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National Planning Improvement

NATIONAL PLANNING IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

Improvement Action Progress Update 2025

East Dunbartonshire



East Dunbartonshire NPIF Annual Report (Year Two - 2025)

Foreword

The first National Planning Improvement Framework (NPIF) for East Dunbartonshire was prepared in late 2024/ early 2025 and received endorsement from the National Planning Improvement Champion on 14 April 2025. The NPIF has been an important tool in helping the authority understand our strengths in the service that we deliver, and in identifying the areas requiring improvement.

It has been an extremely busy period for the development management team who have handled an increase in major and locally significant proposals, particularly relating to Council interest developments and energy infrastructure. During the 12-month period leading up to 30 September 2025, the planning authority has:

- Validated 646 new applications
- Decided 668 applications
- Held 7 Planning Board meetings considering a total of 15 applications
- Held 6 Local Review Bodies considering a total of 14 applications

The development management team has also had a long-term vacancy for a planning officer which has impacted upon capacity within the team. However, this vacancy has now been filled, and the team is currently fully staffed.

In terms of development planning, the authority took a significant step forward in preparing the next Local Development Plan for the area by approving the Evidence Report at Council on 19 June 2025. This was followed by the submission of the Evidence Report to the Planning and Environmental Appeals Division (DPEA) of the Scottish Government to begin the Gate Check assessment on 18 August 2025. In addition, in order to initiate progress with preparing the Proposed Plan, a Call for Ideas and Sites exercise was undertaken from July 2025 to September 2025.

The Council received the outcome of the Gate Check assessment on 05 November 2025. Whilst the Reporter found that the Evidence Report generally provides a comprehensive summary of evidence gathered on topics relevant to the preparation of the next East Dunbartonshire Local Development Plan, an insufficiency of evidence was found in three specific areas: education and health care infrastructure and the indicative Local Housing Land Requirement. Officers will ensure that work to address the Reporter's recommendations is undertaken as a priority, and that a revised Evidence Report will be approved at the earliest possible meeting of full Council. Thereafter, the Evidence Report will be resubmitted to the DPEA to repeat the Gate Check review.

The approved and endorsed NPIF document identified 27 improvement actions for the authority to take forward during the period up until early 2027. In line with the implementation and monitoring arrangements set out in our NPIF, the planning leadership team have met on a quarterly basis to discuss progress with the delivering the action and



agree a programme of upcoming work. This document provides detailed information on the progress of each action, (as of 30 September 2025), including:

- the work undertaken to date,
- what the next steps for the action are, and
- if the planning authority seeks to update the wording or other aspects of the action.

A further update report on the progress of implementing the improvement action plan will be provided in 2026.

Introduction

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

Each improvement action plan sets out:

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

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

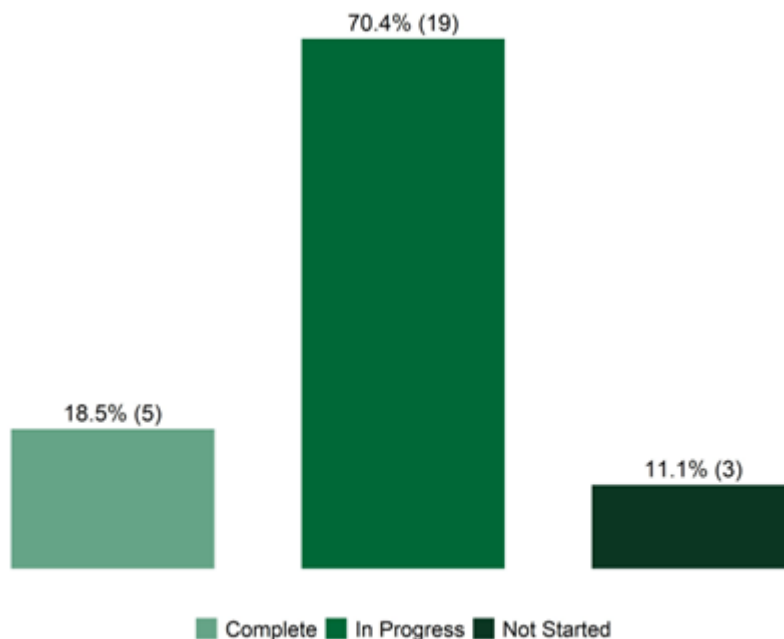
In year two of the NPIF the planning authorities are to update on their progress with the improvement actions. This report sets out the progress East Dunbartonshire has made, detailing any updates to actions, any further actions and plans for further collaboration with peer partners.

