman from Improvement Service/Public Health Scotland with the group considering the self-assessment and focusing on areas of improvement. The Peer Review Group was selected by identifying key customers both externally and internally to East Ayrshire Council Planning Services.

East Ayrshire Council is a medium sized Council and is located in south west Scotland and in easy reach to Glasgow and the Ayrshire Coast. It combines a mix of urban areas and rural areas with the main towns of Kilmarnock, Cumnock and Stewarton. It includes particular attractions such as Dumfries House, Dean Castle and Country Park, Palace Theatre.

The Council has an up-to-date Development Plan, having recently adopted Local Development Plan 2 in April 2024 which is one of the last Local Development Plans under the old legislation. Work will begin shortly on Local Development Plan3.

I would like to thank all who have been involved in the production of the National Planning Improvement Framework document and those who have given up their time to participate in the Peer Review Group.

Pamela Clifford

Chief Planning Officer

East Ayrshire Council

## Peer Review Meeting

A peer review meeting took place with key customers involved in the planning system in East Ayrshire Council on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2024. Customers are both internal and external to the Service and are organisations, services and businesses with whom the Planning Authority engage with.

The group consisted of the representatives from the following:

- Homes for Scotland
- Convenor of the Planning Committee
- Representative of Community Group
- Regulatory Manager
- Strategic Lead: Asset Investment
- Renfrewshire Council as the Service's peer partner authority
- The National Improvement Champion and National Improvement Officer
- Chief Planning Officer, Interim Development Manager and Strategic Manager – Development Planning and Regeneration, Principal Planning Officer Development Planning, Support Staff

The group was facilitated by a representative from the Improvement Service/ Public Health Scotland who helped guide the group through the improvement attributes and actions as well as ensuring everyone had an open and honest discussion about actions and any issues. The purpose of the peer review was to look at the National Planning Improvement Framework document and to review the scoring of attributes and identified improvement actions. The group agreed the Planning Services actions with some minor amendments as well as identifying additional improvement actions for consideration by the Planning Service. The comments made by the peer review group have been incorporated into the final version of this report and the Improvement Action Plan.

Feedback received from those who participated in the Peer Review meeting.

"The process was very constructive and informative and helped to inform my thinking about the challenges facing the planning authority in working to improve the service. This included considering the issues that were in control of the local planning authority and what may be required to be undertaken on a national or joint basis with other local authorities. This also included considering the additional support and resources that may be required to help to move matters forward."

"I found it informative to hear all the contributions on the day, particularly those of neighbouring authorities. There was a healthy amount of constructive challenge in the room."









East Ayrshire Council  
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir an Ear

## National Planning Improvement Framework

Attribute 1: This Planning Authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity



**A high performing planning authority needs to have the right number of people to do the work expected of it with the rights skills set. It also needs to have a strategy to ensure that it retains and recruits the right staff in the future. It supports staff to upskill and to be prepared for changes in policy, legislation, and new circumstances**

## Planning Structure

A Review of the Council Management Structure took place in 2021, whereby Development Planning sits within the Economic Growth Service and Development Management and Enforcement sit with Governance Services, together with Building Standards and Administration and Technical Support functions which is managed by the Chief Planning Officer. Whilst the Strategic Manager – Development Planning and Regeneration reports to the Head of Economic Growth. The post reports to the Chief Planning Officer on strategic Planning Policy matters.

**The following provides additional detail in respect of the activities undertaken.**

*Development Management* is responsible for processing planning applications and other permissions such as Listed Building Consents and Conservation area Consents etc. It provides advice on the need for planning and other related permissions through pre application advice service. It also considers Section 36 applications for wind farms, battery storage facilities as well

as other energy applications. The team also monitor and resolve planning enforcement issues and in the case of major and environmental projects such as housing developments, wind farms, battery storage facilities, open cast coal mines, quarries and landfill sites, carries out all compliance monitoring arrangements to verify compliance with planning conditions and legal obligations.

*Technical Support* has responsibilities for the technical and administration support to Development Management including maintaining planning registers, the validation and registration of planning and other applications, issuing of decisions, Planning Committee support and dealing with general planning enquiries. Additionally it provides support for the development and management of IT systems, for corporate web GIS and the Council's Ordnance Survey mapping requirements. It also supports the Building Standards Service and Development Planning Service.

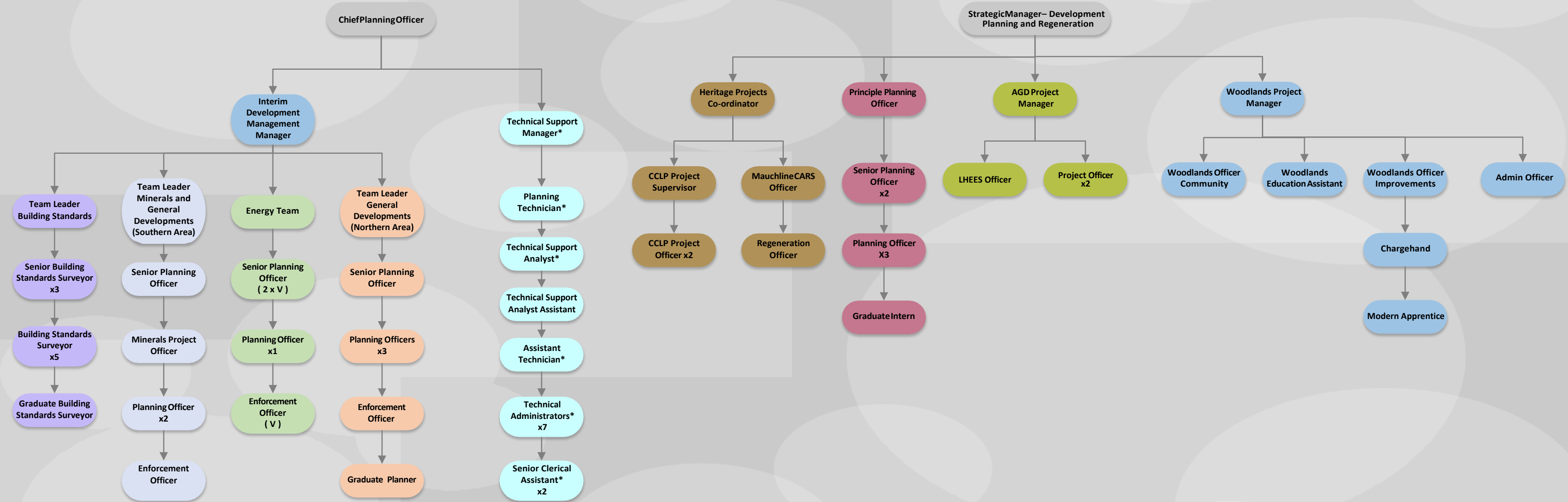
*Development Planning* has responsibilities for producing the Local Development Plan, Supplementary and Non-Statutory Planning Guidance, Land Audits, Local Place Plans, Regional Spatial Strategies, the collection and administration of Developer Contributions, Tree Preservation Orders, stopping up orders and Local Review Body.

## Staffing Resources

Structure Charts are provided below for Development Management, Technical Support and Development Planning.



Development Management & Development Planning & Regeneration  
Staff Structure



Notes:

\* Technical Support staff also support Development Planning and Regeneration

\*\* Admin officers also support Building Standards

V = Vacant Post

# The Development Management Team

Our Development Management Team is divided into three teams with two of the teams each managed by a Team Leader and the Energy Team managed by Interim Development Management Manager who also has responsibility for the management of the Development Management service.

## The Energy Team

This team includes three Senior Planning Officers, one Planning Officer and one Enforcement Officer. This team deals with all wind, battery storage, hydrogen and other energy applications including section 36 applications. The team also monitor and discharge conditions associated with these developments and deal with unauthorised works. One Senior Planning Officer and Enforcement Officer Posts are presently vacant in the team.

## Minerals & General Southern Team

This team includes one Senior Planning Officer, two Planning Officers, one Minerals Project Officer and one Enforcement Officer. This team deals with planning and other applications in the Southern area of East Ayrshire which is more rural in nature and includes small villages and settlements. Most of the mineral sites have been restored with the exception of Chalmerston site which is presently being restored and monitored, although there are number of operational quarry sites in the area.

## Northern Team

This team includes one Senior Planning Officer, three Planning Officers, one Graduate Planning Officer and one Enforcement Officer. This team deals with planning and other applications for more urban developments including housing, commercial, industrial and heritage developments. The Graduate Planning Officer post is presently vacant.

## Technical Support

Our Technical support team includes one Technical Support Manager, one Planning Technician, one Assistant Technician, 0.5 Technical Support Analyst, one Assistant Technical Support Analyst, four Technical administrators and one Senior Clerical Assistant. The team register, validate and issue decisions as well develop digital and manage the corporate GIS system. This team also supports the Building Standards Team.

# Development Planning

The Team is managed by the Strategic Manager – Development Planning and Regeneration which includes one Principal Planning Officer, two Senior Planning Officers, three Planning Officers and one graduate interim.

**The Planning and Building Standards** Service directly support the priorities and objectives set out within the Council's Community Plan and Strategic Plan, including supporting economic growth and development, safeguarding the environment, ensuring safety and Compliance and enhancing the overall quality of life in our communities.

The service continues to work within a challenging and changing environment required as a result of new planning legislation, NPF4 and the financial constraints of the Council. However good progress has been made in relation to taking forward previously identified improvement actions and this is addressed in Attribute 3 – Embedding Continuous Improvement.

## Outcomes of Best Value Review

A Best Value Service Review process was undertaken in 2023 by the Chief Governance Officer and it recognised the value of the Planning Service working with communities, partners and voluntary sector organisations to achieve service objectives.

It looked ahead to understand how stakeholder needs and expectations may change in the future due to demography, environmental and economic factors. Meetings were held with other service leads to review services, consider internal and external factors impacting on the service and to highlight areas for improvement or change.



**A number of similar issues were highlighted throughout the review:**

- |    |  |    |   |
|----|--|----|---|
| 01 | Difficulties in recruitment and retention  | 05 | Continuing Challenges as a result of the Covid 19 Pandemic;                               |
| 02 | Temporary posts and vacancies impact on the services;                                  | 06 | Changes in Legislation and additional duties on services without the additional resources |
| 03 | There is a need to build in career profession opportunities;                           | 07 | Continued focus on maintaining and improving performance                                  |
| 04 | Need to ensure appropriate succession planning arrangements due to an ageing workforce |    |   |

In the past few years there has been some significant turnover in the development management team and there has also been a need to manage vacancies as a result of staff leaving the Council. Officers have taken on interim roles, including the Operations Manager and Energy Team Leader. Following consideration of the outcomes of the Best Value Service Review which was reported to Council in October 2023 more permanent arrangements were put in place within the team which included beginning the recruitment of the Chief Planning Officer role in October 2023.

The service has also previously introduced trainee/graduate posts to assist with career opportunities and succession planning. However, there continues to be issues in respect of recruitment and this is reflected nationally, with RTPI, HOPS and the Scottish Government progressing work on future planners report.



# Development Management

The Development Management Manager post is an interim post and is currently filled by the Team Leader from the Energy Team on a temporary basis. It is intended that this post has a new job profile, it undergoes Job Evaluation and be advertised internally before the end of 2024. This post requires managing a team as well as management duties in terms of overall Development Management Team. As a result a Team Leader post would be deleted following the appointment of a permanent Development Management Manager.

There are three vacancies in Development Management - one Senior Planning Officer, one Graduate Planning Officer and one Enforcement Officer. Both the Senior Planning Officer and Enforcement Officer Posts have been previously advertised with no suitable applicants. The Development Planning Service is fully staffed.

A review of these vacant posts will take place shortly to determine if it is necessary to fill the posts in a like for like basis or the posts could be used to finance more specialists' posts to support the delivery of NPF4 and Local Development Plan 2 and 3.

Also, it has been identified that the pay grades for Planning Officers and Team Leaders is less than competitor councils and job evaluation work is currently underway led by the Interim Development Management Manager with Human Resources.

In 2023-24 the Development Management Team received a total of 669 applications. Attribute 8- Effective and Efficient Decision Making Processes provides further details of the number and categories of applications received and the performance levels.

Planning Officers who deal with the householder and the less complex applications tend to have a caseload of between 25-30 applications. Whilst Senior Planning Officers who are principally dealing with major and the more complex local applications have a caseload of between 10-15 applications as well as dealing with general enquiries and the discharge of conditions. Team Leaders usually do not have a caseload but are responsible for managing the team and giving advice and signing off delegated decisions and Committee items.

## Enforcement

There are 3 Enforcement Officers with individuals allocated across the different Development Management teams. Officers have highlighted a lack of any opportunities for progression in these roles. There is a requirement as part of the Best Value Review that there is a review of current arrangements in order to strengthen current enforcement provision and this will be progressed before the end of 2024.

This review will also be aligned with the work identified in Attribute 7 to increase the digital presence of Enforcement by providing an online Enforcement Form. In 2023-24 there were 303 cases which were largely divided between 3 Enforcement Officers with support from the Team Leaders. In July 2023 one of the Enforcement Officers retired and that post remains vacant and this will be part of the current review.

## Development Planning

The Strategic Manager for Development Planning and Regeneration provides strategic management and co-ordination for the delivery of Development Planning and the Regeneration Service. The post also manages the Ayrshire Growth Deal, Environmental Projects and East Ayrshire Woodlands and leading an integrated approach to the Service. The Principal Planning Officer provides leadership for the development and management of planning policy and manages the four Planning Officers. Planning Officers have specialist areas with the more complex areas of policy such as housing land and developer contributions sitting with senior planning officers. Consideration of rotation of topic areas takes place annually to ensure upskilling and succession planning.



# Professional and Financial Resources

The table below provides a summary of the staffing complement in the Planning service area together with the budget between both services for 2023-24. There are 16.5 Planning Officers and 3 Enforcement Officers in Development Management and 7.5 Support Officers. In Development Planning there is a total of 7.5 Planning Officers. The table above shows the number of officer's members of Royal Town Planning Institute from both service areas and whether they are Chartered, Licentiate or Affiliate members.

Royal Town Planning Institute Membership	
Chartered Members	12
Licentiate Members	7
Affiliate Members	1

The service budgets are monitored on a monthly basis by the Chief Planning Officer and the Strategic Manager, Development Planning and Regeneration and the respective Service Accountants. Planning Fee income for 2023-24 was £945,663 which was an increase from the previous year. A substantial contribution to these fees came through the Section 36 Energy applications. The Council has sought to increase planning income through the introduction of fees for an enhanced pre-application process and charges for the discharge of conditions and non-material variations.

The main payments continue to be employee costs with West of Scotland Archaeology Service, Ordnance Survey, Computer software, Software Licences, Landscape and Noise Consultants.

The Development Planning budget is separate from the Development Management Service budget and it is essentially employee costs with money to support the Local Development Plan process being sought through a capital bid to the Central Council budget. On 1 May 2024 Cabinet agreed a £0.100 allocation be made towards the production of LDP3.

Development Management 27 FTE	Budget £0.992m
Development Planning 7.5 FTE	Budget £0.594m

# Specialist Professional Advice

Consultees play a key role in the local development plan process and in terms of planning applications. Given the broad range of applications received in the East Ayrshire Council area a large number of consultees are consulted both within the Council and external.

The broad approach and ambition of NPF4 and new Local Development Plan requirements has placed additional demands on all consultees for example Nature Scot and SEPA. These stakeholders together with internal consultees such as the Roads and Traffic Service, Environmental Health, Greener Communities have been affected by financial constraints and are also experiencing the difficulty to recruit for vacant posts for the specialist knowledge. This has resulted in delays in response rates for planning applications and the additional demands brought by the new development plan process. A priority system is often implemented with key consultees to allow key developments to be dealt with quickly such as those which bring economic growth and jobs or are linked to tight funding requirements.

Given the nature of planning applications and the high number of section 36 applications received in East Ayrshire, external specialist advice is often sought in terms of noise and visual and landscape assessment and the monitoring of open cast sites and this has an impact on the Council's financial resources.

Whilst the Planning Service is fairly well resourced with planning officers at present, more specialist skills in biodiversity, ecologist, placemaking, climate adaption, flooding, heritage, contaminated land, noise, landscape and visual assessment are not readily available. A skills review is being undertaken to determine what skills are required to deliver on NPF4 and LDP3, however this will require to be undertaken within the financial constraints of the Council and those of external stakeholders.





## National Planning Improvement Framework

Attribute 2: The planning authority has a valued and supported workforce



## Workforce Strategy

East Ayrshire Council recognises that the workforce is an organisation's most valuable resource and they benefit from the dedication, skills, values and diversity of a workforce that is focused on working together to achieve the aims of the Council's Strategic Plan and the overarching Community Plan. The Council has a Corporate Workforce Strategy 2022-27 which supported the Council's Transformation Strategy 2017-22. Significant workforce actions are being progressing or have been implemented. These actions have direct consequences for the Planning Service and include a Flexible Working policy, developing Career Change Pathways, developing place-based empowered teams, introducing multi skilled roles and developing a Young Workforce by the establishment of an Apprenticeship Framework. The Council also has implemented the Mentoring Framework which creates support and builds across the organisation from our young workforce to our senior leaders. The Strategic Manager in Development Planning and Regeneration is a mentor and mentee.

