

# National Planning Improvement Framework



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**East Dunbartonshire Council**

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**is.**  
improvement **service**



## Performance Assessment - East Dunbartonshire Council January 2025

Planning Authority:	East Dunbartonshire Council
Document Lead Officer:	Stewart McNally
Email (Preferred):	<a href="mailto:Stewart.mcnally@eastdunbarton.gov.uk">Stewart.mcnally@eastdunbarton.gov.uk</a>
Phone number:	0300 123 4510

# **Introduction**

## **East Dunbartonshire Context**

East Dunbartonshire sits directly to the north of Glasgow City and is one of the eight constituent authorities comprising the Glasgow City Region. The authority area is also bordered by West Dunbartonshire, Stirling and North Lanarkshire to the west, north and east respectively.

The 2022 Census estimates that the total population of the area is 109,000. The vast majority of residents live in the four main towns of Bearsden, Bishopbriggs, Kirkintilloch and Milngavie, with the remaining population living in and around the villages of Lennoxton, Milton of Campsie, Torrance and Twechar. The wider area can be characterised as the point where urban areas give way to the countryside with key features including the Campsie Fells, Kilpatrick Hills, Forth and Clyde Canal, Kelvin Valley and floodplain and the Antonine Wall World Heritage site.

East Dunbartonshire is generally considered to be an affluent and attractive area with higher-than-average house prices. However, there are pockets of more deprived areas with eight datazones (out of a total of 130) featuring in the 25% most deprived areas in Scotland.

Whilst house prices are higher than average, employment opportunities located within the local area tend to be less well paid and therefore there is a heavy reliance on commuting to other parts of the city region and further afield.

Given the proximity to Glasgow and other areas, and the attractiveness of the area as a place to live, land use planning plays a vital role in managing land as a resource – balancing economic choices, quality of life and environmental sustainability.

Responsibility for the Council's planning functions sit within the Land Planning and Development Service which also has responsibility for building standards, economic development and city deal, regeneration, sustainability policy, transport projects and housing strategy and operations.

Teams work collaboratively to ensure that the delivery of our service is coordinated, benefits the local area and maximises added value. This is considered to be particularly important in a smaller authority like East Dunbartonshire where it is not always possible



to have in-house expertise in all areas of our work and the sharing of knowledge and experience is crucial.

The Land Planning and Development Service is committed to service improvement and the National Planning Improvement Framework presents an opportunity for those involved in the delivery of the Council's planning functions to reflect on our successes and upon the areas where we can do better.

## **National Planning Improvement Framework Process**

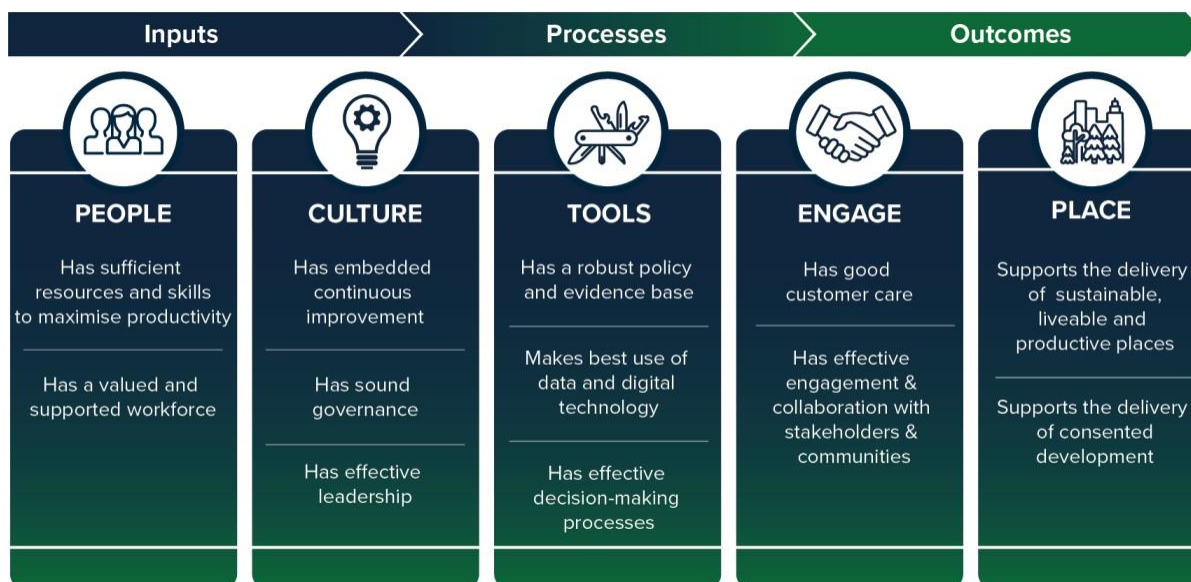
The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 introduced new statutory reporting for planning authorities. This mandatory requirement means that we must prepare a report that will assess our performance and identify actions for improvement.

The process for preparing the National Planning Improvement Framework is set out in the diagram below.



The new National Planning Improvement Framework process was developed by the National Planning Improvement Team (set up by the Scottish Government) in conjunction with stakeholders from a range of perspectives and interests in planning. It focusses

around five themes that have been identified as being key to a high performing planning authority, with 2 or 3 key attributes sitting under each theme.