Planning Improvement Actions Progress Update

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



East Dunbartonshire has 27 improvement actions. The status of the actions is shown below:



Action 1: Review staff structure to ensure that we can continue to meet our statutory duty and corporate priorities

In Progress

Progress against this action: A review of staffing in the Sustainability and Planning Policy section is underway.

The following next steps are proposed: We will conclude the review of the Sustainability and Planning Policy section, and continue to monitor staffing to ensure that statutory duties and corporate priorities are met.

Action 2: We will implement consistent recording of data in Uniform to track consultee response timescales in order to establish areas of focus

In Progress

Progress against this action: An access report has been created and we have commenced recording the dates of when comments are received from consultees for planning applications.

The following next steps are proposed: Once the new system has been in place for approximately 6 months, an access report will be created to analyse trends in response times and identify any potential reoccurring issues. Regular monitoring of response times will continue thereafter.



Action 3: We will formalise consultee response templates for each service to ensure consistent approaches and meaningful comments across teams, including during pre-application discussions

Complete

What was the outcome of completing this action?

A draft version of the template was circulated around internal services for comment. The template has been amended and finalised taking the comments received into account. Internal services have now been sent the finalised template along with a 'user guide' and have been asked to ensure that it is used for providing responses to all planning applications going forward. The implementation of this process should ensure that consultation responses are meaningful, succinct and focussed. Although we have marked this action as complete, we will continue to monitor the effectiveness of the template and make any amendments as required.

Action 4: Encourage attainment of RTPI chartership for those who are eligible

In Progress

Progress against this action: Team Leaders have discussed and encouraged getting RTPI membership with relevant officers during the recent round of PDR's (Performance Development Review). A group has also been set up in Microsoft Teams to allow discussion, information sharing and support.

The following next steps are proposed: Team Leaders to continue to encourage and support officers to gain chartered RTPI membership.

Action 5: We will implement discretionary charges for condition discharge

Complete

What was the outcome of completing this action?

Charging for condition discharge has been introduced. Although we have marked this action as complete, we will continue to monitor the new charge to gain an understanding of it's contribution towards ensuring that the planning service maximises resources and productivity.



Action 6: Continue to review opportunities to promote and utilise the University of the West of Scotland's proposed fully funded, work-based learning degree qualification as part of the Service's work force planning

In Progress

Progress against this action: The Development Applications Team has recently gone through the process of recruiting a new team member. There was a good degree of interest in the post and it was able to be filled through traditional recruitment methods. Therefore, it was not necessary to consider utilising the university scheme in this instance. There have been no other vacancies or opportunities in the Planning Service during the period of review.

The following next steps are proposed: The Council will continue to monitor staffing and vacancies, and where appropriate will consider the university scheme as a means to meet the work force needs of the Service.

Action 7: Continue with our workforce planning by continuing to create opportunities for staff development and progression to strengthen the team and ensure that we are horizon scanning to prepare for future challenges

In Progress

Progress against this action: Work has commenced on preparing a workforce strategy, initially focussing on planning functions, though this may be extended in due course to cover all areas of the Land Planning and Development service area. The work undertaken to date sets out principles regarding; opportunities for training, upskilling/ reskilling, staff retention, workforce efficiency and employee engagement and wellbeing.

The following next steps are proposed: The planning leadership team will continue to develop the workforce strategy and will implement the measures set out in the strategy during 2025/26.

Action 8: Strengthen PDR process by setting deadlines that will ensure all staff and managers undertake PDR meetings in time to allow annual training to be scheduled

In Progress

Progress against this action: The Council has introduced and implemented a new template for undertaking streamlined and refocussed Performance Development Reviews (PDR's), which has been used for all planning team members for the 2025/26 period.

The following next steps are proposed: Interim progress meetings will be undertaken mid-year to catch up on the progress made towards meeting the PDR objectives.



Action 9: We will continue to assess our performance on a regular basis

In Progress

Progress against this action: Progress on actions in the Improvement Plan is collated via a monitoring spreadsheet and is discussed at management team meetings on a quarterly basis. Wider performance issues, useful information and any necessary feedback from officers is also discussed.

The following next steps are proposed: The need to discuss progress on delivering the Improvement Actions and other performance related issues on a quarterly basis has been incorporated into the ongoing agenda for management team meetings.

Action 10: We will implement Elected Members Training in accordance with new legislation

Not Started

Reason(s) action has not been progressed: We are relying on a partner or stakeholder to action this.

The following next steps are proposed: The Council will implement training for Elected Members once the new legislation has been brought forward and enacted by the government. We will require the assistance of our Legal Services Team to do this.