Whilst the Planning Service does not have its own Workforce Strategy it is intended for the next Governance Service Improvement Plan in Autumn 2024 that this will include an area of workforce planning and workforce profile which will identifies any workforce related actions. This will identify the direction for the workforce, financial constraints, skills gap, etc.

The Planning Service in East Ayrshire have a number of workforce challenges including how to recruit, retain and develop our employees to ensure we remain an employer of choice. In 2023-24 the Planning Team were more settled with regard to staff changes.

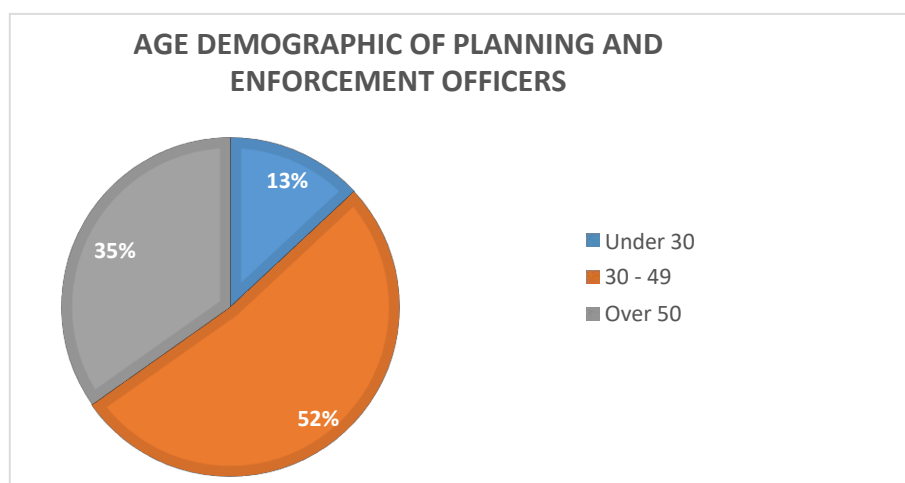
However recruitment of experienced Development Management and Enforcement staff has continued to prove difficult with vacancies in the team. With 3 posts in Development Management remaining vacant at the end of March 2024. However, the appointment of staff is proving a challenge for all local authority planning departments and the Council is an interested and active participant in the RTPI /HOPS Future Planners Project. With an undergraduate accredited Planning Course in the University of West of Scotland (UWS) likely to take its first intakes in 2025, the Council will hopefully continue to be able to offer placements in future years to support the Future Planners Projects. It will continue to support existing Planning Courses in Dundee University and the postgraduate course in Glasgow University.

To this end the Council have a graduate intern post in Development Planning and also have a graduate planning officer post in Development Management. The graduate intern post is financed by the employability team of the Council and is a temporary post for 2 years.

## The Age Demographic

5% of total East Ayrshire Council workforce is age 16-24 while age 45 and above equates to 51% of the workforce.

The workforce in both Development Planning, Development Management and Enforcement shows an ageing workforce with 35% of staff over 50 and over 50% in the 30-45 age group.



## People Management

Support for staff is through the FACE Framework which develops qualities and behaviors as part of the Council's Workforce Plan. The Council's Face Framework supports the Council's Culture to be more flexible in the way we work, with greater collaboration and partnership working, with the ability to provide services closer to where communities need support and for employees to be equipped enabled and empowered to make effective decisions. It keeps staff motivated, engaged and to identify training needs.



FACE Time (annual development review) is a career conversation between the employee and the line manager. This was put in place to support individuals in their development whether they wish to progress or remain in the same role to equip them with the skills and knowledge to be the best they can be in their role enabling effective succession planning. The annual development review keeps staff motivated, engaged and to identify training needs. As part of the Council's succession planning framework it also develops a process for identifying critical skills and training so that employees are upskilled to assume new positions and responsibility.

Regular Team Meetings are held to share good practice, update on national and council issues and to take forward service improvements. All team members have one to ones which are more personal, individual and flexible and provide a safe space to discuss work and other related matters.

## People Development

Staff attended a number of training events during 2023-24. Three young planners attended the RTPi Scottish Young Planners conference 2024 in Glasgow on Future Planners, two staff members participating in the RTPi Conference in Dundee in October 2023 on delivering a digital future for planning and a Planning Officer attended Scotland's EIA Conference 2023.

Conference attendance has the triple benefits of giving staff sometime away from daily workload to hear about new ideas and future thinking, making connections with other planners from across Scotland and hearing about projects in other areas that are directly relevant to what is going on in East Ayrshire.

The Planning Team were encouraged in May to take an hour out of their day to be inspired by the poet Kevin P.Gilday who was presenting the annual Sir Patrick Geddes Commemorative Lecture on the topic of the Poetics of Planning: how art can shape the future. Kevin encouraged planners to release our creativity skills and get back to why we came into the planning profession. There was an opportunity to write a piece of poetry during our lunch break. This is a piece of poetry by a member of the Planning Team.

***“A town is a rainstorm on an October day. A plate of tapas mixing flavours and colours to tantalise the palate.  
A planner is a modernist painter who never finishes her painting.  
Hoping to achieve a garden full of bright colours and inspiration.  
The planning process is a pack of frantic wild dogs protecting its prey each to achieve its own.  
A greenspace of grass against dense dark buildings to let out the light.  
The outcome is as good as the participants let it be.”***



**Poem by a Town Planner – an unacknowledged poet of the physical world.**

Other courses and workshops attended during the year included the Planning Skills session on NPF4 Biodiversity, onshore Wind Pipeline Analysis, Grid Improvements for Scotwind, and A Network for Net Zero: Consenting Pathways for 2030, HOPS Carbon Literary, Trees, Flooding, Housing, Open Space Strategies and Scottish Town Partnership workshop on Climate.

The Chief Planning Officer is Scottish Convenor of RTPi 2024 and is the Chair of Heads of Planning (Scotland/) 2024-25. The Development Planning and Regeneration Strategic Lead is the Chair of the Development Planning Sub-group for 2024-25. The Chair of HOPS provides leadership for 34 Planning Authorities and is HOPS Spokesperson for Media and Communications. She liaises with the Scottish Government, and attends the High Level Group on Performance and is supported by the various sub groups.

Other planning team members also participate in the various sub groups of HOPS - Development Planning sub-group, Development Management, Climate Change, Energy and Resources, Development Planning.



*"I attended the Young Planner Conference organised by RTPI Scotland to deepen my understanding of Scottish Planning System. Various topics were discussed including community benefit, housing need and collaboration between developers and Local planning authorities (LPAs). The discussion on improving communication and different methods of communication was particularly insightful. Moreover, role of GIS in efficient planning was also highlight of the conference.*

*I gained valuable insights into fostering better collaboration and communication within the planning process. Moving forward, I intend to utilise these learnings to enhance my communication strategies and leverage GIS tools for more efficient assessment of planning applications."*

*Syedda Laila  
Planning Officer  
East Ayrshire Council*

## Health and Wellbeing

The Council and the Planning Service have a focus on the wellbeing of the workforce and it recognises the responsibility as an employer to provide avenues of support both preventative and reactive to contribute positively to the physical and mental health of employees.

There are Wellbeing Supports on the Council intranet site where employees are able to find a wide range of information and organisations to contact for support.

These include a range of online wellbeing courses and a revised Flexible Working policy incorporating Hybrid Working arrangements as well access to early intervention assistance through Occupational Health Service and Employee Counselling Service in order to promote positive wellbeing.

The Council also encourages employees to volunteer and give back to their local community, giving them time away from their normal duties to help out a community or voluntary organisation. The employee is granted one day's paid leave per calendar year. Employee Supported Volunteering supports workforce development as well as contributing to the wellbeing of employees.

# Improvement Action Plan (People theme)

(1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)

Attribute	Score
1. The planning authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity	3
2. The planning authority has a value and supported workforce	2

Based on the grading above, the following areas of improvement have been identified. Their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short – 1 Year/ medium – 3 Years/ long term – 3+ Years).

Improvement Actions	Owner	Importance	Timescale	Resources
Attribute 1&3: Review of the Enforcement Function to encompass staffing, workload and digital and to increase the capacity of the enforcement function through upskilling of planning officers.	Planning Service	High	Short (to undertake) Medium (to implement)	Service Managers/ Enforcement Officers/Development Management Team Leaders
Attribute1: Undertake a Specialist Skills Review in the Delivery of NPF4 and LDP3 and relate to Service Structure. We will feed the outcome of this review to the Improvement Service and HOPS to assist with the development of the Planning Hub.	Planning Service/ Improvement Service	High	Short (undertake) Medium (implementation)	Service Managers/ Greener Communities/ Environmental Health
Attribute 2: Undertake Workforce Strategy. We will work with the Council's Organisational Development and HR	Chief Planning	Medium	Short (undertake)	Service Managers/ Planning Staff

sections and external partners to deliver a pipeline of future leaders and skilled practitioners by ensuring that appropriate skills and training is provided. We will explore the possibility of utilising modern /graduate apprenticeships, working with the Council's Employability Service and University of the West of Scotland to deliver a future workforce. We will consider the impact of the Planning Hub on the service including our needs, skills and resources to ensure we maximise the output of our workforce.	Officer/ Governance Service/EAC OD,HR/ Improvement Service/ Universities/ UWS		Long (implementa tion)	
Attribute 2: Promote a positive healthy workplace culture which aligns with the Council's policies and Workforce Strategy building on meaningful work, open communication and FACE values through communication at work events, training and networking sessions within and outwith the office. Investigate and introduce measures for a less risk averse work environment.	Chief Planning Officer/ Planning Service/ Governance Service/EAC OD, HR.	Medium	Long	Planning Team/EAC Organisational Development/Service Managers/Team Leaders



## National Planning Improvement Framework

Attribute 3: The planning authority has embedded continuous improvement



**A high performing planning authority has a positive culture through ensuring it has sound governance, effective leadership and a commitment to continuous improvement. The authority has an identified Chief Planning Officer, who is supported by a strong leadership group to advise on decision-making, policy and operational management.**

## Overview

2023/24 has been a busy period for East Ayrshire Council planning service in terms of self-reflection and improvement actions being identified. As covered in attribute 1, in mid 2023 a best value service review of the Development Management section was undertaken and was presented to Council in October 2023. A copy of that report can be found at [Governance Services - Best Value Service Review of Operations and Regulatory Services.pdf \(east-ayrshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/Governance/Best%20Value%20Service%20Review%20of%20Operations%20and%20Regulatory%20Services.pdf).

That service review identified a number of areas for improvement, some of which were aligned to previous commitments in the Planning Performance Framework, along with new improvements.



The highlights of these include the requirement to update the Scheme of Delegation which was identified as being out of date and in need of refresh (underway), amendments to discretionary fee charges (which is complete), the establishment of a Chief Planning Officer post and recruitment to that (complete), a review of costs (underway), strengthening our enforcement function (review underway) and review of processes within our technical support team (commencing early 2024/25). A similar service review is now underway of our Development Planning function and will be reported to full Council in due course.

## Service Improvements

Our Planning Performance Framework service plan for 2023/2024 had 19 actions across a range of Development Planning and Management functions. A range of these actions have been completed or are in hand and are referenced through this NPIF submission. However, in terms of some significant highlights from the PPFlist:

- *LDP2 was taken through examination and was adopted on 8 April 2024;*
- *Recruited into a number of vacant posts including planners and senior planners across the service;*
- *Revisions made to the prior notification/approval process internally to smooth handling and aid understanding of the process;*
- *Worked with Key Agencies Groups, particularly around flooding matters;*
- *Service review completed for Development Management and underway for Development Planning;*
- *Continued support for Ayrshire Growth Deal projects, noting the recent submission of an application for a centre of excellence for food production and associated business units;*
- *Equipment updates to Development Management and Development Planning;*
- *Put in place opportunities for new apprenticeships within the Service via the Jobs and Training Fund with a new graduate intern starting in coming weeks;*
- *Working to develop the Mauchline CARS action plan;*
- *Continued the development of the Coalfield Communities Landscape Partnership and related projects.*

As demonstrated by the above list, we have reviewed our functions across two separate, but tied, processes and have implemented a range of those identified improvements/actions. A number of others remain in hand and underway at the moment and those are built into the improvement actions identified in this report.

Some of the previously identified service improvements are no longer being taken forward, such as the RCGF proposals as funding for this has not been continued, the development of placemaking plans has been pivoted to take account of the new Local Place Plan process and full Regional Spatial Strategy has been paused awaiting guidance to be issued by the Scottish Government. We continue to strive to identify where we can make improvements to the service we provide across all of our functions, building on our own strengths but also seeking to tackle our identified weaknesses.

As part of this process, we seek to work with our peers to identify areas where we could learn from good practice elsewhere. Heads of Planning Scotland (HoPS) provides a good platform for knowledge sharing across Scotland. East Ayrshire Council actively participates in Heads of Planning Scotland, as covered in Attribute 2. Beyond HoPS, East Ayrshire Council colleagues have met with representatives from West Dunbartonshire Council to exchange knowledge on technical and IT working systems for the Development Management process and Development Planning leads from the three Ayrshire Authorities meet regularly on an informal basis to share information, ideas, challenges etc.

## Complaints Procedure

Further learning and improvement opportunities can come from complaints. Due to the nature of the planning system, complaints are somewhat inevitable, often driven by unhappiness at certain outcomes or decisions. However, on occasion processes and standards can also be subject to complaint from stakeholders who are involved in the planning system. This can relate to failures on the part of the Planning Authority to uphold our own standards or to have failed to deliver an adequate service, for example. Whilst we strive to minimise such complaints by providing a high quality service, when we do fail we seek to understand why that happened and try to put in place learning or process improvements to prevent repetition. The Council operates a two stage complaints system prior to any complaint being considered by the Scottish Public Services ombudsman (SPSO). This is displayed on our website home page with a link to our complaints handling procedures and how to make a complaint at [Comments, suggestions and complaints · East Ayrshire Council \(east-ayrshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/Comments_suggestions_and_complaints).

In 2023/24, six formal stage one complaints were received, three of which were not upheld, 2 partially upheld and one resolved. At the more detailed stage 2 level complaint (i.e. following on from stage 1 or more complex complaints that merited a detailed review under stage 2), a total of 9 complaints were received, of which three were upheld, 2 partially upheld and four not upheld.

Four complaints related to our planning function were made to the SPSO however none of these were taken forward to the decision stage by the SPSO, having reviewed the nature of those complaints. In one of these responses from the SPSO the quality of the Council's complaint response was given specific praise by the Ombudsman. In terms of the volume and complexity of matters dealt with by the Planning Authority each year, the number of formal complaints were small and even less of those complaints were upheld.

Where they were upheld, the learning experience has principally been the requirement to improve staff understanding of certain processes, such as the requirement to maintain timely communication with our customers, however others have been in terms of process, for example failing to timeously publish certain compliance monitoring related information on our website.

In such cases, the highlighting of the failure itself is generally adequate to reinforce the improvements required and there is no evidence of existential failure, or repeated failures, on the same matters.

Further to learning from complaints, we issue feedback forms within the decision notice packs to try to gain an understanding of our customers experience. Responses to these have been low to none over the last number of years and as such the benefit of doing this is not being achieved. On review, we think that we can make this process easier for our customers and have advanced an improvement action to properly review our current feedback form and process to try to obtain an improved response rate going forward.

## Awards

The Planning Authority, along with other participants, has been recognised during 2023/24 for good practice and achievement in the Hagshaw Energy Cluster Development Framework. The Development Framework has been developed together between the local authorities, renewable energy developers and operators, statutory agencies and communities to create a shared vision for the cluster. It sets out an ambitious but deliverable ten year vision for how a more strategic and collaborative approach to renewable energy development can help us achieve Net Zero together in a just and fair way. The Development Framework identifies opportunities to deliver enhancement to both communities, and the natural and built environment, and support a thriving and prosperous local and regional economy. The Framework was shortlisted for the UK Landscape Institute Award – category ‘Excellence in climate, environment and social outcomes’, was the winner of the Scottish Green Energy Award 2023 – category ‘sustainable development award’ and was entered for the RTPI Excellence in Planning Award 2024. The submission of projects and/or processes for awards can bring benefits to the wider team by bring a sense of profession accomplishment and pride, knowing that all the efforts and work has been acknowledged in a formal setting and appreciated by others as well as raising the profile of the Service, Council and the Planning Profession.

## National Planning Improvement Framework

Attribute 4: The planning authority has Sound Governance



## Planning Scheme of Delegation

The Planning Authority Scheme of Delegation was approved by Scottish Ministers however it has subsequently been updated periodically on review, albeit in non-substantive ways, but is beyond the statutory 5 year period for formal review and approval by Ministers. The Scheme of Delegation is available on the Council's website at [Scheme of Delegation and Administration \(east-ayrshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk). Substantive review of the Scheme of Delegation was identified by the Council in the Service review published in October 2023 and following appointment of the Chief Planning Officer, this has been progressed with revisions being discussed at senior officer levels and with the Councillors of the Planning Committee. It is intended that a revised Scheme of Delegation will be presented to Council in the second half of 2024 with subsequent notification to Ministers and adoption thereafter expected before the end of 2024. Although the Scheme of Delegation requires review and notification to Ministers, the current Scheme of Delegation remains fit for purpose in terms of ensuring that Council business continues to be transacted.