Further information on each theme and attribute is provided in the relevant section in the document below. For each attribute we are required to provide some narrative on how the authority feels we are performing against the criteria set out by the National Planning Improvement team. This is accompanied by a score using the scoring system below – where a score of 5 is making no progress at all and a score of 1 is making excellent progress. Note that the assessment is generally based on the period from 01 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

PRIORITISE	REVIEW	DEVELOP	BUILD UPON	CONSOLIDATE
No progress	Making limited progress	Making fair progress	Making good progress	Making excellent progress
5	4	3	2	1
Prioritise fundamental review and revisit approach taken. Engage with NPI Learn from others	Review ambition Review approach taken Inform NPI Learn from others	Increase ambition in targets Review and improve implementation	Increase ambition in targets Share learning with others	Share learning with others

Where we have identified a score of 5-2 we are required to identify at least one improvement action relevant to the attribute to help further improve the quality of the planning service. Where we have scored 1 or 2 in the assessment, we are required to

provide good practice case studies so that this can be shared across local authority networks.

## **Stakeholder Engagement**

A peer review workshop was held on Wednesday 03 December 2024 in Southbank Marina in Kirkintilloch. The purpose of the workshop was to test an initial draft of the Council's Self-Assessment and the identified Improvement Actions, thus providing an opportunity for those with particular experience in interacting with the Planning Service to give considered and constructive feedback. The workshop did not address issues relating to individual planning applications or development plan policies.

The session was organised by officers within the planning service but was facilitated on the day by Nick Wright Planning as an impartial third party. The session was attended by the following stakeholders:

- Key agencies (x2)
- Internal service (x1)
- Community Council (x1)
- Local agents (x2)
- National housebuilders (x2)

The session was also attended by two members of the National Planning Improvement Team and a representative from Inverclyde Council (who are the peer planning authority as part of the NPIF process), as well as four officers from the planning service (including the Chief Planner).

The table below summarises the key points discussed in the Peer Review Workshop, and how they were taken into account by the planning service:

<i><b>Discussion point</b></i>	<i><b>Council Response</b></i>
<i>Overall Comments</i>	
The authority generally performs well compared to other authorities and has scored itself conservatively in the performance assessment. There was also an acknowledgement that there were areas where the Council could improve.	Noted. We reflected on the comments made and considered if any of the initial scores should be increased, however officers considered that risks and pressures to delivering the planning service are dynamic and that the original scores were a fair representation of the Council's overall performance over time.
<i>Theme 1: People (Attributes 1-2)</i>	
Were staff at officer level involved in the scoring and assessment for this theme?	The assessment and scoring have been checked with and corroborated by officers.
<i>Theme 2: Culture (Attributes 3-5)</i>	
Any training for Councillors in making planning decisions is welcome.	The Council has implemented enhanced member briefings and is set out as a case study at the end of this document. See also action relating to Attribute 4. Please note that all Members currently undertake informal training on planning upon election to the Council.
Design Panels have had success elsewhere to help applicants and objectors understand that the design quality of proposals is being considered objectively.	The Council does see that there is some merit in this suggestion, however upon further consideration it was determined that the value added to the application process would be unlikely to offset the implications in terms of resources and skills, and the number of applicable applications would be relatively small.

Theme 3: Tools (Attributes 6-8)	
Digital technology – whilst it might work for local authorities and applicants, a substantial minority of local residents don't have internet access or find it difficult. The situation is exacerbated by the current temporary closure of the Bearsden Hub until 2025, and earlier permanent closures of other satellite officers.	The Scottish Government's expectation is that authorities maximise the use of digital tools as part of providing an efficient planning service. The Council considers that the number of residents without any access to the internet continues to diminish, however we appreciate that the skills of those with access can vary greatly. Officers are happy to have face to face meetings with local residents where appropriate.
Theme 4: Engage (Attribute 9-10)	
It can be difficult to contact case officers. Ensuring that each officer has a direct dial phone number would help to build relationships and cut down response times.	Whilst the desire for all officers to have direct dial phone number is understandable, it is considered that given the need for staff to balance competing demands and ensure that the assessment of applications is carried out as quickly as possible, the provision of a direct dial number would not in itself allow case officers to respond any sooner. The improvement actions identified for Attributes 1 & 2 for managing resources and workforce planning will ensure that officers can manage their time to balance the competing demands of the role as much as possible. In addition to being able to contact officers by email, the duty planner is also a route that can be used to escalate urgent matters where appropriate.
With regards to pre-application advice:	The need for meaningful comments from consultees during the pre-app phase is acknowledged and changes have been

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meaningful advice from internal and external consultees is important to make sure the process is worthwhile.</li> <li>• A meeting would be a useful complement to the written report.</li> </ul>	<p>made to the relevant improvement action for Attribute 1.</p> <p>The pre-application advise document on the Council's website sets out all of the advice and help that is available; including the offer of a meeting for an additional fee.</p>
<p>Public consultation events by the LDP team were seen as valuable however, could similar events be run by the development management team; for example, regarding matters such as enforcement, representations, the decision-making process and good practice.</p>	<p>The Council considers that this suggestion has some merit and have added an improvement action on the basis of these comments (see Attribute 10).</p>
<p>Theme 5: Place (Attributes 11-12)</p>	
<p>There are fewer and fewer development sites available in East Dunbartonshire – where will future development take place?</p>	<p>This will be tackled through LDP3, as explained in the workshop. The question underlines the importance of the Council completing LDP3 timeously.</p>

The discussion also raised a number of matters governed by national processes and regulations that are not within the Council's gift to address. These matters were:

- Increasing the scope of Permitted Development would free up more officer time to concentrate on applications that have more impact/ public interest.
- Could the new national Planning Improvement Hub act as a central source of expertise to help local authorities and communities improve digital information and literacy?
- A standard Scotland-wide approach to publishing representations would be beneficial.
- Input from external consultees can affect processing times for applications and it is important that such organisations are properly resourced. Where appropriate, meaningful comments from external consultees during the pre-application stage is also necessary to ensure that applications are determined as quickly as possible.