Action 11: We will continue to look for opportunities to enhance our service delivery and leadership through sharing good practice, skills and knowledge with our partners and stakeholders

In Progress

Progress against this action: All members of the planning leadership team, including the Chief Planner, attend regular Heads of Planning Scotland meetings. Officers also attend Glasgow City Region meetings, and have informal discussions with counterparts in other local authorities where appropriate. Officers from the Land Planning Policy and Development Applications Team meet approximately every 6 weeks to ensure internal collaboration between planning professionals.

The following next steps are proposed: We will continue to ensure that opportunities for the planning leadership team and officers to attend networks, events and training are maximised, and that good practice and knowledge is shared in order to enhance service delivery.



Action 12: Ensure timely approval of the Evidence Report for LDP3 at full Council

In Progress

Progress against this action: The Evidence Report for LDP3 was approved at full Council on 19 June 2025 and was subsequently submitted to the DPEA in July. Following the need to withdraw the Council's initial submission, as a result of administration matters, the Evidence Report was re-submitted to the DPEA on 18 August 2025. The Council received notice on 05 November 2025 that the Reporter undertaking the Gate Check review has deemed the Evidence Report to be insufficient and that a number of matters should be addressed before the Proposed Plan is progressed.

The following next steps are proposed: Officers will ensure that work to address the Reporter's recommendations is undertaken as a priority, and that a revised Evidence Report will be approved at the earliest possible meeting of full Council. Thereafter, the Evidence Report will be resubmitted to the DPEA to repeat the Gate Check review.

Action 13: Ensure that the customer experience of accessing planning information is improved through the roll-out of the new Council website

Complete

What was the outcome of completing this action?

The new Council website was launched in November 2024. Officers have worked with the Web team to ensure that the planning pages in the new website are fit for purpose and that information is as easily accessible as possible.

Action 14: We will investigate workflow tools to enable digital management of casework to improve decision making timescales

In Progress

Progress against this action: In collaboration with the GIS Co-ordinator, investigations have begun into utilising the Enterprise module for planning applications.

The following next steps are proposed: We will continue investigating the use of the Enterprise module, and conduct benchmarking with other authorities who utilise other forms of workflow tools.



Action 15: We will share best practice with peer authorities and learn from others around implementation of processes that strengthen effective and efficient decision-making.

In Progress

Progress against this action: Members of the planning service regularly attend Heads of Planning Scotland meetings, Glasgow City Region meetings and Improvement Service training events, and have informal discussions with counterparts in other local authorities where appropriate. Officers from the Land Planning Policy and Development Applications Team meet approximately every 6 weeks to ensure internal collaboration between planning professionals.

The following next steps are proposed: We will continue to ensure that opportunities for all officers to attend networks, events and training are maximised, and that good practice and knowledge is shared in order to ensure that effective and efficient decision-making is strengthened.

Action 16: Continue with the preparation of detailed ‘how to’ notes for various aspects of the enforcement process and ensure a full suite of templates for enforcement notices are up to date and available to generate from the Uniform module

In Progress

Progress against this action: We have updated the Uniform system templates for letters to complainants.

The following next steps are proposed: We will continue to update template letters on the Uniform system, including letters to offenders, and undertake a review of enforcement ‘how to’ notes.

Action 17: We will promote the national customer survey and will analyse the results to help us improve performance

In Progress

Progress against this action: We promoted the 2024 National Customer and Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey by adding a link to the survey in the digital signature of all outgoing emails from the Development Applications Team during the 3 week period the survey was open. East Dunbartonshire received 28 responses which, considering the smaller size of the area, was a high rate of response compared to much larger authorities such as Glasgow (29), Fife (25) and Edinburgh (16). The planning leadership team has discussed the outputs of the survey and considered the matters that were raised.



The following next steps are proposed: We will help to promote the 2025 survey, again through the use of email digital signatures. Given the extended time period for the 2025 survey, we will also promote it through the LDP newsletter, and to internal services and key agencies.

Action 18: Ensure that a robust and efficient process for registering Local Place Plans is developed and in place

In Progress

Progress against this action: Whilst the Council has been having initial discussions with some community groups regarding the preparation of Local Place Plans, no groups have made substantial progress on a draft LPP yet and it is unclear when the first submission(s) for registering are likely to be made. However, officers have discussed and agreed an outline process for registering LPP's which will be taken forward as required.

The following next steps are proposed: When the Council receives a draft or finalised LPP, a report will be taken to the next available committee or full Council to update members on the preparation of the LPP.

Action 19: Investigate the potential value of engagement sessions related to the development management process to supplement the ongoing LDP engagement, and implement sessions where considered to be valuable

Not Started

Reason(s) action has not been progressed: The action was set as a low or medium priority.

The following next steps are proposed: We will continue to monitor the value and need for engagement sessions related to development management processes. This could potentially take the form of a joint meeting/ forum that also reports back to the stakeholder group on progress with implementing the Improvement Action Plan.