96.9% of our Scottish Government recorded decisions are made under delegated powers with Planning Committee determining the balance. For the year 2023/24, Planning Committee:



- *Determined 18 applications for planning permission or planning permission in principle;*
- *Considered and agreed the Council position on 3 consultations under Section 36 of The Electricity Act 1989;*
- *Considered and agreed 8 quarterly reports relating to compliance monitoring and updates on progress with legacy planning applications and applications awaiting legal agreements;*
- *Considered and agreed 2 completion reports for restoration at former open cast mining developments; and*
- *Determined 8 discharge of planning condition applications relating to decommissioning or financial guarantees.*

These applications represent a mix of large and smaller scale development but included a number of large scale housing, business and renewables projects. Amongst these and of particular note included an eco-wellness park, whisky maturation warehouses with office building and a windfarm with turbines up to 250m in height. Over this period only one planning application was refused contrary to officer recommendation, with members taking a different view on road safety matters. In total, of those applications measured for terms of statistical purposes, i.e. the planning applications etc., approximately 5.6% of the recommendations made to planning committee were overturned.

## Local Review Body

In 2023/24 the Local Review Body (LRB) determined 11 cases in total. The original officer decision was upheld in 10 of those 11 cases, resulting in the original decision being overturned in around 9.1% of cases determined.

In terms of appeals to Scottish Ministers for planning decisions, 4 planning cases were determined by the DPEA, with two of those four original decisions being upheld, resulting in a 50% overturn rate. In addition, two enforcement notice appeals and a planning appeal were submitted but were rejected as being out with the remit of the DPEA.



# Planning Committee

The Planning Committee is comprised of 13 Councillors drawn from across the district, sitting on average once per month throughout the year other than in July. For 2023/24, a total of 12 meetings of the planning committee took place, most of which were diarised in advance with additional, or special, committee's convened when business dictates, subject to the discretion of the Chair of the committee. A selection of five members from planning committee sit on the LRB at any one time, drawing on their knowledge and experience of planning matters. LRB met 12 times during 2023/24 and will meet when business is required to be heard. Training is provided to our members when they join the Planning Committee, provided in house by senior staff within Development Management and Legal Services and all members of the planning committee require to have completed this training before sitting on the committee. Training generally comprises of a presentation session setting out the statutory process and the key elements of planning knowledge that they will require to undertake their duty and usually lasts for approximately 2 hours. This training is supplemented by shorter ad hoc sessions when the need arises, for example when the National Planning Framework 4 came into force and when the Local Development Plan 2 was adopted. Planning and Legal advice is available at each planning committee meeting to help clarify any questions or queries members may have. Whilst not specific to planning committee members, our Councillors have also participated in member officer working groups in relation to the Local Development Plan. This has built a considerable knowledge amongst some members and they are well versed in the content of policies and direction of strategic travel that this key decision making document has. The Members Officers Working Group (MOWG) will continue to be used as a vehicle to get members views on engagement and issues in terms of LDP3.

Whilst ongoing training is ad hoc in nature, we do have aspirations to bring a more structured approach to training of committee members, including for example feeding back the outcome of appeal decisions as learning opportunities for members or provide training on supplementary guidance such as developer contributions and rural housing clusters. This approach has been discussed with the Chair of the committee who is supportive and this will be rolled out as an improvement during 2024/25.



## National Planning Improvement Framework

Attribute 5: The planning authority has effective leadership



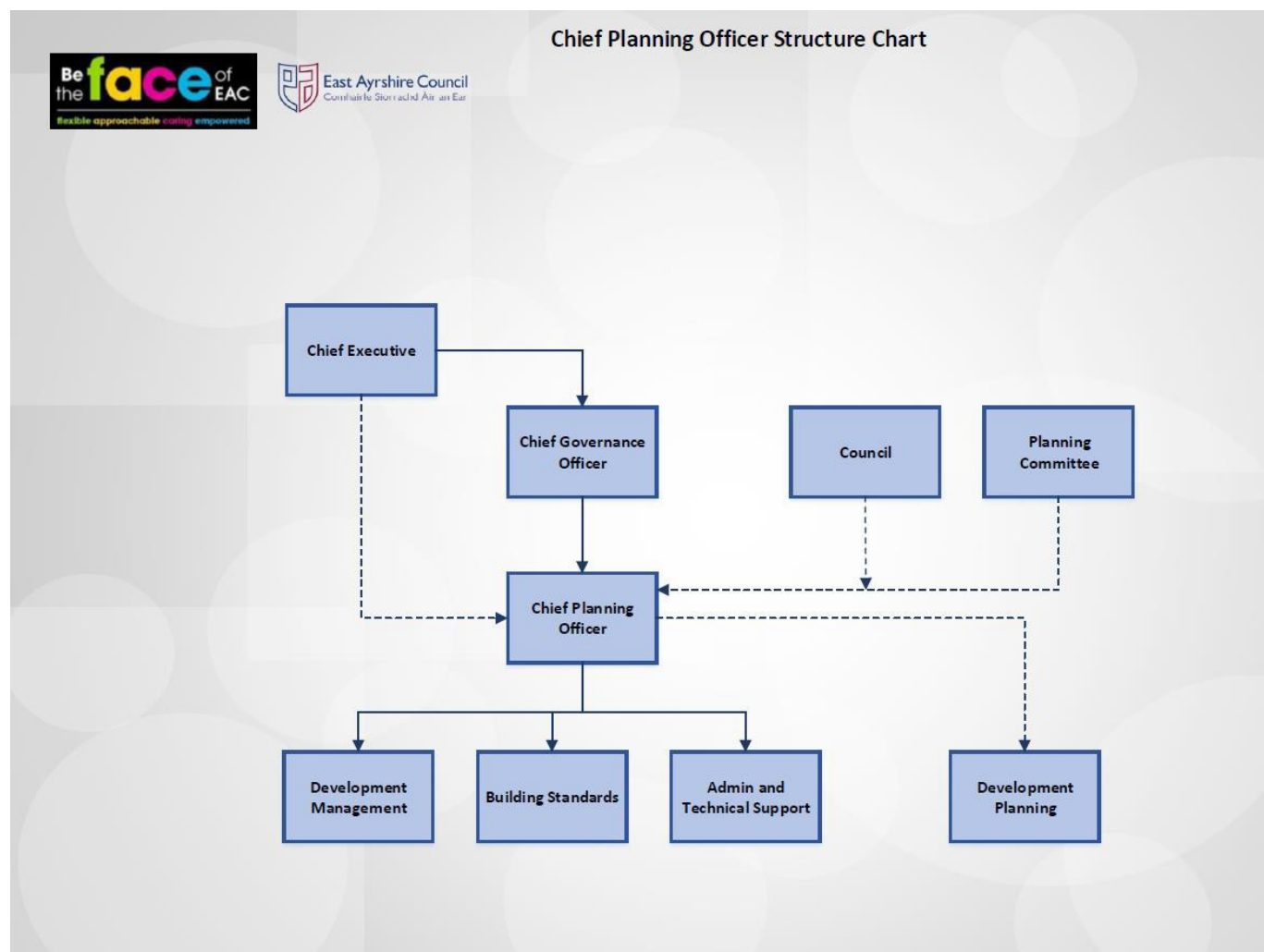
## Chief Planning Officer

The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) requires that each planning authority must appoint a Chief Planning Officer. The appointment and role of the Chief Planning Officer became a statutory requirement in April 2024. The person should hold chartered membership of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) and should have the relevant skills and experience for the role of Chief Planning Officer including effective communication, stakeholder relationship management externally and throughout the authority, planning and delivery skills and leadership skills.

The Chief Planning Officer guidance indicates that the role is to help strengthen leadership on planning and corporate recognition of the importance and positive influence of planning within their authorities. The duties and responsibilities of the Chief Planning Officer are around 5 main attributes:

- *Professional Advisor*
- *Delivering National Planning Priorities*
- *Champion of place*
- *Head of Profession*
- *Performance Improvement*

The findings and report of the Best Value Service Review of Governance Services (as detailed in Attributes 1 and 3) recognised the need to appoint a statutory Chief Planning Officer and to be appointed at an appropriate level of seniority to ensure that the officer can add value to strategic objectives and aspirations within the Council. As Head of the Profession for Planning, the Chief Planning Officer will influence key planning, place and architecture decisions. Reports to Planning Committee are in the name of the Chief Planning Officer and there is a structural link to the Development Planning and Regeneration Team with the Chief Planning Officer having the final sign off in terms of the Development Plan.



The role has now been filled and Pamela Clifford was appointed as the new Chief Planning Officer and started the role on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2024. See case study.



# Professional Advisor

The role of the Chief Planning Officer in East Ayrshire Council is to deliver on the vision of and the six priorities of the Strategic Plan. The Chief Planning Officer is a member of the Council's Corporate Management Team and the Governance Team supports the Senior Management Team and elected members in developing corporate objective and translating these into place – based strategies. Key skills of the post involve the delivery on a strategic vision and working collaboratively in partnership with senior managers and elected members to promote and achieve the Strategic Plan priorities.

A recent example is a significant housing development to the North of Kilmarnock where a more collaborative approach was taken with the developer to achieve biodiversity enhancements and a more coordinated masterplan layout. This approach was welcomed by the developer.

*“Many thanks for meeting with us earlier this week, it always good to sit round a table and talk all things planning and development. We appreciate the officer time on the current Buntonhill/Northcraigs allocated site and hopefully we can progress this through to determination later this year as discussed. It would be great to talk about how we could assist realising the local ambitions for Kilmarnock, and sit down with your policy team to see how that could be achieved collaboratively”.*

**Andrew McNab | Senior Land and Planning Manager | Hallam Land Management Ltd**





# Delivering National Planning Priorities

The Chief Planning Officer is currently the Scottish Convenor of Royal Town Planning Institute 2024 whereby she represents the planning profession both private and public sector in Scotland and nationally promoting the value of the Institute and Planning at a national level. She regularly attends the General Assembly which provides a forum for debate about the development of planning policy and practice. She also communicates through RTPI monthly bulletin, the Scottish Planner and through X @ConvenorRTPIS which has over 1815 followers. She recently hosted the Sir Patrick Geddes Commemorative Lecture in May 2024 and will hold an Annual Conference in October 2024.

## Champion of Place

The role of Chief Planning Officer supports place making ambitions within the Council and it is the Council's placemaking champion and encourages working collaboratively with other Council officers, elected members and developers. The Chief Planning Officer has a passion about Place and has a strong track record of delivering multi-scale Projects and quality Placemaking, NPF4 has shifted the focus to place and there are good opportunities in East Ayrshire – through the Levelling Up Programme, the Town Centre Strategic Advisory Group and the Council's Ayrshire Growth Deal proposal as well as other major development sites to encourage placemaking qualities to be at the forefront of development proposals.

## Head of Profession

The Chief Planning Officer is the Head of the Planning Profession in East Ayrshire and the most senior responsible qualified officer for the Council's Planning Service. She is the main contact for key stakeholders on planning and place and represents the Council externally on various external groups. She is a member of RTPI and has been a Chief Planning Officer for over 14 years with substantial experience of facilitating large scale regeneration and major development, delivering on the Local Development process and on large scale project management. As detailed above the Chief Planning Officer is Scottish Convener of the RTPI 2024 and Chair of Heads of Planning (Scotland). She represents these organisations and the Council at various groups such as the High Level Group, COSLA, SOLACE and the Scotland's Local Authority Professional Association Leadership 2024. She encourages team members to be part of HOPS sub- groups, RTPI Chapters and to attend workshops, Conferences and various events and meetings, to collaborate and develop further skills.

As previously detailed, the Strategic Manager – Development Planning and Regeneration is the Chair of the Development Planning sub-group and the Interim Development Management Manager is participant of the Development Management sub-group and the Climate and Energy sub-group. Team members are encouraged to gain RTPI charter membership. A number of the younger planners are licentiates and are working towards the assessments of Professional Competence.

Recently, one of the Planning Officers from the Development Planning Team wrote an article for the recent Scottish Planner discussing how the transformative impact of NPF4 on planning in Scotland – the challenges and opportunities it presents.

# Performance and Improvement

In East Ayrshire, there is a strong recognition to deliver and support Fit for Future Services which results in excellent performance and customer service whilst delivering outcomes and development on the ground.

The role of the Chief Planning Officer is to embed continuous improvement in the Service and improvements have been identified previously through the Planning Performance Framework and the Best Value Service Review and either have been delivered or are being taken forward.

In terms of Continuous Improvement, work has commenced on a new Committee report format, review of the registration and validation process of applications, review of the Scheme of Delegation, digital transformation in terms of online forms and exploring moving to a new GIS platform.

The Chief Planning Officer is the interface between elected members and officers and Senior Planning Officers work closely with elected officers. As the postholder is fairly new to the post and the local authority, a strong work relationship is being developed by the Chief Planning Officer with elected members especially the Chair and Vice Chair and other Planning Committee members. This will be done through pre agenda meetings before the Planning Committee, informed briefing workshops on various service improvements such as the new Committee report format, Scheme of Delegation and identify training needs such as certain policies of LDP2 as well as ward site visit with the respective elected members.

## Improvement Action Plan (Culture theme)

(1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)

Attribute	Score
3. This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement	2
4. This Planning Authority has sound governance	2
5. This Planning Authority has effective leadership	2

Based on the grading above, the following areas of improvement have been identified. Their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short – 1 Year/ medium – 3 Years/ long term – 3+ Years).

Improvement Action	Owner	Importance	Timescale	Resources
Attribute 3: Review of customer feedback form and process in connection with planning decisions to facilitate easier engagement and feedback by our customers and ensure that it is properly recorded and actioned. We will seek to align this work with the national survey to be undertaken by the National Planning Improvement team.	Planning Service and Improvement Service	Medium	Medium	Development Management and technical support staff
Attribute 4: Review of scheme of delegation to bring SoD up to date and to reflect relevant pressures and priorities. This will seek to ensure that the work of committee is proportionate to the nature of the development under consideration and ensure that smaller scale development is determined under delegated power,	Planning Service	High	Short	Service Managers

thereby allowing elected members to focus on strategic and complex developments.				
Attribute 4: Elected member training to bring forward a more structured and consistent approach and greater awareness of current wider development, news and innovation within the Scottish planning sector. We will seek to ensure that training is aligned with forthcoming Scottish Government guidance and legislation in respect of statutory councillor training and to support elected members in decision-making and knowledge gathering.	Planning Service, Elected members and Scottish Government	Medium	Short to Medium	Chief Planning Officer/ Development Management staff/Development Planning and possible external resource
Attribute 5: Corporate Management Team workshops to show links between planning and other departments on e.g. developer contributions, place and wellbeing outcomes. We will also involve external stakeholders in sharing good practice.	Planning Service Corporate Management Team	Medium	Short	Service Managers and Development Planning



## National Planning Improvement Framework

Attribute 6: The planning authority has a robust policy and evidence base



A high performing planning authority needs to have an effective local development plan and other strategies in place to provide a vision for the future of the area. It needs to be able to set and deliver on policy ambitions and priorities by clearly informing decision making and providing certainty and predictability for communities, developers and investment. The authority's development management systems need to be effective in making the right decisions about development and be efficient as possible in doing this. The planning authority makes best use of digital technology and how it manages and uses data.

## Local Development Plan 2

The Planning Authority adopted LDP2 on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024 and therefore has an up to date Local Development Plan.

The Plan was written in a number of difficult circumstances with the first Covid lockdown tying in with the publication of the Main Issues Report, and draft NPF4 being published as the Proposed Plan was nearing completion, resulting in officers delaying the publication of the Proposed Plan to try and ensure alignment.



The Plan was produced with collaboration from the LDP2 Members Officers Working Group (MOWG) which met for the first time on the 17 April 2019 and has met on more than 30 occasions thereafter. It has been a significant commitment for Elected Members on the group and for the officers involved across the Council.

Out with MOWG, the policy team have also worked closely with colleagues in Education, NHS Ayrshire and Arran, the Health and Social Care Partnership and Facilities and Property Management to ensure that the implications of our site allocations on education and medical services are well understood and catered for. In addition, the Council's legal services and other local authorities have assisted with matters related to the complex issue of developer contributions.

LDP2 will ensure that decision making takes account of matters critical for East Ayrshire including the drive to achieve net-zero, community wealth building, the delivery of the Ayrshire Growth Deal and the provision of new, well designed housing and associated infrastructure that helps to achieve good placemaking and well connected, thriving communities.