# Performance Assessment



A high performing planning authority needs to have the right number of people to do the work expected of it with the right 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.

## **ATTRIBUTE 1: THIS PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS SUFFICIENT RESOURCES AND SKILLS TO MAXIMISE PRODUCTIVITY**

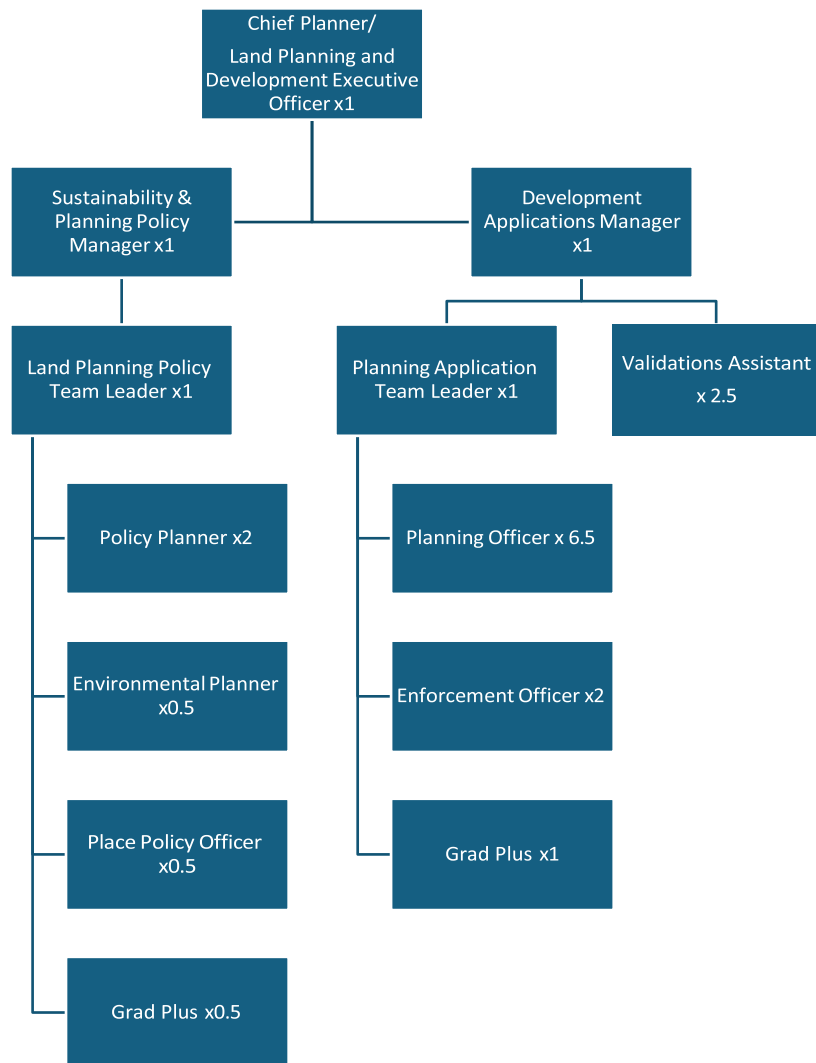
### Staffing and Structure

*Does the planning authority have the sufficient level of staff to carry out all activities within the required timeframes?*

The planning application and policy functions at the Council sit within the wider Land Planning and Development Service area. The service is responsible for the following:

- Development Applications
  - Planning
  - Building Standards
- Housing Operations, Policy & Systems
- Place and Business
  - Business Support
  - City Deal
  - Regeneration and Town Centres
  - Traffic and Transport
- Sustainability and Planning Policy
  - GIS and Technical Support
  - Land Planning Policy
  - Sustainability Policy

## Planning Functions – Detailed Structure 2024



	Tier 1 <i>Chief Executive</i>	Tier 2 <i>Executive Officer</i>	Tier 3 <i>Manager</i>
Head of Planning Service		1	2

Staff Age Profile	Headcount
Under 30	1.5
30-39	4.5
40-49	7.5
50 and over	6

RTPI Chartered Staff	Headcount	% staff in roles where RTPI is desirable
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Chartered staff	9	60%
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We recognise the importance and value of RTPI chartership for planning staff. In this respect, having reviewed the level of full membership and those who are eligible within roles where this is desired, we are committed to working with members of the planning team in achieving chartered membership. These individuals are being supported through mentorship.

Being a smaller planning authority with a smaller team of planners can have an impact on the ability to undertake certain duties. For example, all authorities regardless of size are required to prepare a Development Plan Scheme, attend national and regional planning meetings and respond to national consultations and there is not always the opportunity to reduce the size of the task to match the size and resources of the authority. However, being a smaller authority also has benefits in terms of gaining experience in undertaking a range of tasks and representing the organisation at external meetings.

### **Carrying out activities on time and budget**

*Does the planning authority have the ability to carry out all activities within the required timeframes with its current budget?*

The planning service is dedicated to executing all activities within the statutory timeframes and within budget. Land Planning and Development has resilience built in at service level to ensure that it can meet its statutory planning functions and also deliver on Council priorities and projects.

### **Development Planning**

A partial re-structure of the Land Planning & Development Service in 2023 improved integration of the Land Planning Policy Team, which is responsible for the preparation, monitoring and review of the Local Development Plan and related planning policy, with the Sustainability Policy Team, which prepares, monitors and reviews the Climate Action Plan, Local Heat & Energy Efficiency Strategy and related sustainability policy. As part of the re-structure a new Land Planning & Sustainability Manager post was created. Another element of the re-structure has been to replace one Planner post in the previous structure with an Environmental Planner post and a Grad Plus post; both of which are shared with the Sustainability Policy Team and therefore work half-time on planning related duties.