Action 20: Ensure that the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes are integrated into the Proposed LDP to support local decision-making

Not Started

Reason(s) action has not been progressed: The action was set as a low or medium priority.

The following next steps are proposed: Work on the Proposed Plan has recently commenced and the Land Planning Policy Team will consider how the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes can be integrated into the Proposed Plan.



Action 21: Continue to develop and use identified and innovative tools to deliver sustainable, liveable and productive places

In Progress

Progress against this action: Officers have prepared a Local Living/ 20 Minute Neighbourhood tool which has formed part of the Evidence Report for LDP3 and has been published on the Council's website. The Council has also used the Place Standard tool during the early engagement for LDP3. With regards to planning applications, the Council has implemented a Sustainability and Energy Form, and associated guidance, to enable applicants to meet the requirements of LDP2 Policy 9.

The following next steps are proposed: We have embedded the Local Living/ 20 Minute Neighbourhood tool within the site assessment process for determining sites to be included within LDP3. We will continue to refine the tool going forward as appropriate. We will continue to use the Sustainability and Energy Form in determining planning applications, and ensure that work to prepare LDP3 identifies areas where supplementary information, forms and tools are required.

Action 22: Ensure the development and approval of a Local Housing Land Requirement through the preparation of LDP3

In Progress

Progress against this action: The Evidence Report for LDP3 was approved at full Council on 19 June 2025 and was subsequently submitted to the DPEA in July. Following the need to withdraw the Council's initial submission, as a result of administration matters, the Evidence Report was re-submitted to the DPEA on 18 August 2025. The Council received notice on 05 November 2025 that the Reporter undertaking the Gate Check review has deemed the Evidence Report to be insufficient and that a number of matters should be addressed before the Proposed Plan is progressed. This includes setting out a clearer explanation of the rationale for the chosen option for the Indicative Housing Land Requirement.

The following next steps are proposed: Officers will ensure that work to address the Reporter's recommendations is undertaken as a priority, and that a revised Evidence Report will be approved at the earliest possible meeting of full Council. Thereafter, the Evidence Report will be resubmitted to the DPEA to repeat the Gate Check review.

Action 23: Ensure that the Action Programme for LDP2 is revised to the standard of a Delivery Programme to meet the requirements of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019

Complete

What was the outcome of completing this action?



The updated Delivery Programme was published by the Council in March 2025, with copies sent to Scottish Ministers. It is therefore considered that the Council has discharged this requirement of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019.

Action 24: Continue to actively carry out site monitoring of Major planning applications. This will involve updating the Major site Monitoring document on a biannual basis and having a copy published on the Councils website to ensure officer responsibility for delivery on site and compliance with conditions

In Progress

Progress against this action: Officers have continued to monitor major live planning sites and a review of the monitoring document was undertaken in August 2025.

The following next steps are proposed: The updated monitoring document will be published on the Council's website in due course. We will continue to monitor major sites, update the document and publish it on the website at regular intervals.

Action 25: Establish regular meetings between Development Applications Team Leader and legal services to review all outstanding legal agreements

Complete

What was the outcome of completing this action?

The Development Applications Team Leader has commenced regular meetings with Legal Services, taking place approximately every 10 weeks. They are also ensuring that regular communication with Legal Services outwith these meetings is occurring as and when required. Although we have marked this action as complete we will continue to monitor it to ensure that regular legal liaison meetings continue and that any potential improvements are identified.

Action 26: Develop a standardised condition monitoring spreadsheet for locally significant planning applications

In Progress

Progress against this action: A standardised condition monitoring spreadsheet for locally significant planning applications has been created and has been shared within the Development Applications Team.



The following next steps are proposed: Discussions within the team on refining and using the spreadsheet are ongoing. Once finalised, the spreadsheet will be used on all appropriate local planning applications.

Action 27: Commence provision of draft processing agreements alongside pre-application consultation

In Progress

Progress against this action: Provision of draft processing agreements alongside pre-application consultation responses has recently commenced. Given the type of applications being considered, officers are taking steps to ensure that the need for EIA, and screening at pre-application stage, is taken into consideration as part of the early drafting of processing agreements.

The following next steps are proposed: Review of this action and whether it has impacted upon the uptake of formalised processing agreements will be undertaken in 2026.

Peer Collaborative Review Follow Up

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

Status of the peer review follow-up meeting: We are planning to send an email to update on progress.

Additional information: We will send an update email to the stakeholders who attended the Peer Review Workshop once the annual progress report has been published. The Council is also considering the potential for arranging a joint stakeholder meeting in the New Year that reports back on progress with implementing the Improvement Action Plan, and provides a forum for development management matters to be considered.