The **LDP Vision** is as follows: **“East Ayrshire will be a net zero place with a thriving and diverse environment. We will have strong, healthy and resilient communities that benefit from high quality places, multi-functional green spaces and access to high quality services that are well located to maximise sustainable travel choices. Our economy will have recovered and be fairer, greener and more inclusive, with all East Ayrshire citizens able to benefit from greater economic opportunities.”**

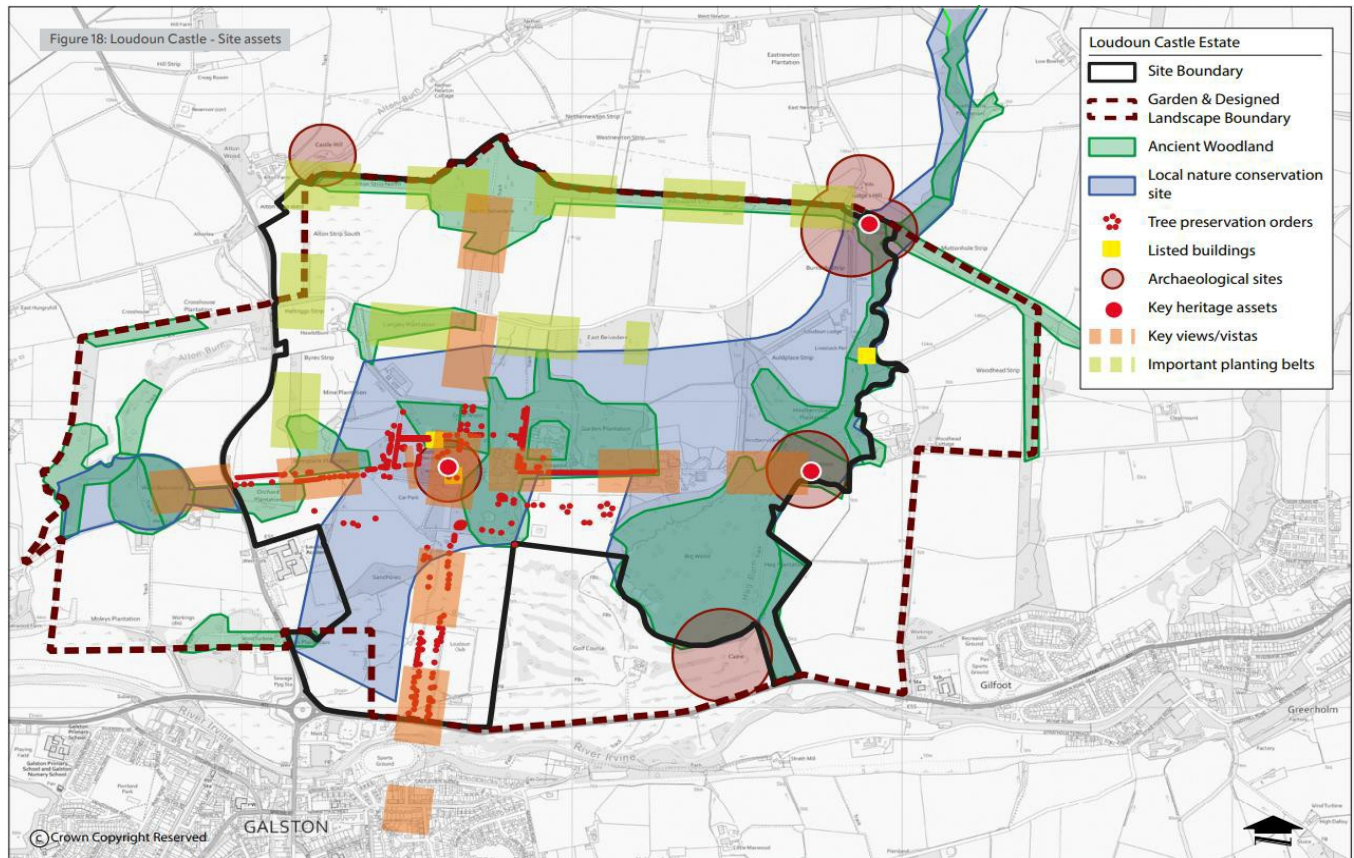
The Spatial Strategy is a fundamental part of the Plan, which sets out spatially the Council's priorities for how development should take place over the next 10 years. The spatial strategy is split over 5 themes; sustainability and green recovery; (ii) place and environment; (iii) economy and employment; (iv) transport and infrastructure; and (v) energy, resources and resilience.

Officers worked to incorporate Draft NPF4 into the Proposed Plan, and further changes to align the Plan with NPF4 were made by Planning & Environmental Appeals Division (DPEA) meaning whilst the Plan was created under transitional arrangements it aligns well with NPF4 and contains the first LDP policy on Community Wealth Building in Scotland.

## Supplementary and Planning Guidance

Supporting LDP2 is a wide range of supplementary and non-statutory planning guidance. Since adoption of the Plan in April, significant progress is being made on the commitment to prepare supplementary guidance to support the implementation of the policies. Supplementary Guidance on affordable housing and Financial Guarantees already has been adopted, whilst consultation on number of further guidance documents finished at the end of June, including Housing in the Countryside, Skills and Employment plan guidance, Developer Contributions and Local landscape areas. The consultation on the supplementary Guidance on the Loudoun Castle Estate has just closed. It was a substantial piece of work whereby the Council sets out how it would like the site to progress.

LDP2 identifies Loudoun Castle and Estate as a miscellaneous development opportunity site (RU-M2) within the rural area. RU-M2 stipulates that the Council will support the development of 'Tourism & leisure, tourist accommodation & housing (only as part of a mix with the aforementioned uses)'. The site is characterised by its notable environmental assets, including the A-listed Loudoun Castle and the nationally recognised garden and designed landscape. Given the complexities of the site detailed guidance assists developers in preparing proposals which will respect the sites assets and any future development proposals.



## Delivery Programme

An ambitious and comprehensive delivery programme has been prepared to support the LDP, this is one of the first in Scotland. The Delivery Programme sets out how the Council will implement the Local Development Plan 2 and is a live document which will be updated every 2 years as per the legislation. It places greater focus on delivery being used to drive outcomes rather than just monitor specific actions. The Delivery Programme was recently approved by Cabinet in June 2024. Not all the actions are dependent upon the Planning Service, or indeed the Council.

Many of the actions, in particular the delivery of housing sites are dependent upon developers and other external organisations, however the Council will monitor progress to determine when interventions may be required to assist with the long term aspirations of the Plan.

No policies in LDP2 have been found to be deficient at appeal or judicial review. No judicial review has occurred relevant to the Plan.

## Regional Spatial Strategy

Following Cabinet approval on 2 September 2020 and approval by the appropriate committees of North and South Ayrshire Councils, an indicative Regional Spatial Strategy for Ayrshire was submitted to the Scottish Government on 15 September 2020. As the guidance from the Scottish government has not yet been forthcoming this has not progressed. However, officers are considering how the can become a spatial iteration of the Regional Economic Strategy for Ayrshire ([Ayrshire Regional Economic Strategy \(north-ayrshire.gov.uk\)](http://north-ayrshire.gov.uk))

## Local Development Plan 3

As a Planning Authority which chose to proceed through transitional arrangements with an 'old style' LDP, which has just been adopted, the evidence report is at an early stage, and on track, per the Development Plan Scheme to be completed by Q1 25/26. The development plan scheme 2024 which was approved by Cabinet on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2024.

## National Planning Improvement Framework

Attribute 7: The planning authority makes the best use of data and digital technology



## Digital Transformation

During 2023-24 95% of applications received were submitted through the Planning Portal, accounting for 635 of the 669 applications received. We strongly encourage the use of the Portal on our website at [eDevelopment · East Ayrshire Council \(east-ayrshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/eDevelopment) and [Planning application forms · East Ayrshire Council \(east-ayrshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/Planning_application_forms) and have also introduced a surcharge for paper submissions of applications to further incentivise the use of electronic submissions. In addition to this use for planning applications, we have also created a workaround to take advantage of the portal for the submissions of applications to discharge planning conditions. That process is not supported by the Portal however through the use of the 'application to discharge conditions of a planning permission in principle' we have been able to encourage applications made through the Portal and subsequently change the application type when received. That minimises our handling of documents and ensures better efficiency.

Our processes are now fully electronic, with any hard copy information quickly digitised and we have operated in this manner for a number of years. In respect of a formalised pathway in place to allow access to up-to-date local authority data required for the LDP evidence reports, East Ayrshire Council is at the very early stages of preparing the evidence report for LDP3 (LDP2 adopted as recently as April 2024), and data requirements/sources are not yet fully mapped out. Internally, the Development Planning Team has good links with the Council's Corporate Support team, which manages statistical information (population / census) etc. Externally, good



links are established with data providers, such as NHS Ayrshire and Arran, NatureScot, Improvement Service and Scottish Wildlife Trust.

As such, and reflecting the current stage of the Local Development Plan, there are good links already in place that will be a good grounding for a more formalised pathway to be put in place to ensure that adequate and up to date data will be available.

The Planning Authority has access to GIS and spatial data with a small team of trained technical support staff helping to run that access. However, the Council is partly constrained by the current provision of GIS, which doesn't take in real time information nor provides development tools for dynamic real time analysis of map data. The Council is actively looking at a more advanced, real time data analysis GIS type system and is in discussions at a corporate level to replace our current system with a more up to date, real time GIS type system to bring this Council into alignment with most other Scottish Council's. Presently the Business case is being developed and a Survey has been issued through HQ engagement to all existing and potential users of the GIS to determine their service requirements.

Our Strategic Lead for Development Planning sits on the Council's Digital Management Board and is on the local government transformation programme led by Solace and the Improvement Service in the cohort looking at creating digital, design and technology-enabled transformation. This means we are at the forefront of conversations around how digital can assist with both financial constraints and facilitating a better service. Over the next year we hope to start to implement change in the service as a result of learning and engagement in these groups.

In respect of other digital tools, the Council makes significant use of a range of tools. In respect of the LDP2 process:

- <sup>Δ</sup> EAC website was regularly updated and all information on LDP is put online here.
- <sup>Δ</sup> Issued 'stay connected' updates to residents who we know have an interest in planning related matters
- <sup>Δ</sup> LDP Proposed Plan consultation was regularly promoted through EAC corporate Facebook and twitter accounts
- <sup>Δ</sup> Online meetings were offered to communities through the MIR and Proposed Plan consultation periods.
- <sup>Δ</sup> Online sessions were held with elected members (separated into ward sessions), both in relation to the proposed plan and pre-examination.

**In addition, the website is regularly updated with up to date information and revisions to.**

- Documents, including for example early notification to our customers of forthcoming discretionary fees charges and revisions to existing charges, bolstered by an email push out to the planning agents and architects that we engage with most, to raise awareness of the changes.





## National Planning Improvement Framework

Attribute 8: The planning authority has effective and efficient decision making processes



## Planning Performance

For the year 2023/24 the returns from the Scottish Government indicate the following:

- *Approval rate: 92.1%*

Average processing times:

- *Major development: 17.9 weeks*
- *Local development (all): 11.3 weeks*
- *Householder development: 8.5 weeks*
- *Housing Major: 24 weeks*
- *Business and Industry Major: 15.3 weeks*
- *EIA development: 25 weeks*

In terms of comparison, our performance for Major development applications has substantially improved since 2022/23, noting that we have dropped to 17.9 weeks from 46 weeks in 2022/23, albeit fewer Major developments were determined than the last year, but no processing agreements were required to achieve this overall figure.

Our local and householder figures have slightly dropped, from 9.5 and 8.1 weeks to 11.3 and 8.5

weeks respectively. There are various reasons for this, primarily including a number of vacancies which required to be filled but which we were unable to recruit to due to insufficient quantity and quality of candidates and a drop in the number of processing agreements from the previous year for local developments. This Council also promotes a collaborative approach with applicants, working with them to resolve issues rather than solely determining applications to achieve better performance statistics. Whilst processing agreements and stop the clock can and are used to reflect delays, by the nature of this approach our determination period for some more complex and challenging applications will inevitably be longer, with average processing times therefore impacted.

## Appeals

In terms of appeals to Scottish Ministers for planning decisions (i.e. excluding any enforcement related appeals or on any other grounds), 4 planning cases were determined by the DPEA, with one of those two original decisions being upheld, resulting in a 50% overturn rate. In addition, two enforcement notice appeals and a planning appeal were submitted but were rejected as being outwith the remit of the DPEA. Over the previous number of years the appeals of our decisions to DPEA have been relatively low, a trend that has continued during 2023/24. No judicial reviews of the Council's decisions were sought or allowed during 2023/24, a position that has remained steady for many years.

## Local Reviews

In relation to local appeals through Local Review Body, 11 appeals were determined during 2023/24, with the original decision upheld in 10 of those cases with an average decision time of 12.7 weeks. A selection of five elected members from our planning committee sit on the Local Review Body at any one time, drawing on their knowledge and experience of planning matters in their decision making. LRB met 12 times during 2023/24 and will meet when business is required to be heard.

## Enforcement

The enforcement charter, it remains within the two year period since last reviewed and updated (March 2023) and is currently being reviewed and will be updated before the current scheme reaches 18 months since last updated. It is located on our website at [DM Enforcement Charter \(east-ayrshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/DM-Enforcement-Charter).

This Council places considerable importance on the planning enforcement function. We currently have three dedicated enforcement officer posts within our structure, one of which is currently vacant and has been since mid-2023 following the retirement of one of our long standing enforcement officers.

This post is under active review, with the service review undertaken during 2023/24, in conjunction with other vacant posts in the service. In addition to the normal enforcement function of investigating planning breaches, our enforcement function plays a large part in compliance monitoring the construction of large scale environmental projects and Major developments.

A quarterly report is prepared for the consideration of our planning committee which details compliance related matters over the previous quarter and any recommendations flowing from that. Section 44 of The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 will introduce a requirement on Scottish planning authorities to have statements in their enforcement charters in respect of monitoring of compliance with planning permissions that have been granted in respect of Major developments. This Council already has such a statement and the quarterly report to our planning committee on all significant large scale environmental projects, as well as Major developments, is considered to already meet, and exceed, the future legislative requirements. This is highlighted within a specific case study.

In relation to the information requested to be submitted the following figures are applicable to East Ayrshire:

- *Complaints lodged and investigated; 224*
- *cases closed (resolved); 307*
- *notices served; 24*
- *direct action; 0*
- *Reports to Procurator Fiscal; 0*
- *Prosecutions. 0*

## Improvement Action Plan (Tools theme)

(Scoring: 1 - Making excellent progress, 5 - No progress)

Attribute	Score
6. The planning authority has a robust policy and evidence base	2
7. The planning authority makes best use of data and digital technology	3
8. The planning authority has effective and efficient decision-making processes	2

Based on the grading above, the following areas of improvement have been identified. Their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short – 1 Year/ medium – 3 Years/ long term – 3+ Years).

Improvement Action	Owner	Importance	Timescale	Resources
Attribute 6/ 7: Introduce new GIS system and layers, which will contribute to a spatial evidence base for LDP processes and planning decision-making, and corporate spatial data sharing and management. Consider linkages of various systems with spatial data to streamline processes – e.g. Uniform and GIS.	Corporate	High	Medium	Planning Service, IT and other services. External resources.
Attribute 7: Explore further opportunities to use digital solutions to increase automation and improve workflow and provide seamless communication with other systems where relevant – e.g. Implement electronic Enforcement forms and Mailbox	Planning Service	High	Short	Planning Staff and IT

to focus delivery and reduce timescales and handling.				
Attribute 7: Review Planning and Enforcement web presence to provide a better and more customer friendly experience which is quality, accurate and accessible.	Planning Service	High	Short (review) Medium (implementation)	Planning Enforcement and Support Staff
Attribute 8: Update Enforcement Charter to ensure it reflects the Council's current approach to the use of enforcement controls and the monitoring of development.	Planning Service	Medium	Medium	Service Managers/Enforcement Officers
Attribute 8: Introducing new measures to improve local development performance figures, including review of front and back end of planning application processes and benchmark with other Planning Authorities.	Planning Services	Medium	Medium	Development Management and support staff



## National Planning Improvement Framework

Attribute 9: The planning authority has good Customer Care



**A high performing planning authority should ensure a wide range of people are involved in shaping their future places. Engagement should be fair and inclusive, early, collaborative, meaningful and proportionate and should include difficult to reach groups. The authority should engage with a wide range of partners at a national, regional and local level to ensure a joined-up approach and that links are made across policies and programmes. The planning authority should demonstrate good customer care, transparency and effective communication.**

## Pre-Application Advice

The Council welcomes early engagement with all applicants and developers prior to the submission of any application. The submission of informed, detailed and comprehensive applications results in quicker decision making and better quality of developments once the application is submitted. The Council offers a chargeable pre application advice service for major and local development, whilst a free pre-application advice service is available for householder proposals and for proposals by not for profit community organisations and registered charities. The pre application advice is intended to guide and inform the formulation of development proposals.

The benefits of pre application advice is to understand how policies and guidance will be applied to the development proposal and identifying at an early stage where there is a need for specialist input for example traffic requirements or site investigations. At present pre application advice provides an assessment of the planning merits of a proposal, how the proposal relates to key local plan policies and guidance, details of submission requirements, advice on the likely timescale for completing the planning process and outline of the material planning issues. Details of the pre application advice service is provided on the Planning website together with the cost and the timescale for response. The pre application advice is largely provided through a written response. 52 formal written requests received during 2023/24 and 41 issued during years 2023/24 with some pre application request's withdrawn or failed to provide a fee.

The pre application service is presently under review to encourage a more collaborative approach and it recognizes the need to establish a more bespoke pre-application process: one which reflects the different needs of different applications to provide a greater take up and move away from solely written responses. It will enable joint working between the applicant and local planning authority and require the input from different services within the Council and external stakeholders. This more bespoke pre application process would seek to support applicants in the development of the larger and more complex proposals in terms of achieving more placemaking benefits.