The closer integration of these teams is delivering efficiencies in policy-making and allows for greater collaborative working to strengthen the focus on tackling the climate crisis, climate mitigation and adaptation, zero waste, sustainable transport and sustainability policy aspects of the Local Development Plan. The new Environmental Planner post is intended to improve policy coherence between environmental sustainability and planning policy, and ensure that the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the LDP and associated policy documents is carried out as efficiently and effectively as possible. It is anticipated that Sustainability Policy Team staff will provide increased input into the climate change and sustainability policy aspects of the Local Development Plan during its preparation.

The role profile of the Economic Development Policy Officer has also been expanded to include responsibility for place policy and specifically supporting community groups that are interested in preparing Local Place Plans for their area (therefore showing as a half post in the planning functions structure diagram above).

Whilst these posts do not work full time on planning related duties, they do have a substantial role in the team's ability to undertake development planning activities within the required timeframes – however priority workstreams relevant to their other duties can limit their capacity to contribute to LDP work.

In addition, the Council's Greenspace & Biodiversity Policy Officer post has been re-located into the Land Planning Policy Team and whilst the focus of the role is to prepare greenspace and biodiversity policy (for example the Greenspace Strategy and the Local Biodiversity Action Plan) and associated workstreams, the role helps to support planning policy on blue and green infrastructure, biodiversity, natural places, and forestry, woodland and trees.

The budget available to the Land Planning Policy Team has been fixed for a number of years without increase in available resource to take account of inflation, reflective of the wider local authority funding allocations. This has become more challenging in recent years, but the recent re-structure has provided the opportunity to undertake more work in-house with less reliance on external consultants. However, it is anticipated that increases in available budget will become necessary in future years to carry out all necessary activities effectively and within the necessary timeframes.

#### Development Applications (Planning)

Within our Development Applications Team which covers planning applications and enforcement, performance management allows us to identify skill gaps and address



these to ensure all staff have the relevant skills and experience to carry out their role within the development applications team. There is a varied skills base within the team, and this means that there is not a single point of failure. Over the past year we have worked to ensure that all members of the team have gained experience of presenting at Planning Board meetings and have the opportunity to progress applications to their experience level. We have three members of the team currently working towards their RTPI Chartership.

Staffing numbers are regularly reviewed against workloads, project delivery targets and budgets to ensure that adequate capacity and skills are managed across the service.

During the reporting period a half planning post was removed from the structure. There has also been one member of the Enforcement Team off on long term sick. However as reported under the last PPF we have created a Grad Plus role within the structure to help support the professional planners to focus on determining planning applications and remove the burden of some of the more administrative tasks.

Our performance timescales demonstrate the team's resilience over this period and success with our approach.

## **Service Income**

*Does the planning authority have the ability to carry out all activities within the required timeframes with its current income?*

The total income from application fees for the past three reporting years is as follows:

- 2023-24: £292,267
- 2022-23: £463,800
- 2021-22: £363,729

Our workload has broadly remained the same between 2022-23 and 2023-24. Income for recently introduced discretionary charges (**not** included in our total income figures) for 2023-24 is **£14,912.66**

## **Consultee Response Times**

*Does the planning authority receive responses from consultees within the prescribed timescale when assessing planning applications?*

With the increasing complexity of work involved across the planning service to address the policy context of NPF4, the delivery of planning whether in determining planning applications or preparing the Local Development Plan there is an ever-greater reliance on specialist advice and input from both internal and external consultees.

Difficulties in recruitment into these key services such as Environmental Health, Neighbourhood Services and Transportation have implications in relation to delivering statutory planning functions within expected timescales.

The development applications service has a varied experience in respect to consultee responses both internally and externally. For varying reasons, delays have been experienced in receiving an initial response when consulting on planning applications and the quality of responses themselves can further impact upon timescales if the case officer is then required to seek further information or clarify issues. The recording of consultee timescales has been inconsistent making it difficult to quantify areas for improvement. As such, an action identified through this process is to formally record response data to allow the planning service to readily evidence consultee response rates. In addition, in respect of the quality of consultee responses we are taking steps to formalise templates to allow a more consistent approach to be taken. There is also an opportunity to provide training to upskill our internal services on the scope of their consultation, the impact of their response and the outcomes in applying their expertise and advice.

We hope that these actions will help to improve our consultee rate of response within statutory prescribed timescales and result in a more meaningful exchange of information.

With regards to consultation responses as part of preparing the Evidence Report for LDP3, the experience with key agencies and internal services has been very positive. This perhaps reflects the different nature of LDP preparation and the ability to plan consultation requirements in advance and provide flexibility in timescales for responding.

### **Access to Advice, Expertise and Data**

*Does the planning authority have the ability to access the appropriate advice, expertise, evidence and data it requires?*

East Dunbartonshire Council's planning service does face challenges due to its small scale. The Land Planning Policy team has 6 FTE members of staff including a Team Leader. However, in addition to the preparation of planning policy the team also has responsibility for economic development policy and greenspace and biodiversity policy. Therefore, as the team is responsible for a wide range of policy functions this can limit capacity to develop specialisms and expertise in particular subject areas as necessary for effective plan-making.

However, the Council's collaborative approach mitigates these challenges. Close working relationships with colleagues across the Council, including corporate research, housing, education, economic development, and town centre/regeneration teams, facilitate good access to evidence and data essential to the preparation of the LDP.