It is recognized that by frontloading the process through a more robust pre application service with early and effective consultation and engagement, this will assist in avoiding delays and difficult situations during the planning application process.

The Council also offer Processing Agreements for all National or Major applications and also for complex local developments. Details of the Processing Agreements process is available on the Planning Website. A Processing Agreement is used to set out the key processes in determining the application, identifying what information is required and from whom and sets the timescales for the delivery of various stages of the process. It is recognized that there are a number of benefits of Processing Agreements such as greater transparency in decision making, greater predictability and certainty over the timing of key stages. A total of 27 Processing Agreements were received in 2023-24.

The Council also sends out a link to a customer survey with each decision notice issued and the survey is available online at [Customer Care Survey: Planning Application Process · East Ayrshire Council \(east-ayrshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/customer-care-survey), However there has been a low take up with applicants and agents completing the survey with applicants/agents preferring to speak directly to the Case Officer/Manager/Chief Planning Officer if they are happy or dissatisfied with the process or Service they have received. Due to the low return from the survey no issues have been raised. There has been no returns so far for 2024 and 4 for 2023. The results from the customer and stakeholder survey show that customers are satisfied with the service offered by the planning authority.

# Engagement with Developers and Communities

The Council has invested in a new Community Engagement Tool –Engagement HQ Surveys which provides community engagement in a modern clear and digital way to gather community responses and turn them into action. It allows a range of question types, the addition of visual aids such as maps, photos as well as other graphics. Survey responses can provides data and meaningful feedback and input from our communities on matters of interest to them. Engagement HQ provides helpful diagrams, graphs and analysis tools to capture patterns and trends across different community segments. Free text responses can be further analysed using ‘Text analysis’ when enables responses to be tagged with themes and key words and then extracted.

The flexibility of the platform allows the Council to tailor its surveys in order to obtain the most efficacious and meaningful responses from the target community. This flexibility facilitates the creation of surveys which are accessible, convenient and informative for the public.

Engagement HQ has been used to consult on the Draft Loudoun Castle and Estate Supplementary Guidance document. This was a six week public consultation which will influence the finer detail of the Draft Supplementary Guidance document and inform the future decision making in Loudoun Castle – A listed Castle and associated Inventory Garden and Designed Landscape.

During the Draft Loudoun Castle and Estate Supplementary Guidance consultation, the Council requested some additional feedback around navigation of the document, use of visuals/illustrations and photographs, as well as the method of engagement in order to understand how to improve similar consultations in the future. This will allow the Council to more effectively engage our communities, ensure that we are reaching a range of groups and maximising opportunities for comment.

The Council intends to utilise Engagement HQ more in the future as a means to engage and consult with our communities, in conjunction with other Services in a more clear and concise digital way. The results, comments and feedback can be easily analysed. It has been used recently to consult other service users of the current GIS system and to get views of existing and potential service users for a new GIS platform.



East Ayrshire Council  
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir an Ear

## National Planning Improvement Framework

Attribute 10: The planning authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities

# Engagement and collaboration with Stakeholders and Communities



The Council endeavors to involve and collaborate with local communities, public bodies and other stakeholders at all relevant stages of the planning process.

The Planning Authority produces an annual Development Plan Scheme, including a Participation Statement, which acts as a strategy for engagement activities. The most recent Development Plan Scheme and accompanying Participation Statement were published online on 24th May and were open for public consultation until 21st June. As the Council is currently at the very start of the production process for Local Development Plan 3, with LDP2 having been adopted earlier this year, the Participation Statement sets out the various stages at which communities and other stakeholders will be engaged in the development of LDP3, the main stages being: engagement to inform the Evidence Report; engagement to inform the Proposed Plan; and engagement on the Proposed Plan.

With regards to engagement on planning applications, Development Management follow the processes set out in legislation, while also providing advice to applicants through the major application pre-application process in respect of appropriate community engagement for that formal pre-application consultation and that is detailed in Attribute 9.

The Council has plans to make use of the Place Standard Tool as part of early engagement for LDP3. A variation of the tool will be used at in-person sessions to inform the Evidence Report and it will also be incorporated into the online engagement content to be made available on the Council's new Engagement HQ platform.

As set out in the Participation Statement, the Council have plans in place for ensuring that the engagement activities for LDP3 will encourage the participation of people from all demographics and equality groups and will be representative of local communities.

No Local Place Plans have yet been submitted within the Local Planning Authority area, and East Ayrshire Council has not yet issued its formal invitation for Local Place Plans for Local Development Plan 3, which will be the Planning Authority's first 'new style' plan. However, there is a process in place: Local Development Plan 2 (adopted in April 2024) includes two policies for Local Place Plans (LPP1 and LPP2) which set out how the Council will continue to support the production of Place Plans through the adopted plan period and into the next plan. As per policy LPP1, where a LPP meets stated criteria including alignment with policies and allocations contained within LDP2, the Council will adopt the Place Plan as Supplementary Planning Guidance to support LDP2. Alternatively, on the basis of the Town and Country Planning (Local Place Plans) (Scotland) Regulations, communities may opt to produce a Local Place Plan that is not in accord with LDP2; whilst this would not be adopted as Supplementary Guidance it would nevertheless be added to the Council's Local Place Plan register (assuming it meets all statutory requirements) and taken into account in the preparation of LDP3.



## Improvement Action Plan (Engagetheme)

(1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)

Attribute	Score
9. This planning authority has good customer care	3
10 The planning authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities.	3

Based on the grading above, the following areas of improvement have been identified. Their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short – 1 Year/ medium – 3 Years/ long term – 3+ Years).

Improvement Action	Owner	Importance	Timescale	Resources
Attribute 9: Review our chargeable pre application service and the use of Processing Agreements. We will seek to work across Council departments and with external and internal consultees to deliver an improved and streamlined service that provides applicants with a better and more complete service that is more interactive and can deliver greater certainty earlier in the process to enable them to incorporate feedback prior to submission of their application. This will assist in improving the quality of development and decision making.	Planning Services	Medium	Medium	Service Managers/ Team Leaders
Attribute 9: Hold a meeting with agents for householder and local development in terms of validation and registration of applications and customer service.	Planning Service	Medium	Medium	Service Managers/Team Leaders
Attribute 10: Promote the use of Engagement HQ for consultation with communities and other service departments and external stakeholders.	Planning Service	Low	Short	All Planning Staff

Attribute 10: Engage with communities on Local Place Plans and Community Action Plans and how these will interface with LDP3. Pilot with a community to develop different approaches to consultation moving away from traditional drop-in events to ensure communities are listen to and actions are publicised.	Development Planning	High	Long	Development Planning Team
--	----------------------	------	------	---------------------------

## National Planning Improvement Framework

Attribute 11: The planning authority supports the delivery of sustainable, livable and productive places



**A high performing planning authority should demonstrate place leadership by taking a collaborative place-based approach in line with the Place Principle. It should use the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes in decision-making processes, to achieve the three spatial principles outlined in NPF4: Sustainable places, where we reduce emissions, restore and better connect biodiversity; Liveable places, where we can all live better, healthier lives; and Productive places, where we have a greener, fairer and more inclusive wellbeing economy. The planning authority should seek to ensure that there are no impediments to delivering agreed development.**

The Planning Authority fully recognises the need for sustainable, liveable and productive places, as a fundamental aim of the planning system. This can be demonstrated through recent policy preparation, development on the ground and recent planning application decisions.

# The spatial strategy of Local Development Plan 2

The place and wellbeing outcomes, whilst not explicitly referred to in the recently adopted East Ayrshire LDP2, align with the aims and principles of the plan, particularly through its spatial strategy. As detailed in Attribute 6, the spatial strategy of LDP2, adopted in the April 2024 is robust and detailed, setting out the keys ways in which development should aim to achieve the vision of the Plan ‘strong, healthy, resilient communities’ with a ‘fairer, greener and more inclusive economy’. The LDP2 spatial strategy focuses on many elements that are covered by the Place and Wellbeing outcomes including supporting and expanding natural places, creating robust active travel networks and making better use of land and resources through incentivising the take up of vacant and derelict land. Policy SS2 an overarching policy of LDP2 links to the spatial strategy, ensuring that all proposals align with the overall spatial strategy of the Plan.

By having a clear spatial strategy which embraces the overall ethos of the place and wellbeing outcomes, the Plan sets at firm direction for the type of development it will support and where and this is illustrated below by recent planning decisions and development achieved on the ground.

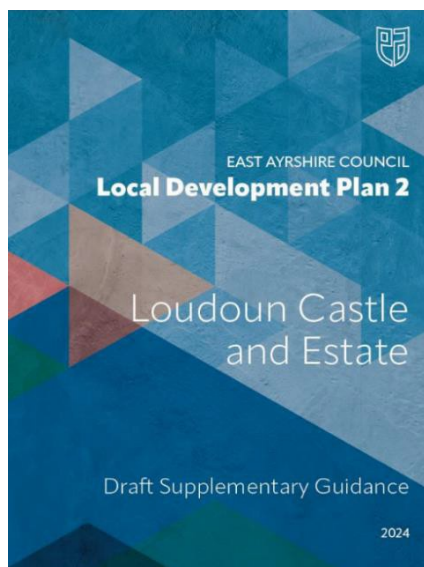
## Emerging policy for Loudoun Castle and Estate

Loudoun Castle and Estate within the Irvine Valley contains the A-listed ruinous Loudoun Castle, the centrepiece of a nationally recognised Garden and Designed Landscape. Local Development Plan 2 maintains the policy approach for LDP1, which was to support the redevelopment of the estate for a leisure and tourism development, enabled by new housing development.

However, LDP2 has taken a more pro-active and structured approach to how the site could and should be developed. Draft supplementary guidance has been produced and consulted on, which gives further information on the important site assets and qualities that should be protected and gives more detailed guidance for how housing could sensitively be sited on the site. The overall purpose of the Supplementary Guidance is to promote the development of the site, but in a manner that protects the environmental integrity of it and more detail is provided in Attribute 6.

When development comes forward, it will potentially be of a significant scale, delivering both a tourist destination and a new residential community.

By taking a more structured policy-led approach, it is intended that the developer will have clearer parameters to work to, both in terms of the Estate itself but also, critically, how it integrates with existing nearby communities, to deliver a liveable and sustainable place, that contributes to the local economy and embeds the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes in future development proposals.



## Delivery of innovative new amenity housing

As part of the delivery of the Council's Strategic Housing Investment Programme, the Planning Authority has worked closely with housing colleagues and other partners to create new demand-led housing and bring redundant sites back into use.

One example is Witch Road in Kilmarnock, which was previously occupied by three storey apartment blocks that were difficult to let and were a focus for anti-social behaviour. The site has been redeveloped with 43 one and two bedroom bungalows, specially aimed at older residents who may be affected by a range of mobility and other age-related medical needs, including dementia sufferers.

Design and open space details, arrived at through joint working between planning, housing, social care and the construction company, include a shared residents garden to encourage resident interaction and the use of colour to external finishes to aid wayfinding, particularly valuable for dementia sufferers.

Another purposeful design aspect was the creation of front garden seating areas outside residents' own front doors where residents could sit within their own gardens, interact with each other and also interact with passers-by and feel part of the wider community which is particularly relevant for older persons. Raised planting beds are also provided within each front garden and residents have given their own front gardens their individual identity with bright planting displays adding life and vitality into the streetscene. The ethos behind the development is that by tailoring particular aspects of the design to the needs of residents, those residents can be empowered to stay in their own homes and lead independent lives for as long as possible.

This approach demonstrates a development that has placed social and wellbeing outcomes at its core. Furthermore, it was winner in the "Age Exclusive Development of the Year" category at the Scottish Home Awards 2023.





## Eco tourism development

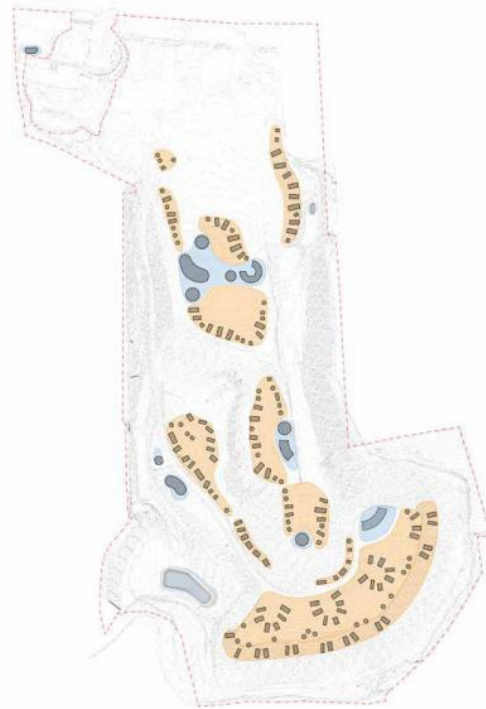
A major planning permission in principle application for an 'Eco Wellness' styled holiday and visitor destination with accommodation, educational and leisure uses, ancillary retail etc., was submitted with a limited range of high level information, on a former colliery site (designated in the Local Development Plan for a range of uses). The site had/has a range of constraints including contamination, mining residue, flooding, and a number of wildlife and ecology assets, including rare breed insects and butterflies and habitats. A Core Path and well used walking route traverses the site, and the site itself had a range of tracks for walking and wheeling. The site was/is used by naturalists for entomology study, as well as general informal recreation by the public. After many rounds of public advertisement due to submission of additional information, the application was refused at Planning Committee. Whilst in principle, the proposed use was accepted, the application was refused due to the lack of detailed information regarding how the proposed use/uses might be reasonably expected to impact upon the nature interests on site - and that the proposal did not demonstrate biodiversity enhancements commensurate with the size of the proposal.

A resubmission of the proposal was made some months later, providing the required additional information from the initial submission, with the applicant taking advice from the Report of Handling and the reasons for refusal. The applicants' agent also met with Council officers to ascertain their concerns, to try and address these. This, more collaborative, resubmission process gave the Planning Authority a greater confidence that the site could be developed in a manner

which protected both the nature interests of the site, and facilitated a development that could provide a range of environmental, economic, social and health and wellbeing benefits for the area. This would include active travel benefits, both for long stay patrons, day visitors through the ethos of the eco-style business model, and for the public accessing the Core Path through the site, using the natural or semi-naturalised rural nature of the site, and the use of non-motorised/fossil fuel travel.



Scott Brownrigg's refused masterplan proposal



New Boomhaus masterplan proposal

If developed according to the approved documents, this could ultimately create a more balanced health and wellbeing hub development where recreation could be accommodated with educational elements with ecology and landscaped hubs, sport and play activities including the more commonly found facilities such as off road cycle tracks and walking routes but also less traditional pursuits such as a market garden, yoga studio, brewery, and civic spaces such as café and restaurant and reception (hotel/bar /meeting spaces etc.).

As well as attaching conditions which would ensure targeted surveys for wildlife, and information on the various physical constraints such as mining and contamination matters, an Access Management Plan was conditioned to ensure the public access function to the site would continue to best protect the interests of both the patrons of the development and the public who frequently access the site via the Core Path, including the submission of details of how the existing path network shall be maintained and improved, to provide connectivity between the site and its surroundings and linkages beyond to the wider recreational path network.





*Illustrative render of potential accommodation raised off the ground on stilts*

Cafe Restaurant



*CGI image of the cafe/restaurant building*

Spa



*CGI image of the spa building*

In summary the resubmission, and engagement with the Planning Service allowed for a more balanced outcome that protected the nature interests of the site, whilst facilitating a large scale leisure use that promotes active travel and recreation, and allows public use through interlinked spaces and civic nodes within the site and promotes connections beyond the site to the existing recreation network which all embraces the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes.

(Plan and photo extracts taken from approved Design and Access Statement prepared by boomhaus for Barony)

## New land release housing development and raising design standards

The Planning Authority has recently been reviewing how it approaches the design and layout of new housing estates in order to raise design standards and create improved quality in new residential areas and putting placemaking principles at the heart. The aim here is also to encourage and inspire pride in our wider council area.

We recently considered and approved a housing remix in a large land release to the north of Kilmaronock. We sought improvements in the design, layout and front garden areas with a hedging mix in order to better reflect the location of the land release next to the countryside, enhanced biodiversity and a more softer and pleasing outlook.

This will help create a sense of pride in its location, relate better to the rural edge of Kilmaronock and seek improved designs as we also seek to reduce the dominance of timber boundary treatments and lessen the impact of frontage car parking. The housebuilder concerned responded positively to the discussions and we hope to continue this improved partnership working in the future with housebuilders in future residential areas.





## HALO – Former Diageo (Johnnie Walker) Bottling site

The HALO site incorporates the new Kilmarnock College and the HALO Digital, Cyber and Innovation park which is a net zero carbon mixed use development providing its residents and the wider community with jobs, economic growth, skills development, access to employment opportunities, clean energy and housing and is led by a masterplan approach. Planning Permission for the masterplan was granted in 2018.





The Planning Service are currently in collaborative discussions on a pre application basis with the housing phase of the Halo development. These discussions centre on a new approach to place-making, design, layout, materiality and ancillary features such as boundary treatments and street furniture for East Ayrshire building on the placemaking and the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes.

These discussions seek to continue the quality adventurous design of the HALO development in order to create a statement for Kilmarnock's future development aspirations. By strongly encouraging a dense and modern designed development in a central location that has the advantage of proximity to the town centre and major transport nodes, that encourages local living, we hope this will be a catalyst for further comparative regeneration and redevelopment to foster a modern community for East Ayrshire to build upon for future generations. We want this site to continue to create a statement in order to create a sense of pride in the local environment and bring environmental, economic, social and health and wellbeing benefits resulting in a "showcase" development which utilises the centrally located site to its full potential for our community. We hope to report progress on this site in the next National Planning Improvement Framework.



## National Planning Improvement Framework

Attribute 12: The planning authority supports the deliver of consented development

## Delivering consented development



The requirement for a legal agreement is highlighted in pre-application discussions and guidance on pre application advice is on the website. Some legal agreements are concluded within 6 months but a number of others are not. There can be various reasons for delays longer than 6 months and this is not always in the control of the Planning Authority. However, to manage this process a quarterly report to our planning committee providing updates on progress towards conclusion of the legal agreement and recommendations should the process become stalled. In terms of the Local Development Plan, there are several references made to legal agreements. Specifically, reference to legal agreements are made in relation to development in the settlement of Stewarton and in line with the associated Development Framework; policy INF4 developer contribution requirements; policy FIN1 financial guarantees compliance monitoring; and in relation to transport assessments.

In terms of the approach to imposing conditions, we have regard to the requirements and tests set out in Circular 4/1998 on the use of planning conditions. Draft decision notices require to go through a minimum of two professional planners for sign off, including at least a team leader level, therefore opportunity for challenge and review of the conditions is built into the process. We have had no planning appeals challenging the imposition of conditions during 2023/24.

The planning authority has an ambitious local housing land requirement. A minimum all-tenure housing land requirement (MATHLR) of 4050 residential units (both market and affordable) has been established for East Ayrshire. To ensure that there is a generous housing land supply, additional residential capacity has been allocated above the MATHLR.

The recently adopted LDP2 identifies development sites able to accommodate around 6145 residential units – an additional 52% to the established MATHLR. A housing land pipeline has been established to support the achievement of the MATHLR. Sites allocated for residential purposes in the LDP have been divided into Short Term, Medium Term, and Longer Term delivery.

Determination of timescales for the delivery of allocated housing sites during the Plan period has been informed by programming from the 2021 Housing Land Audit, proximity to existing services and infrastructure, transport connections and other factors. The local housing land requirement is therefore on track to support delivery.

The planning authority has an effective delivery programme in place that supports the delivery of development on the ground. The Delivery Programme was approved by East Ayrshire Council Cabinet on 26 June 2024 and can be viewed here: [Information about local development plan 2 · East Ayrshire Council \(east-ayrshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/information-about-local-development-plan-2)

East Ayrshire Council signed 27 processing agreements with applicants during the 2023/24 period, which is slightly more than half of the processing agreements signed during the previous year and therefore is a fall in total numbers. We continue to offer processing agreements to all Major and complex local planning applications during pre-applications discussions and via our website, however such agreements require both parties and therefore the total numbers of such agreements is out with the hands of the Planning Authority. Despite having no processing agreements for any major application during 2023/24, our determination timescale was substantially less than the year before and our average timescale for such applications is only slightly out with the statutory target itself. This demonstrates that Processing Agreements can be a useful application management tool in the right circumstances and that the signing of them is not always necessary and ultimately a lack of yearly increase in such agreements should not be viewed as a failing or weakness by the Planning Authority. The good performance result for Major applications demonstrates working more closely with applicants to get early decision.

## Improvement Action Plan (Place theme)

(1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)

Attribute	Score
11. The planning authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places	3
12 This planning authority supports the delivery of appropriate development	2

Based on the grading above, the following areas of improvement have been identified. Their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short – 1 Year/ medium – 3 Years/ long term – 3+ Years).

Improvement Actions	Owner	Importance	Timescal	Resources
Attribute 11: Build on relationships with NHS to build better links to health and wellbeing outcomes through LDP3 and other service departments and link to Attribute 5.	Planning Service/ NHSAA and Improvement Service	High	Medium	Planning staff
Attribute 12: Create template for legal agreements for most common heads of terms to reduce timescales for completion. Consider and integrate with work being undertaken by HoPS on template legal agreements. Place these documents on our website. Encourage twin tracking of legal agreement drafting during planning application assessment to minimise time post recommendation and work closely with Legal	Planning Service/ Legal Services and HoPS	High	Short	Planning and legal staff with potential to draw on work being undertaken by HoPS

Colleagues.				
-------------	--	--	--	--



# Summary of Improvement Actions

Attribute	Rating	Improvement	Priority
1	3	Review of the Enforcement Function	High
1	3	Undertake a Specialist Skills Review in the Delivery of NPF4 and LDP3 and relate to Service Structure	High
2	2	Undertake Workforce Strategy	Medium
2	2	Promote Positive Healthy Workplace	Medium
3	2	Review of Customer Feedback form and process in connection with planning decisions.	Medium
4	2	Review of Scheme of Delegation to bring it up to date	High
4	2	Elected member training to bring forward a more structured and consistent approach	Medium
5	2	Corporate Management Team workshops to show links between planning and other departments e.g. developer contributions, place and wellbeing outcomes	Medium
6/7	2/3	Introduce new GIS system and layers which will contribute to a spatial evidence base for Local Development Planning processes and planning decision-making and corporate spatial data sharing and management	High
7	3	Explore further opportunities to use digital solutions to increase automation and improve workflow	High
7	3	Review Planning and Enforcement web presence and accessibility	High
7	3	Horizon scanning of digital solutions which could enhance delivery of the planning service.	Medium
8	2	Update Enforcement Charter	Medium
8	2	Introduce new measures to improve local development performance figures	Medium
9	3	Review our chargeable pre application service and the use of Processing Agreements	Medium

9	3	Hold a meeting with agents for householder and local development in terms of validation and registration of applications and customer service.	Medium
10	3	Promote the use of Engagement HQ for consultation with communities and other service departments and external stakeholders.	Low
10	3	Engage with communities on Local Place Plans and Community Action Plans and how these will interface with LDP3	High
11	3	Build on relationships with NHS to build better links to health and wellbeing outcomes through LDP3 and other service departments and link to Attribute 5.	High
12	2	Create template legal agreements for most common heads of terms to reduce timescales for completion.	High

# Case Study: Supporting Our Planners

## Attribute 2: The Planning Authority has a valued and supported workforce planning authority

### Context

The Planning Department at East Ayrshire Council is working to ensure it supports its staff and future planners by opening up opportunities and ensuring succession planning is in place as well as mechanisms to upskill.

---

## What happened

### Graduate Planning Officer

Recruitment challenges in planning are well recognised and research has been undertaken by Heads of Planning Scotland and RTPI Scotland, culminating in the Future Planners Project Report, issued in July 2022 and recently updated in June 2023. There are varied recommendations within that report and implementation will be required to ensure an adequate pipeline of qualified students enter the profession.

In East Ayrshire, it was recognised that sufficient experienced staff were difficult to attract and in October 2015 Cabinet agreed a significant commitment and investment into the service to support and develop its own staff, this included a number of new posts, one of which was a trainee planner post. That post is based in Development Management and is specifically targeted at recent graduates. The purpose of the post was essentially to 'grow your own' experienced staff by introducing an entry level post that allowed supported career progression through training and development structure. Similar posts have also been created within our Building Standards team.

The role offers a basic introduction to the planning system and the function of a development management officer, using peer mentoring, shadowing and training across the various elements of the local authority planning department. This includes building confidence and knowledge through general public duty enquiries and building up to householder and small application developments.

Over the years since introduction, the post has been held by four graduate planners. In most cases the trainee planner has progressed, via competitive interview, onto a full planning officer post internally when vacancies have arisen with previous post holders now employed as Planning and Senior Planning Officers at this Authority, with one member being successful in a permanent Planning Officer post externally at another local authority. The quotes below are from a previous post holder:

*"The trainee planner post was a fantastic entry point into the planning profession. This was my first job in planning and allowed me to learn the ropes in a pressure-free environment, without the expectation of having any previous professional experience. I gained a broad, and detailed, knowledge of development management which eventually allowed me to progress into a Planning Officer role here at East Ayrshire Council. Throughout my time at the Council, I have had the opportunity to develop my skills through shadowing of colleagues in other roles and attending seminars. I have also been encouraged to utilise the departmental learning budget for any other*

*training experiences I identify. I feel that senior colleagues have sought to foster an environment where training and development are supported, and my team leader has actively sought out development opportunities for me within my daily work. I am grateful for the opportunity the trainee role presented to gain experience in planning following completion of my university studies and in helping me to kick off my career in planning!”*

- Planning officer, Development Management

### Graduate Intern

Development Planning and Regeneration have employed a Graduate Intern for 2 years, the post being shared with Economic Development to provide experience across the Economic Growth portfolio. The quote below is from the current postholder:

*“As a Graduate Intern in Economic Growth for East Ayrshire Council, I have had the opportunity to work across three departments: Planning, Business Support and the Ayrshire Growth Deal. This has allowed me to identify the specific areas I enjoy and potentially want to pursue. I have been given the responsibility and autonomy to complete a number of different and complex tasks, which has made me feel confident in my abilities and contribution to the team, as well as increased my problem solving, communication and leadership skills. Throughout my time as a Graduate Intern, I have been welcomed and received a huge amount of support from my colleagues, who have been willing to give me their time, knowledge and guidance which has helped make me feel like an important part of their team and has further built my confidence which is only going to benefit me in my future career with the Council”.*

In recognising that the number of graduates has decreased over the years and that if the trend continues, the Planning Authority has also begun to consider and actively participate in other programmes to explore and support the ongoing provision of qualified staff.

The Council approved the establishment of a £6m Jobs and Training Scheme to support apprenticeships within the Council and local businesses in February 2022. From 2022/23 to 2024/25, 172 placements will be established for the Council, with a further 38 apprenticeships and 3 interns within the private sector.

109 young people have been appointed to posts (65 Modern Apprenticeships, 17 Graduate Interns and 38 within local businesses) across the Council. A further 33 young people have joined the Council’s Modern Apprenticeship scheme via existing routes. All of the placements are being aligned to the Council’s terms and conditions and importantly, will provide work based skills and qualifications at the conclusion of the apprenticeships.

### Student Placement

Development Planning and Regeneration have also agreed to take on a student placement. This demonstrates the commitment of the team to promoting the planning profession and providing learning opportunities.

### Supporting the development and upskilling of our staff

East Ayrshire are committed to supporting and developing their staff. With the year mark of NPF4 having past, the Council recognise the strong focus on tackling the twin crisis of climate change and biodiversity loss, within increased expectations and requirements being placed on planning departments and planning officers professionally to increase the planning profession’s role in contributing to a more sustainable future – adding new strings to our bows.

*“I was successful in securing a Trainee Planner post at East Ayrshire while studying for my MSc in City Planning and Regeneration part-time, while working in the Planning Technical Support team. Although this was not my first post within the Planning department, it was a wonderful opportunity for me to gain invaluable experience working directly within the profession I was training for. I have been greatly supported in my professional learning and development across my career at East Ayrshire Council for which I am grateful. This has given me the*

knowledge, skills and confidence to apply for new opportunities which have arisen, both within Development Management and Development Planning & Regeneration where I am currently an Acting Senior Planning Officer. The new challenges of NPF4 has highlighted areas where there is a skills deficit and provided an opportunity for me to expand my knowledge on matters that are of both personal and professional interest to me, including the natural environment and biodiversity. The Council have actively supported this and enabled me to upskill, attending webinars, seminars and CPD training on natural environment matters including carbon literacy, trees and ancient woodland. While the Trainee Planner position was a great entry point into the planning profession, I continue to feel supported and empowered to progress, learn and grow as a Planner.”

- Rachel Hall Acting Senior Planning Officer, Development Planning & Regeneration

---

## Areas of collaboration

Planning authority staff and other organisations who deliver and organize training including HOPS, RTPi Arboricultural Association etc.

---

## What was the overall result

NPF4 has altered the expectations and definition of what it means to be a planner, expanding our role and skillset. By supporting our Planning staff to upskill and expand their knowledge, we are facilitating and empowering our planners to deliver greener and better planning decisions. The Council by its progressive approach to recruitment is providing a pipeline of Future planners and addressing succession planning for East Ayrshire which are supporting and embodying the recommendation of the Future Planners Report.

---

## Lessons learned

Whilst not everyone who has undertaken one of the pathways into the profession has stayed at East Ayrshire Council, all have stayed in planning and related professions. Whilst the scheme has been successful, it can be difficult to attract people into these and other posts who live in Ayrshire, and are therefore more likely to remain within the area. We are therefore interested in exploring apprenticeship pathways into the profession and developing stronger links with the new planning degree courses in University of the West of Scotland.

---

## What contribution did it make towards delivering outcomes?

Please tick all the below outcomes that this example worked towards:

### NPF4

☐ Sustainable places

☒ Climate change and nature crisis

☒ Climate mitigate and adaptation

☒ Biodiversity

☒ Natural Places



- ☐ Soils
- ☐ Forestry, woodland and trees
- ☐ Historic assets and places
- ☐ Green belts
- ☐ Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings
- ☐ Coast development
- ☐ Energy
- ☐ Zero waste
- ☐ Sustainable transport

#### ☐ Liveable places

- ☐ Design, quality and place
- ☐ Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods
- ☐ Quality homes
- ☐ Rural homes
- ☐ Infrastructure first
- ☐ Heat and cooling
- ☒ Blue and green infrastructure
- ☐ Play, recreation and sport
- ☐ Flood risk and water management
- ☐ Health and safety
- ☐ Digital Infrastructure

#### ☐ Productive places

- ☐ Community Wealth Building
- ☐ Business and industry
- ☐ City, town, local and commercial centres
- ☐ Retail
- ☐ Rural development
- ☐ Tourism
- ☐ Culture and creativity
- ☐ Aquaculture
- ☐ Minerals

#### Place and Wellbeing Outcomes

- ☐ Movement
  - ☐ Spaces
  - ☒ Resources
  - ☐ Civic
  - ☐ Stewardship
-

# Case Study: Producing and delivering the Hagshaw energy cluster development framework

## Attribute 3: This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement

---

### Context

The onshore wind policy statement, published by Scottish Government in 2017, called for more collaboration across the onshore wind sector. Responding to that call NatureScot identified a potential at Hagshaw to pilot a more strategic, joined up approach to planning for wind energy.

The Hagshaw cluster is centred on Scotland's oldest commercial wind farm which still continues to be subject to ongoing change and development activity, with re-powering and new developments at differing stages in the planning process.

The location of the cluster is adjacent to the M74 strategic road network with a number of surrounding communities, including Douglas, Coalburn, Lesmahagow and Muirkirk. These surrounding communities are former mining communities, which have faced socio-economic challenges for decades. The pilot project brought the opportunity to explore how these communities can harness the landscape change going on around them, to deliver a more positive future.

The majority of the cluster sits within South Lanarkshire, with a small portion at the west edge falling within East Ayrshire.

Getting the pilot off the ground depending on gaining the commitment of the two planning authorities (EAC and South Lanarkshire Council) as well as six renewables operators active within the cluster.

---

### What happened

In 2020, NatureScot set up the Hagshaw Energy Cluster Steering Group, comprising South Lanarkshire Council (SLC), East Ayrshire Council (EAC), 6 renewable energy developers (3R Energy, ScottishPower Renewables, BayWa.re UK, Energiekontor UK, Octopus Renewables, Ventient Energy) and Architecture and Design Scotland to discuss how they could work together on the future of renewable energy development in the context of planning for and delivering Net Zero in Scotland.

In June 2021, after collectively exploring different options, the steering group appointed LUC to produce a Development Framework, with contract management from NatureScot and financial support from the renewables developers, overseen by the steering group. Key elements of the process involved:

- Online community and stakeholder engagement carried out - October to December 2021
- Targeted one-to-one engagement with stakeholders and community groups - January to February 2022

- Final draft approved by SLC and EAC - October 2022
  - Formal public consultation - 6 weeks from October to November 2022
  - Adopted as planning guidance by SLC and EAC - August 2023
- 

## Areas of collaboration

The approach taken to produce the framework has been an exemplar in terms of collaborate working; the multi-disciplinary steering group, with different interests and priorities, worked productively together to arrive at a Plan that was endorsed by all with a positive vision for renewable energy development. Of particular note:

- **Leadership and vision** - Whilst the overall project was instigated by NatureScot, and its role was critical throughout to the overall project, the buy-in and commitment from the 2 planning authorities from the outset was also important. Both planning authorities quickly recognised the value of the project, and enthusiastically committed early on to both being part of the pilot project and importantly, showed their vision for the project by committing to adopting the Framework as Planning Guidance. This ensured that from the outset, there was certainty that the work would be meaningful and be given appropriate recognition and status, helping to secure and importantly sustain the buy-in from all other partners.
  - **Public / private collaboration** - the development of the framework is considered an exemplar of collaborative working between private and public interests. The multiple interests represented in the steering group, were, with the careful management and guidance of NatureScot, able to collectively work together, agree the principles, content and final sign off. Differences of opinion arose, but compromises were reached, with all partners willing to work together to find solutions.
  - **Working in partnership across local authority boundaries** - the Planning Authorities of SLC and EAC do not have history of partnership working, SLC being traditionally part of Clydeside and EAC working closely with its Ayrshire counterparts on strategic planning matters. Work on the development framework forms the first time the two authorities have worked collaboratively on planning guidance, which has helped form stronger cross-boundary relationships and understanding of common issues.
  - **Combining Development Planning and Development Management expertise** - for the duration of the project, SLC input into the steering group came from a Development Management perspective, whilst EAC brought a distinct Development Planning perspective to the group. This combination of skills was invaluable; bringing both expertise on policy context and formation, alongside expertise on how the framework could be used on a practical level in relation to the planning application process.
- 

## What was the overall result

The framework has been approved by both planning authorities as non-statutory planning guidance and as such will be used to help guide and inform development proposals within the cluster. This will help to ensure that development coming forward accords with the principles of the framework, delivering improving planning outcomes.