Additionally, strong ties with Glasgow City Region (GCR) provide access to and enable the Council to participate in partnership working including strategic research on housing land availability, the regional economy, and greenspace and nature networks, involving the strategic planning unit (formerly Clydeplan), Glasgow & Clyde Valley Green Network Partnership and the GCR Intelligence Hub.

Participation in regional and local working groups and networks, such as Climate Ready Clyde, collaborative groups on transport planning, and the City Region Heads of Planning group, are particularly important for sharing expertise and accessing evidence and data to support policy-making.

Furthermore, the Council's close collaboration with community planning colleagues and community groups, which has provided the opportunity to encourage and support involvement in Local Place Planning over the past year, and engagement with Key Agencies and other consultees, has been important to ensure assembly of the full range of evidence and data required to support the Council's LDP Evidence Report.

Since 2017 we have entered into a service level agreement with West of Scotland Archaeological Services to assist the Council with its historic environment statutory duties to ensure that we have up to date access to appropriately curated and updated information and advice.

The Land Planning and Development Service benefits from having a GIS Support Team and a dedicated Co-Ordinator in post. GIS Support Team help to support the work of both the Planning Policy and Development Application teams through informing decision making and project development and UNIFORM.

### **ATTRIBUTE 1 SUMMARY**

We consider that the Planning Service is making fair progress with regard to the resources and skills needed to maximise productivity.

The structure of the wider Land Planning and Development Service area supports the Planning Service and ensures that income is maximised and statutory timeframes delivered on. Within our staff structure we have a dedicated GIS team who support the work of both Development Applications and Planning Policy Teams.

At the start of the next financial year, we intend to introduce fees for discharging planning conditions, the fee level will be based on benchmarking and subject to review.

We do recognise that time taken for consultees to respond is an area that we need to focus on and are looking to bring forward solutions to support consultees in responding.



## ATTRIBUTE 2: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS A VALUED AND SUPPORTED WORKFORCE

### Workforce Planning

*Does the planning authority have a workforce planning strategy in place?*

One of the Council's key priorities is to ensure that: *'Our people are equipped with knowledge and skills for learning, life and work.'*

A talented, engaged and aligned workforce is crucial to delivering our priorities and strategic objectives, underpinned by our values. Our Workforce Strategy needs to align with our wider Council strategies and plans, including the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP), Locality Plans, our updated Digital Strategy and Climate Action Plan. The annual action plans to deliver this Workforce Strategy will ensure that our workforce has the necessary skills, and can work flexibly and be responsive to our Council priorities and customer needs.

The Council has recently updated its Workforce Strategy to reflect the future shape of the organisation.

It outlines how the organisation plans and prepares its workforce to deliver its organisational priorities. It looks at both the current organisation and future service delivery needs and makes risk-based assumptions based on business plans, which are reviewed with projections and horizon scanning, validated through continual assessment.

The Workforce Strategy 2024-2027 is a three-year plan for the Council that aligns with other key Council strategies. It will inform annual action plans across our strategic portfolios and will be reviewed each year to ensure it continues to meet our organisational needs.

The Land Planning and Development Service recognise the challenges with identified skills and capacity gaps across the planning profession throughout Scotland. In the past 12 months we have worked closely with our colleagues in HR to expand use of social media and promoting the Council's approach to flexible and smart working which

remains attractive to applicants. This focus on outcomes, not attendance and flexible working patterns is considered to be attractive to applicants.

Working with our Early Career Programme Lead within the Council we have had successfully filled our two Grad+ posts. Both candidates are in the first year of the programme and are currently being mentored by service managers and given active and practical learning experience. Within the Development Applications Team, the Grad+ has gained exposure of Planning Enforcement and paired up with an experienced member of the team to shadow and learn the purpose and responsibilities of this role. This has allowed for succession planning and staff retention to be developed. Within the Land Planning Policy Team, the Grad+ has gained experience working on the evidence gathering process for LDP3, arranging and undertaking engagement on the Play Sufficiency Assessment and contributing to the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy.

The Planning Authority is part of the Glasgow City Region Local Government Future Skills Working Group which is focused in addressing shortages within Planning Departments. The Service is committed to keeping under review the opportunity to promote and utilise the University of the West of Scotland's proposed fully funded, work- based learning degree qualification in Town Planning as part of the Service's work force planning.

## **Staff Development**

*Does the planning authority have the ability to support staff development and upskilling and send staff on relevant courses?*

It is recognised that there is an ongoing need for training and development opportunities, particularly for professional disciplines, and this has been impacted by national availability of training.

Officers have attended training on a variety of topics, including, but not limited to:

- Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods
- NPF4 Biodiversity & Nature Networks
- Delivering NPF4 & achieving net-zero through behaviour change
- Renewable series: End of life considerations for renewable energy
- Digitalising Planning
- An introduction to Listed Buildings
- The Role of Environmental Clerk of Works
- DPEA Appeals

- Water Vole training
- Building standards & planning at the Licensing board
- Gender based planning
- Community wealth building

Attending training on various planning related topics allows the team to further develop their planning skills, knowledge and experience in putting this into practice in providing sound planning advice and through the assessment of applications of all scales.

The team have engaged with education establishment and training opportunities have been offered to employees through a grow our own skills model. Team Plans and individual development plans will continue to explore training needs and continuous professional development through the Professional Development Review (PDR) process. The PDR process is a tool to engage individuals in focusing on their personal objectives and help to identify learning and development which will help in achieving those objectives. It is also a tool to allow us to identify ways in which individuals can be supported through training or mentorship. Work is now underway to streamline the PDR process, aligning this to Team Plans which identify operational objectives and indicators arising from the Business & Improvement plans, with a clear line of sight from individual PDR with objectives and training needs ultimately linking back through Team Plans and BIPs to the LOIP.