Alongside the planning process, an economic development officer has been employed by SLC to develop and then oversee delivery of a project plan that underpins the framework. As part of this, the officer also supports community groups, charities and social enterprises to deliver projects that align with the Framework, such as community ownership projects. Some of examples of work now progressing comprises:

-Circular economy activity led by Zero Waste Scotland – work is underway to bring communities and developers together to allow communities to be able to benefit from any excess material etc. that may be generated through wind farm developments

-Strategic path networks - feasibility work is being undertaken to look at the best routes for connecting the communities around the cluster and connecting them to established long distance walking routes in the area.

The success of the pilot project has been recognized through several means:

-Included as a case study in the Onshore Wind Policy Statement (December 2022)

-Included as a case study in the Scottish Government's draft planning guidance on biodiversity (November 2023)

-Shortlisted for the UK Landscape Institute Awards 2023 in the Excellence in climate, environment and social outcomes category

-Winner of the Green Energy Awards 2023 in the Sustainable Development category

---

## Lessons learned

### What worked well:

**Relationships developed** – Developers in the cluster have been brought together and now have a better working relationship to be able to identify areas where working together has clear benefits, both financially and to achieve better outcomes. A developer group continues to meet regularly to take forward joint projects.

**The role of NatureScot** – played an important leadership, and at times conciliatory role, important in bringing together the different interests and viewpoints. The project would have been more difficult to progress without the strong involvement of NatureScot.

**The quality of document produced** – The framework document is intentionally visionary, with a focus on the kind of place Hagshaw could become. LUC and NatureScot were able to bring high quality mapping and drawing skills to the table to produce a final document that is of a high quality and visually appealing.

### What would be done differently:

**Timeframe** – It took over 3 years, from initial discussion on the project to adopting the framework as planning guidance. This was undoubtedly impacted by the pandemic, but in general it proved relatively time and resource intensive to progress. If replicating elsewhere, ways to make the process more succinct and streamlined should be explored.

**In-person community engagement** – Given the limitations of the pandemic, LUC set up an innovative online engagement platform to engage local communities in the work. Whilst this was a good solution at that time, on reflection and based on some activities post-pandemic, the benefits in getting people up into the landscape can't be underestimated. The best way to try to explore with residents how the landscape and renewables developments can relate to their community.

---

## What contribution did it make towards delivering outcomes?

Please tick all the below outcomes that this example worked towards:

### NPF4

☐ Sustainable places

☒ Climate change and nature crisis

- ☒ Climate mitigate and adaptation
- ☒ Biodiversity
- ☒ Natural Places
- ☒ Soils
- ☐ Forestry, woodland and trees
- ☐ Historic assets and places
- ☐ Green belts
- ☐ Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings
- ☐ Coast development
- ☒ Energy
- ☒ Zero waste
- ☐ Sustainable transport

#### ☐ Liveable places

- ☒ Design, quality and place
- ☐ Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods
- ☐ Quality homes
- ☐ Rural homes
- ☐ Infrastructure first
- ☐ Heat and cooling
- ☒ Blue and green infrastructure
- ☒ Play, recreation and sport
- ☐ Flood risk and water management
- ☐ Health and safety
- ☐ Digital Infrastructure

#### ☐ Productive places

- ☒ Community Wealth Building
- ☐ Business and industry
- ☐ City, town, local and commercial centres
- ☐ Retail
- ☒ Rural development
- ☒ Tourism
- ☐ Culture and creativity
- ☐ Aquaculture
- ☐ Minerals

#### Place and Wellbeing Outcomes

- ☐ Movement
- ☒ Spaces
- ☒ Resources
- ☒ Civic





# Case Study: Achieving results through joint working with elected members and officers across the Council

## Attribute 4: The Planning Authority has Sound Governance

---

### Context

Various meetings and workshops held via online platforms and in person throughout 2023/24.

---

### What happened

The Member Officer Working Group (LDP2 MOWG) was established in the Cabinet meeting of the 7<sup>th</sup> March 2018. The MOWG met for the first time on the 17<sup>th</sup> of April 2019 and since its inception, LDP2 has been adopted and supplementary guidance approved.

The establishment of the MOWG was as a result of the success of the Minerals Local Development Plan Member Officer Working Group in which Members' and officers input had been invaluable in progressing the Plan to Examination. It was also a way of improving engagement and collaborative working with all Elected Members, Council services and arm's length organisations. It was ensured that there would be a balanced geographical and political spread, in terms of Elected Members sitting on the MOWG.

The group approved the LDP (post Examination) on 1 February 2024 prior to its further approval by Council and submission to Scottish Ministers for adoption. Since this meeting, we have met a further time to discuss emerging supplementary guidance yet to be finalised and the next Local Development Plan (LDP3).

Prior to these key decisions, various meetings of the MOWG have taken place to make decisions on key milestones in the LDP preparation process, discuss background evidence supporting the Plan's spatial strategy, policies and proposals. Each MOWG meeting focused on breaking down sections of the LDP by topic areas e.g. energy, housing, environment and industry and business. Each meeting included an assessment of environmental impacts for strategic environmental impact purposes. All meetings have taken place in person or online and led by managers and officers in planning policy.

---

### Areas of collaboration

Lead Officer – Strategic Manager Development Planning. LDP2 MOWG comprises of Elected Members representing a wide geographical area and balanced political spread, and Officers from key Council Services including Planning and Economic Development; Waste; Sustainable Development; Education; Facilities and Property Management; Housing and Vibrant Communities as well as arm's length organisations, including the Ayrshire Roads Alliance and East Ayrshire Leisure Trust. As each meeting focuses on specific topics areas, this makes officers time inputting to the MOWG and preparation of the LDP much more efficient.

---

## What was the overall result

The Local Development Plan for East Ayrshire was adopted on 8 April 2024. The MOWG meetings in the NPIF year leading up to this point and in previous years have allowed major parts of the Plan, and the Plan post Examination to be viewed, amended and approved on a preliminary basis, which has ensured a much more efficient journey to Council in early 2024.

---

## Lessons learned

New and improved relationships have formed between departments allowing for more positive collaborative working. This has extended to how the Council liaise and work with stakeholders. Elected Members also have an improved sense of how the Plan comes together, in terms of its relationship with NPF4 and its spatial strategy and policies. The requirement to lodge papers for MOWG and meet the meeting timetable has resulted in improved project management and improved adherence to the development plan scheme.

---

## What contribution did it make towards delivering outcomes?

### **NPF4**

#### ☒ Sustainable places

- ☒ Climate change and nature crisis
- ☒ Climate mitigate and adaptation
- ☒ Biodiversity
- ☒ Natural Places
- ☒ Soils
- ☒ Forestry, woodland and trees
- ☒ Historic assets and places
- ☐ Green belts
- ☒ Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings
- ☐ Coast development
- ☒ Energy
- ☒ Zero waste
- ☒ Sustainable transport

#### ☒ Liveable places

- ☒ Design, quality and place

- ☒ Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods
- ☒ Quality homes
- ☒ Rural homes
- ☒ Infrastructure first
- ☒ Heat and cooling
- ☒ Blue and green infrastructure
- ☒ Play, recreation and sport
- ☒ Flood risk and water management
- ☒ Health and safety
- ☒ Digital Infrastructure

#### ☒ Productive places

- ☒ Community Wealth Building
- ☒ Business and industry
- ☒ City, town, local and commercial centres
- ☒ Retail
- ☒ Rural development
- ☒ Tourism
- ☐ Culture and creativity
- ☐ Aquaculture
- ☒ Minerals

#### Place and Wellbeing Outcomes

- ☒ Movement
- ☒ Spaces
- ☒ Resources
- ☒ Civic
- ☒ Stewardship

# Case Study: Chief Planning Officer

## Attribute 5: This Planning Authority has effective leadership

---

### Context

The establishment of a Chief Planning Officer in the Council Management Structure.

---

### What happened

The role of the Chief Planning Officer is to deliver on the East Ayrshire Strategic Plan 2022-27 “East Ayrshire is a place with strong, safe and vibrant communities where everyone has a good quality of life and access to opportunities, choices and high quality services which are sustainable , accessible and meet peoples needs.” Following the Best Value Service Review, the post was recruited in January 2024 with the postholder taking up the post from late April 2024. The Chief Planning Officer reports to the Chief Governance Officer and reports indirect to the Chief Executive as Chief Advisor on Planning and Place matters. All planning reports are presented to Planning Committee, Cabinet and Council in the name of the Chief Planning Officer. The statutory Chief Planning Officer has been appointed at an appropriate level of seniority to ensure that the officer is adding value to strategic objectives and aspirations within the Council. As Head of the Planning Profession they are able to influence key planning, place and architectural decisions and are a member of the Corporate Management Team (CMT). The Chief Planning Officer by being part of the CMT is able to influence strategic decisions and ensure there is a place focus in Council decisions. The role helps to bring ideas, innovation and conversation to strategic decisions and hearing first hand the strategic issues of other services results in better planning outcomes and decisions.

The role also involves understanding and working with elected members to achieve their “buy-in” and retain a strategic long term view.

---

### Areas of collaboration

Key Officer: Pamela Clifford, Chief Planning Officer

Stakeholders: Corporate Management Team, Elected Members, Planning Service Staff, Council Staff, Developers, Local Communities.

---

### What was the overall result

Although the post is in its early stages, the benefits of having a Chief Planning Officer are being realized, even in this short period of time, whereby silo working is being broken down and having a greater influence over strategic decisions. Increased collaboration between services is being promoted and greater collaboration with developers, elected members and within the Planning team is having an overall collaborative approach. In the first 4 months, strong collaboration has taken place with the Convenor and Vice Convenor of the Planning Committee and other Planning Committee members in terms of a new Committee Report format and early awareness of major development proposals.

---



# Lessons learned

The provision of a Chief Planning Officer helps to strengthen leadership on planning and corporate recognition in a Council environment. Demonstrating the importance and positive influence of planning within the Council and outwith.

---

## What contribution did it make towards delivering outcomes?

### NPF4

#### ☐ Sustainable places

- ☒ Climate change and nature crisis
- ☒ Climate mitigate and adaptation
- ☒ Biodiversity
- ☒ Natural Places
- ☒ Soils
- ☒ Forestry, woodland and trees
- ☒ Historic assets and places
- ☐ Green belts
- ☒ Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings
- ☐ Coast development
- ☒ Energy
- ☒ Zero waste
- ☒ Sustainable transport

#### ☐ Liveable places

- ☒ Design, quality and place
- ☒ Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods
- ☒ Quality homes
- ☒ Rural homes
- ☒ Infrastructure first
- ☒ Heat and cooling
- ☒ Blue and green infrastructure
- ☒ Play, recreation and sport
- ☒ Flood risk and water management
- ☒ Health and safety
- ☒ Digital Infrastructure

#### ☐ Productive places

- ☒ Community Wealth Building
- ☒ Business and industry
- ☒ City, town, local and commercial centres

- ☒ Retail
- ☒ Rural development
- ☒ Tourism
- ☐ Culture and creativity
- ☐ Aquaculture
- ☒ Minerals

## Place and Wellbeing Outcomes

- ☒ Movement
- ☒ Spaces
- ☒ Resources
- ☒ Civic
- ☒ Stewardship

# Case Study: Producing a robust evidence base to resolve infrastructure constraints in Stewarton

## Attribute 6: This Planning Authority has a robust policy and evidence base

---

### Context

Stewarton is a historic burgh in the north of East Ayrshire and had a population of around 7500 inhabitants in 2016. Close to the M77 and served by frequent rail services, the town has become an increasingly popular dormitory settlement for people working in Kilmarnock, Glasgow and further afield. Pressure for residential development is high and a large number of sites were submitted when the Council undertook its Call for Sites in 2017. At the same time, there was considerable concern from residents and elected members in terms of infrastructure capacity in the town; education, health care, road network, water and wastewater etc. In the early stages of producing LDP2, it was clear that the matter of future growth in Stewarton would be a significant issue for the Plan to address and plan for.

---

### What happened

In 2020, the Council responded to a 'Call for Interest' from the Key Agency Group (KAG) for projects where a collaborative approach could support green recovery. KAG agreed to work with the Council to take a place based approach to exploring how Stewarton could develop sustainably; arriving at a new development strategy for Stewarton, built upon a detailed understanding of the realities of the infrastructure constraints within the town and an analysis of the qualitative and quantitative opportunities within the town.

A number KAG workshops were held during 2021 and 2022. These brought all interested parties round the table, to discuss infrastructure in the town in order to allow any capacity issues to be fully understood.

Qualitative data was also gathered, piloting use of the place standard with a climate lens through community workshops that prompted conversations around mitigation and adaptation actions that could happen in Stewarton to help address the climate and biodiversity crises. A 'living local' survey was then carried out to gain further insights into walking distance thresholds, frequency of using services, and the quality of routes to move around

Building on this work, consultants were appointed to summarise and report on the infrastructure situation and to produce a development strategy for future development within the town.

Key findings of the KAG work and the consultants study have had a significant influence on LDP2. Specifically:

- A far clearer understanding is now held by all parties, as to what the infrastructure issues are in the town, separating out perception from fact. This is critical going forward, to ensure that any new development can move forward based on sound evidence.
- As part of an infrastructure first approach for the town, LDP2 ensures that new housing cannot be developed without an agreement being reached with developers for the provision of new primary school accommodation, within the site of the one significant housing land release (siteST-H2).

- Should a new school be developed on site ST-H2, the existing primary school site will be safeguarded for new healthcare facilities and/or affordable housing, ensuring this central site is utilised to address infrastructure needs.

---

## Areas of collaboration

The KAG approach is built upon collaboration; bringing together all key agencies, as well as other stakeholders with an interest in the town, to explore the infrastructure constraints and map a way forward.

KAG involvement as led by Architecture & Design Scotland (A&DS), was fundamental to being able to fully understand the constraints, and indeed the opportunities within Stewarton.

The community have fed into the process, giving insight into how local people use the town, move about it and feel about it.

Elected members have been supportive of the work undertaken in Stewarton. The local elected members are very aware of the infrastructure concerns of constituents and have embraced the infrastructure first approach that has been embedded into LDP2 as a result of the work undertaken.

---

## What was the overall result

The LDP2 framework for Stewarton is robust and based on a clear understanding of the constraints and opportunities in the town. The approach was highlighted in the LDP2 Examination report (published December 2023) as a good approach to meeting the infrastructure first principles embedded within NPF4:

*‘Overall, I am impressed by the level of attention that the council has paid to these matters. The proposals and mechanisms set out in the supplementary guidance and the proposed plan go a good way towards meeting the infrastructure first principles promoted in NPF4. Detailed evidence regarding infrastructure capacity and needs has been prepared, and some key infrastructure requirements and developer contributions are included in the plan (most notably land for a new school).’* LDP2 Examination Report, Page 786

The added value of working with the Key Agencies Group and the place based approach taken, was highlighted through its inclusion as a case study within the Scottish Government Planning Guidance ‘Local Living and 20 minute neighbourhoods’.

---

## Lessons learned

**High level of collaboration** – the work has brought a range of interests around the table, addressing silo working and ensuring all interested parties have a better understanding of the challenges facing the town. Critically, the work has also resulted in better joint working across Council departments; the challenges facing the town are not just planning matters, they require a range of council departments and external stakeholders working together to find solutions. This is important going forward, as the development of Stewarton will continue to be a priority for some time.

**Digital mapping** – the work with A&DS and the KAG allowed the Council to tap into digital mapping analysis that it has not used previously. Going forward with LDP3, the Council will reflect on the added value that this mapping capability brought and explore ways in which it can adapt to in-house capabilities.

**Time & resources required** – the work carried out in Stewarton was, in its depth and intensity, a new approach within East Ayrshire. This was considered necessary for Stewarton given the complexities of the infrastructure constraints and the level of concern from the community and elected members. However, Stewarton is just one of over 30 settlements across East Ayrshire. A place based approach like this could not feasibly be undertaken across all settlements. Moving forward, decisions will have to be taken as to where resource are prioritized and how the experience of undertaking this work in Stewarton can be taken on board for other settlements, but perhaps in a less time and resource intensive manner.