### **Staff Health and Wellbeing**

*Does the planning authority have a deliverable commitment to support staff health and wellbeing?*

East Dunbartonshire Council views the health and wellbeing of its employees as important in itself and key to the success of the Council and its Public Services.

We continue to support the wellbeing of our employees through our policy base which the Council are continuing to develop and update. Our Employee Zone has a section dedicated to Wellbeing which covers different aspects that may affect our employees to enable them to access support and guidance.

The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) can support Council employees through these periods and help to promote their resilience as well as provide general advice around a broad range of topics to help you resolve problems and concerns in both your personal and work life. Our aim is to assist employees to live their lives more resourcefully; balancing the requirements of their personal lives, their employer and the public they serve, thus promoting a healthier and happier workforce.

Within the Council we continue to promote wellbeing to our staff through our monthly health and wellbeing focus and through our Chief Executive updates.

Our e-learning platform, Moodle Workplace, also has several online courses focusing on health and wellbeing which employees are encouraged to access and complete. The service also benefits from an appointed HR Business Partner who attends Team Meetings on a regular basis to provide advice and guidance when required.

### **ATTRIBUTE 2 SUMMARY**

We have recently updated our workforce strategy and can demonstrate success of our approach in recruiting, developing and retaining staff.

We carry out a Performance Review and Development process that supports staff development. In addition to this, within the LP&D service, we hold regular Management Team meetings, Team Meetings, 1:1's and quarterly PDRs.

Health and wellbeing is cascaded corporately and all staff have online access to procedures, guidance and health and wellbeing resources.



### Improvement Action Plan (People theme)

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
1. The planning authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity	3
2. The planning authority has a valued and supported workforce	2

Based on the grading above, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).

Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance High Medium Low	Timescale Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years	Resources
Attribute 1: Review staff structure to ensure that we can continue to meet our statutory duty and corporate priorities	Heather Holland	High	Short	
Attribute 1: We will implement consistent recording of data in Uniform to track consultee response timescales in order to establish areas of focus.	Heather Holland	Medium	Short	
Attribute 1: We will formalise consultee response templates for each service to ensure consistent approaches and meaningful comments across teams, including during pre-application discussions.	Heather Holland	Medium	Short	
Attribute 1: Encourage attainment of RTPi chartership for those who are eligible.	Heather Holland	High	Long	

Attribute 1: We will implement discretionary charges for condition discharge.	Heather Holland	High	Short	
Attribute 1: 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.	Heather Holland	High	Long	
Attribute 2: 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.	Heather Holland	High	Long	
Attribute 2: Strengthen PRD process by setting deadlines that will ensure all staff / managers undertake PRD meetings in time to allow annual training to be scheduled.	Heather Holland	Medium	Medium	



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 planner, who is supported by a strong leadership group to advise on decision-making, policy and operational management.

### ATTRIBUTE 3: THIS PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS EMBEDDED CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT.

#### Annual Performance Assessment

*Has the planning authority undertaken an annual assessment of its performance and acted upon areas previously identified as in need of improvement?*

Our improvement measures set out in previous year's Planning Performance Framework reports have delivered progress and benefits that are now being realised. In the last Planning Performance Framework the service identified the following objectives for 2023/24:

Committed Improvements and actions	Outcome
Improve the use of digital tools and alternative methods for presenting policy documents on the Council's website, including using StoryMaps and interactive survey tools.	The Evidence Report for LDP3 is being prepared as a collection of interactive StoryMaps that allow the relevant information and data to be presented as a mixture of written text, maps and dashboards. Initial feedback on the approach has been very positive. The Land Planning Policy Team will continue to hone and improve the approach as the work on the Evidence Report continues.
Prepare detailed 'how to' notes for various aspects of the enforcement process and ensure a full suite of templates for enforcement notices are up	Through this action we have prepared an Enforcement User Guide and created a library of letter templates. It is our ambition to be able to generate Notices
Committed Improvements and actions	Outcome

<p>to date and available to generate from the Uniform module. With our longest standing and most experienced enforcement officer due to retire in the near future this must be a priority for this year to ensure as much of that experience as possible is passed on to future enforcement officers.</p>	<p>from the Uniform Enforcement module and work in this area continues. The team are currently still relying on templates created in Word for all of our enforcement notices. Work has been delayed due to the team currently being a staff member down. However, this will continue to be an area of focus for the team.</p>
<p>Ensure all development management planning officers gain substantial experience of a committee setting (either LRB or Planning Board). With a number of new planners starting in the last six months the number of staff with experience in this area has declined and there is a need to ensure new staff are exposed to a committee environment in a supportive manner and at a pace they are comfortable with to gain this vital skill.</p>	<p>This continues to be an action for the development management team. Where possible, less experienced planning officers have gained experience of a committee setting. To manage workload, the planning advisor role for LRB is undertaken on a rota basis. Exposure to planning committee as a case officer cannot necessarily be guaranteed. However, planning officers are encouraged to engage with the process and to have an awareness of applications being taken to committee. This includes ensuring officer knowledge and understanding of the procedures including the requirement and purpose of a pre-agenda meeting, necessary timescales set by committee services and the impact upon our ability to target a committee date. Where possible, learning through observation of planning committee to gain an understanding of the format, tone and formalities, as well as the presentation skills required, is encouraged.</p>



## **Recognition and Accreditation**

*Has the planning authority achieved recognition at relevant awards or through performance accreditation frameworks?*

It is recognised that, at this time, the planning authority has not received formal recognition through relevant awards or performance accreditation frameworks. However, we remain committed to delivering high quality work and continuously improving our performance. We will explore future opportunities to further validate and showcase our achievements.