---

## What contribution did it make towards delivering outcomes?

### NPF4

#### ☐ Sustainable places

- ☐ Climate change and nature crisis
- ☒ Climate mitigate and adaptation
- ☐ Biodiversity
- ☐ Natural Places
- ☐ Soils
- ☐ Forestry, woodland and trees
- ☐ Historic assets and places
- ☐ Green belts
- ☒ Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings
- ☐ Coast development
- ☐ Energy
- ☐ Zero waste
- ☐ Sustainable transport

#### ☐ Liveable places

- ☒ Design, quality and place
- ☒ Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods
- ☒ Quality homes
- ☐ Rural homes
- ☒ Infrastructure first
- ☐ Heat and cooling
- ☐ Blue and green infrastructure
- ☐ Play, recreation and sport
- ☐ Flood risk and water management
- ☐ Health and safety
- ☐ Digital Infrastructure

#### ☐ Productive places

- ☐ Community Wealth Building
- ☐ Business and industry



- ☒ City, town, local and commercial centres
- ☐ Retail
- ☐ Rural development
- ☐ Tourism
- ☐ Culture and creativity
- ☐ Aquaculture
- ☐ Minerals

## Place and Wellbeing Outcomes

- ☒ Movement
  - ☒ Spaces
  - ☒ Resources
  - ☒ Civic
  - ☒ Stewardship
-

# Case Study: Compliance monitoring of large scale environmental projects and Major developments

## Attribute 8: The planning authority has effective and efficient decision-making processes

---

### Context

Location – planning committee and various large scale and Major development sites across East Ayrshire

Dates – from 2014 and every quarter at planning committee and monthly or appropriate other timescale for compliance monitoring visits

#### Background

The Independent Review of the Regulation of Open Cast Coal Operations in East Ayrshire that was undertaken following the collapse of the coal sector included as one of its recommendations that quarterly reports should be submitted to the Planning Committee recording progress of mining activity and restoration of the particular sites and complexes. This was a direct result of the part played by the Planning Service in failing to properly monitor the ongoing works at such sites and, in part, contributed to having insufficient restoration guarantee monies to be able to ensure that these sites could be restored to the agreed restoration plans. At the Planning Committee on 27 June 2014, it was agreed that the remit of this quarterly report be widened to include the other environmental development subject to compliance monitoring including quarries, landfills, onshore wind farms and the electrical interconnector project. At the Planning Committee on 22nd of April 2016, it was agreed that the remit of the Quarterly Report be further expanded to include information on single turbine developments. The remit now also includes all other Major developments. The requirement for planning authorities to report on the monitoring of compliance with planning permissions on all Major developments will be introduced in future as a statutory requirement under Section 44 of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 and has been introduced into the report ahead of this requirement legally coming into force.

---

## What happened?

Following conclusion of every quarter in a calendar year, a summary of compliance monitoring activity during that quarter is presented to our planning committee. This provides the planning committee with an opportunity to be informed of any matters arising from the compliance monitoring activity, such as any formal enforcement action that may have been needed, and to give elected members an opportunity to seek further details of officers on any individual development. A copy of the report is made publicly available ahead of planning committee on our website, providing members of the public with access to that same information. Behind the compliance monitoring summary report and informing the content of the report, officers and/or consultants employed by the Council as independent Planning Monitoring Officer (PMO) undertake compliance monitoring activities at each relevant development being reported on. Those visits often take place monthly on active construction sites with reports on compliance submitted to the Planning Authority and the developer after each visit. These reports are placed on the Council's website for public view, allowing for public scrutiny of any active large scale construction/development site that is being monitored.

This level of scrutiny holds developers to account and reassures the public that large scale environmental projects are being properly monitored and that all of the good practice environmental commitments made in environmental statements, application documentation and discharge of conditions is properly carried out and that any non compliance is quickly tackled and addressed. Additionally, where there are community liaison groups for certain developments, the meetings of these are included in the reporting as well as also being placed online and details of any appropriate financial guarantee that is in place is also reported, allowing for a one stop shop of development critical information to be available in a public forum. Our elected officials are particularly interested in these matters, often via their constituents, and having frequent progress updates allows them to be more aware of what is happening throughout the district and to be able to bring relevant matters to Council officials quickly. This also allows our members to track progress of developments, from an initial planning decision taken by the planning committee through to active build out and completion. This has extended to our members attending a number of compliance site visits, particularly so for wind farm developments and open cast coal restoration sites, including Sneddon law, South Kyle and North Kyle/Chalmerston developments. Most developers actively wish to participate in this process, given that the use of Planning Monitoring Officers has become more common, particularly on large scale wind developments, over the last decade. Most developers are willing to engage with the Council on the use of a Council appointed PMO, reimbursing the Council's costs through a legal agreement. Where that has not happened, a developer appointed PMO allows for a similar process to take place. Our public reporting can be found at: [Minerals, waste and electricity generating stations · East Ayrshire Council \(east-ayrshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/minerals-waste-and-electricity-generating-stations)

---

## Areas of collaboration

Lead officer: David Wilson, Interim Development Management Manager Stakeholders: Planning Authority staff, planning committee, developers, Planning Monitoring Officers, Ecological Clerk of Works.

---

## What was the overall result?

The compliance monitoring reporting system and work around compliance monitoring activity generally in East Ayrshire have resulted in variously (a) a process that underpins and ensures that any financial guarantee's in place to ensure that sites are restored are sufficient, by being fully aware and up to date with the extent and progress of works; (b) heightened public scrutiny and overview of the compliance monitoring of projects (c) increasing the knowledge, awareness and participation of our elected members in the construction stage of projects, after original planning decisions have been made, including arranged visits to a number of under construction projects (d) developers held to greater public account for the quality and compliance of their construction phase, with many welcoming this scrutiny and able to demonstrate good environmental and construction practice in a public forum (e) being ahead of the forthcoming legislative requirements to monitor and report on Major developments and (f) the best protection of the environment from projects by bringing together skilled professionals to ensure that good practice and commitments are adhered to, positively promoting and protecting place and the wider environment. Collectively, this level of scrutiny and the various benefits it brings is considered to heighten confidence in the planning system generally.

---

## Lessons learned

The existence of the compliance report and the extensive efforts and resource that this Council puts into compliance monitoring is the lesson that has been learned. Failure to properly monitor the large scale open cast developments resulted in insufficient scrutiny such that many sites included unauthorised work, had progressed more quickly than anticipated or had not been undertaking progressive restoration as envisaged by the approved plans. Our compliance monitoring efforts and report have evolved over time to encompass all large scale environmental projects, wind turbines and Major developments and it has the potential to evolve further if required. This has ensured that potentially significant environmental non compliance has been quickly identified and either solutions put in place or enforcement action progressed. Ultimately this contributes to greater public awareness and understanding of a frequently 'hidden' part of the planning system and builds confidence that the planning system in East Ayrshire works for them, their community and their environment from pre-application processes through to completion and operation of a development.

---

# What contribution did it make towards delivering outcomes?

## **NPF4**

### ☒ Sustainable places

- ☒ Climate change and nature crisis
- ☒ Climate mitigate and adaptation
- ☒ Biodiversity
- ☒ Natural Places
- ☒ Soils
- ☐ Forestry, woodland and trees
- ☐ Historic assets and places
- ☐ Green belts
- ☐ Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings
- ☐ Coast development
- ☒ Energy
- ☐ Zero waste
- ☐ Sustainable transport

### ☐ Liveable places

- ☐ Design, quality and place
- ☐ Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods
- ☐ Quality homes
- ☐ Rural homes
- ☐ Infrastructure first
- ☐ Heat and cooling
- ☐ Blue and green infrastructure
  
- ☐ Play, recreation and sport
- ☐ Flood risk and water management
- ☐ Health and safety
- ☐ Digital Infrastructure



☒ Productive places

- ☐ Community Wealth Building
- ☒ Business and industry
- ☐ City, town, local and commercial centres
- ☐ Retail
- ☒ Rural development
- ☐ Tourism
- ☐ Culture and creativity
- ☐ Aquaculture
- ☐ Minerals

☒ Place and Wellbeing Outcomes

- ☐ Movement
  - ☐ Spaces
  - ☒ Resources
  - ☐ Civic
  - ☒ Stewardship
- 

Images below are extracts from various compliance monitoring reports of large scale environmental projects:

Tincornhill Quarry  
Planning Ref: 19/0230/PP  
Condition Audit Matrix – June 2023

Condition	Status						
	Discharged	Continuing Compliance	General Compliance	Partial Compliance	Awaiting Information	Not Applicable	Non Compliance
1		•					
2	•						
3		•					
4			•				
5		•					
6		•					
7		•					
8		•					
9						•	
10		•					
11	•						
12		•					
13		•					
14		•					
15		•					
16		•					
17			•				
18		•					
19		•					
20		•					
21		•					
22		•					
23		•					
24		•					
25		•					
26		•					
27		•					
28		•					
29						•	
30		•					
31		•					
32		•					
33						•	
34		•					
35		•					
36		•					
37		•					
38						•	

x:\[TAC]\668\June2023

8

Dalgleish Associates Ltd

Extract from compliance monitoring report on Tincornhill quarry 2023 compliance visit - [16\\_0013\\_CM-PLANNING\\_AUDIT\\_MARCH\\_2023-1161181.pdf \(east-ayrshire.gov.uk\)](#)

## PMO Site Visit and Planning Audit Report – North Kyle Windfarm

This 'Planning Compliance and Site Visit Report' has been prepared by the "Planning Monitoring Officer (PMO)" appointed by East Ayrshire Council to monitor activities on the North Kyle Windfarm and check compliance with the terms of all Planning Permissions, Planning Obligations and associated Approved Planning Application Conditions attached to the development.

Consent under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 and deemed planning permission under Section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 for construction and operation of North Kyle Energy Project within the Planning Authority area of East Ayrshire Council.

The proposed Development is located approximately 5.5km east of Patna, 6km west of New Cumnock and 2.5km south of Skares in the East Ayrshire Council area with a total generating capacity approximately 205 Mega Watts (MW).

**Site Visit and Planning Audit Reports will be issued to East Ayrshire Council (Graham Mitchell, Paul Outram), Brockwell Energy (Richard Buckland, Stuart Bell), Natural Power (Mark Nicolson, Allan MacDonald), ECoW MacArthur Green (Natasha Woest), Jones Bros (Kieran Pugh, David N, Mitch Doyle)**

### CURRENT STATUS - Traffic Light System

<b>1</b>	<b>Red Status</b>	Red denotes a strict contravention of planning conditions or major incident with potential for environmental impact - requires immediate action.
<b>2</b>	<b>Amber Status</b>	Amber denotes a failure to ensure strict compliance with planning conditions or incident with risk of leading to environmental impact - requires scheduled action.
<b>3</b>	<b>Green Status</b>	Green denotes an observation of progress, records best practice and also records when issues are resolved - no further action required.
<b>4</b>	<b>White Status</b>	Audit point removed, when an issue self-remediates or the circumstances contributing to the issues have been removed

Please note that Amber actions observed on subsequent site inspections that remain un-actioned will automatically switch to Red.

Extract from early PMO visit to North Kyle windfarm - [23\\_0001\\_CM-COMPLIANCE\\_REPORT\\_NO\\_2-1172429.pdf](#) ([east-ayrshire.gov.uk](http://east-ayrshire.gov.uk))

#### SITE PHOTOGRAPHS SEPTEMBER 2023



Revegetation at the Hareshawmuir Water



Revegetation of verges Spur 1



Development of bog pools near T11



Development of bog pools at J7

insideFarrar

52 of 54

18. Sneddon Law Windfarm Planning Compliance Checklist September 2023 FINAL

Extract of photo evidence from PMO report at Sneddon Law windfarm nearing end of construction period - [22\\_0001\\_SM-PMO\\_REPORT\\_SEPTMBER2023-1148415.pdf](#) ([east-ayrshire.gov.uk](http://east-ayrshire.gov.uk))



Images below relate to various compliance monitoring visits to Battery Energy Storage, windfarm and quarry developments within East Ayrshire:







# Case Study: Open for business: Minimum All Tenure Housing Land Requirement & LDP2 allocation of housing sites

## Attribute 12: This Planning Authority supports the delivery of consented development

---

### Context

East Ayrshire Council was preparing its second local development plan under the transitional arrangements as National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) was being drafted, complicating the determination of the housing land supply. Ongoing discussions with Homes for Scotland as part of the Housing Land Audit process identified that a full review of all housing land would be required to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of the land supply. A new requirement - the MATHLR (Minimum all tenure housing land requirement) represents the minimum capacity of housing land that a Planning Authority must allocate for residential development during the Local Development Plan period. The determination of a HST (Housing Supply Target) and MATHLR for East Ayrshire occurred at the juncture of two Planning Acts, as well as the preparation of the new National Planning Framework (NPF4) and new Local Development Plan. This case study considers the process that East Ayrshire went through to determine the MATHLR and allocate housing land.

---

### What happened

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, sets out a requirement for NPF4 to include 'targets for the use of land in different areas of Scotland for housing'. The Minimum All-Tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR), as this target is described, constitutes the minimum amount of housing land to be allocated within each Local Development Plan (LDP). It is expected that LDPs should identify land to at least meet the minimum requirement or figure. As part of the Draft NPF4 consultation exercise which encompassed all Planning Authorities in Scotland, the Scottish Government/CHMA presented to East Ayrshire Council in early 2021 an initial default MATHLR estimate of 350 dwellings to be allocated during the 10-year EALDP period. This figure was not considered to be sufficient to meet the Council's needs, particularly when the Main Issues Report (MIR) to EALDP2 stated an ambition to stabilise and increase the resident population of the area so as to address projected long term population decline, nor did it reflect the programmed rate of house completions from the 2021 Housing Land Audit which was on average 490 dwellings per year.

Discussions between the Council and the Scottish Government/ Centre for Housing Market Analysis (CHMA) to determine a MATHLR for East Ayrshire took place during spring and summer 2021. This determination was based on a methodology prepared by the CHMA as set out in the Draft NPF4: Housing Land Requirement - Explanatory Report. Various proposals were discussed, including an initial proposal of 4100 units, the determination of which was considered by the CHMA not to be sufficiently robust. A final figure of 4050 dwellings was agreed upon after extensive discussions with the CHMA, submitted in September 2021 and subsequently included in Draft NPF4 when it was released for consultation in November 2021. The inclusion of the 4050 MATHLR in Draft NPF4 and NPF4 indicates that the Scottish Government considers that figure is robust and credible. To ensure that housing land supply is sufficiently generous to allow for any unforeseen problems in the delivery of sites, additional residential capacity has been allocated above the MATHLR. This 52% addition achieves a total indicative housing land supply within allocated sites capable of accommodating development of 6145 units.



Eight weekly meetings with Homes for Scotland during the formulation of the plan assisted in assessing the effectiveness of existing and potential housing sites and each potential housing site was presented to a Members Officers Working Group.

---

## Areas of collaboration

The work on the MATHLR and the submission to the Scottish Government was supported by Homes for Scotland and Strathclyde sub-committee members. Meetings then took place between the Scottish Government and CHMA and the Planning Authority. In terms of the Local Development Plan, a Members Officers Working Group was established which included a range of Elected Members, and representatives from departments across the Council for example from Education, Roads, Housing, Waste. There was strong collaboration with Homes for Scotland through eight weekly meetings.

---

## What was the overall result?

As a result of the substantial collaborative work put into the housing land and site selection process, the outputs and outcomes are that:

---

- We have a generous amount of housing land a positive to ensure that sufficient range and choice is afforded to developers, the Council and Registered Social Landlords.
  - We are working towards our aim to stabilise East Ayrshire's population and stimulate population growth.
  - The DPEA concluded that the approach aligns with national policy, and in particular NPF4's expectation to promote an ambitious approach. It should also serve to promote the availability of a wider range and choice of sites and so improve the functioning of the housingmarket.
  - Relationships have been strengthened with Homes for Scotland and internally between departments via the MOWG process.
- 

## Lessons learned

### What worked well:

**Relationships developed** – working well internally and with Homes for Scotland led to a smoother plan preparation and examination process. We continue to develop these relationships.

**The quality of document produced** – Due to the collaboration a robust and credible LDP has been produced.

---

# What contribution did it make towards delivering outcomes?

## NPF4

### Sustainable places

- ☐ Climate change and nature crisis
- ☐ Climate mitigate and adaptation
- ☐ Biodiversity
- ☐ Natural Places
- ☐ Soils

- ☐ Forestry, woodland and trees
- ☐ Historic assets and places
- ☐ Green belts
- ☒ Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings
- ☐ Coast development
- ☐ Energy
- ☐ Zero waste
- ☐ Sustainable transport

### Liveable places

- ☐ Design, quality and place
- ☒ Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods
- ☐ Quality homes
- ☒ Rural homes
- ☒ Infrastructure first
- ☐ Heat and cooling
- ☐ Blue and green infrastructure
- ☐ Play, recreation and sport
- ☐ Flood risk and water management
- ☐ Health and safety
- ☐ Digital Infrastructure

### Productive places

- ☐ Community Wealth Building
- ☐ Business and industry
- ☐ City, town, local and commercial centres
- ☐ Retail
- ☒ Rural development
- ☐ Tourism
- ☐ Culture and creativity
- ☐ Aquaculture
- ☐ Minerals

### Place and Wellbeing Outcomes

- ☒ Movement
- ☐ Spaces
- ☐ Resources
- ☐ Civic
- ☐ Stewardship