It is worth mentioning that many of the Council's Major Assets projects have been nominated for awards in recent years. These projects have been subject to planning advice, design input and formal approval. For example, the Council's Additional Support Needs school, Woodland View, Kirkintilloch, was nominated in the Inclusive Design category Scottish Education Estates Awards 2023. This brand new £34.9m ASN school opened to pupils in August 2023. This is a state-of-the-art facility in Waterside, Kirkintilloch. The school is custom built, designed to be both practical and stimulating for children and young people who have a broad range of additional support needs.

## **Peer Review and Improvement Activities**

*Has the planning authority engaged in peer review, good practice exchange or improvement activities?*

Throughout the year we have continued to participate in knowledge sharing both internally across the Council and externally with key partners.

The Development Applications Team have strong connections with counterparts in other Council areas and use these relationships to work collaboratively and cost effectively to share good practice and benchmark on specific planning issues. We also ensure attendance and participation at HOPS Development Management meetings. We engage in any questionnaires/calls for information to help formulate thinking on key topic areas such as Planning Applications and Fee Income, Staff and Resource Survey or Short Term Lets, etc.

Similarly, the Land Planning Policy Team have strong connections with counterparts in other Council areas and use these relationships to work collaboratively and cost

effectively to share good practice and benchmark on specific planning issues. We also ensure attendance and participation at HOPS Development Planning meetings.

We have also shared the Council's experience of developing a 20 Minute Neighbourhood tool with APSE, Glasgow City Region partners and the Scottish Government.

### **Handling Complaints**

*Has the planning authority addressed any complaints upheld by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman and have evidence of this and that it has learned from valid cases?*

As a Council we are committed to providing high quality customer services. Our customer views and experiences are important to us and as a service we are focused on continuous improvement. We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services.

For the reporting year 2023-24, five complaints were received by the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman relating to the Planning Service. These complaints were not investigated and were not upheld indicating that our responses and approach were reasonable.

### **ATTRIBUTE 3 SUMMARY**

We assess our performance on a regular basis and are making fair progress with our continuous improvement. Our improvement action plan is monitored and we have been able to demonstrate progress over the course of the reporting period.

We continue to share best practice and welcome learning from others to focus on our improvement activities.

Responding to complaints through the Council's formal complaints handling procedure ensures that we are self-reflective and this gives us an opportunity to gain insight to customers experience of the service and how we can improve. Of the five complaints referred to the Scottish Public Ombudsman Service, none were upheld.

## ATTRIBUTE 4: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS SOUND GOVERNANCE

### **Scheme of Delegation**

*Does the planning authority have an effective scheme of delegation in place?*

East Dunbartonshire Council has an effective scheme of delegation which is reviewed annually at a meeting of the full Council. Our Scheme of Delegation allows us to make decisions efficiently and effectively. It was last updated August 2024 and a copy is available on the Council's [website](#). This will be shared with the Scottish Government. During the reporting period, 96.6% of applications were decided under the Scheme of Delegation.

### **Member Training**

*Have all councillors who exercise a planning function undergone statutory training and is there is evidence of ongoing training for members?*

Mandatory training for Elected Members was included in the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 as part of a wider package of measures to improve the performance of the planning system as a whole. While the Scottish Government consider responses to a consultation on mandatory training, to enable more informed decision making, we have continued to engage and inform Elected Members around our service delivery and on topics such as changes brought about by the new Planning Act, NPF4 and new Local Development Plan guidance. We hold informal Enhanced Briefing Sessions with Elected Members in advance of Planning Board. This offers the opportunity to deliver regular informal training to members directly from the planning team who can highlight current issues/ legislative updates or procedural matters and provides a forum for discussion of planning matters relative to applications Members are required to determine.

More formal training has been carried out with Members of the Council's Planning Board and Local Review Body (whilst this was undertaken prior to the reporting period for this document, it is considered relevant in demonstrating the Council's commitment to training Elected Members. The training was delivered inhouse and focused on the purpose of planning, roles, responsibilities and processes.

## **Decision-making Process**

*Have more than x % of officer recommendations have been overturned by councillors at committee or Local Review Body.*

The meeting of the Local Review Body (LRB) remains a fully virtual meeting. Given this format, it allows the planning advisor to present a detailed presentation providing an overview of the application being reviewed including all relevant existing and proposed plans, site photographs, outline the key policy considerations and the reason for refusal, as well as provide context for any specific points raised in the appellants statement of appeal. The level of detail able to be provided through this format has been well received by Elected Members and has improved the consistency in terms of the information provided to Members. These meetings are all broadcast on the Council's YouTube channel to ensure public attendance remains as high as possible.

With only 10 applications going to Local Review Body (LRB), 70% of the original decisions have been upheld. This compares to 69.2% of decisions reviewed at LRB being upheld in the 22-23 reporting period evidencing a level of consistency in decision making.

In addition, of 23 applications presented to planning committee, the decision made by elected members for 19 of these align with the officer recommendation, equating to 82.6%. Whilst Elected Members are within their rights to determine an application contrary to the recommendation of a planning officer, the high percentage of decisions made at planning board which align with the recommendation demonstrate the effective application of development plan policies and consistency in decision making.

#### **ATTRIBUTE 4 SUMMARY**

We are making fair progress around sound governance with our effective scheme of delegation resulting in 96.6% of applications being decided under this scheme.

Informal training with Elected Members has been carried out. Future training will be planned for Elected Members to allow us to meet our new statutory duties.

The Local Review Body upholds 70% of delegated refusals. At planning committee Elected Member decisions align with the case officer's recommendations on 82.6% of applications.

## ATTRIBUTE 5: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

### Chief Planning Officer

*Does the planning authority have an identified Chief Planning Officer in place?*

In accordance with the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 the position of Chief Planner was incorporated into the Council's organisational structure in April 2024. The Chief Planner post is undertaken by Heather Holland, who is also the Executive Officer for Land Planning and Development.

*Does the Chief Planning Officer advise on corporate decision making and policy within the broader organisation?*

The Chief Planner sits on the Senior Leadership Team of the Council and reports directly to the Chief Executive of the organisation. Details of the Senior Leadership Team can be found here: [Chief Officers and Services - East Dunbartonshire Council](#).

*Is the planning authority's Chief Planning Officer a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute?*

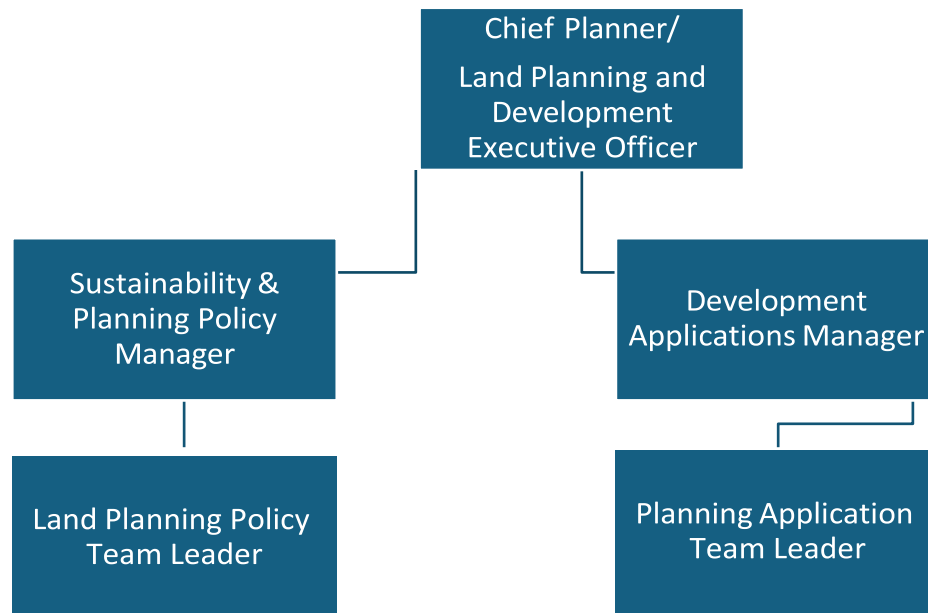
The Chief Planning Officer is a chartered member of the Royal Town Planning Institute.

*Does the Chief Planning Officer advise and support external bodies through engagement in organisations' committees, advisory groups or working groups?*

The Chief Planning Officer is a current member of the Performance and Practice subgroup of Heads of Planning Scotland and sits on the Climate Ready Clyde Action Group as the Local Authority representative. The Chief Planning Officer also represents the Council in a number of regional working groups including the GCR Economic Development Group, Electric Vehicles Senior Officer Group, Clyde Metro Senior Officers Group and the Local Government Future Skills Working Group. In addition, she is a member of the Glasgow City Region Steering Group for the Regional Spatial Strategy. The Chief Planning Officer also acts as the Council's lead point of contact for the Scottish Housing Regulator.

## **Planning Leadership Team**

*Does the planning authority have a strong leadership team that supports a culture of continuous improvement?*



The planning leadership team consists of the Chief Planner, two Managers (with other responsibilities within their portfolios) and two Team Leaders. All teams have regular team meetings where best practice examples and opportunities for new ways of working are discussed. Continuous improvement is embedded into individual work programmes through the Personal Development Review (PDR) process.

Team members are actively encouraged to contribute to Heads of Planning Scotland, Improvement Service and Glasgow City Region activity.



### **ATTRIBUTE 5 SUMMARY**

The Council has a chartered Chief Planner who is actively involved in both the Council's Senior Leadership Team and the regular running of the planning service alongside the 'Planning Leadership Team'.

The Chief Planner also supports the work of external bodies through representing the Council on the Glasgow City Region and Heads of Planning Scotland.

The planning leadership team supports a culture of continuous improvement through team meetings and the PDR process.

### Improvement Action Plan (Culture theme)

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
3. This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement	3
4. This Planning Authority has sound governance	2
5. This Planning Authority has effective leadership	2

Based on the grading above, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).

Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance High Medium Low	Timescale Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years	Resources
Attribute 3: We will continue to assess our performance on a regular basis	Heather Holland	High	Short	
Attribute 4: We will implement Elected Members Training in accordance with new legislation.	Heather Holland	High	Short	
Attribute 5: We will continue to look for opportunities to enhance our service delivery through sharing good practice, skills and knowledge with our partners and stakeholders.	Heather Holland	Medium	Medium	



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.

## ATTRIBUTE 6: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS A ROBUST POLICY AND EVIDENCE BASE

### Local Development Plan

*Does the planning authority have an up-to-date Local Development Plan in place and/or is on track to adoption?*

The Local Development Plan sets out a long-term vision for where development should and shouldn't happen. The East Dunbartonshire Local Development Plan 2 was adopted in November 2022 and is used (alongside National Planning Framework 4) by the Development Applications Team to determine planning applications.

Work is underway to ensure that a new LDP, prepared under the provisions of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, will be in place in line with the timescales set out by the Scottish Government. The work programme for LDP3 is set out in the [Development Plan Scheme](#).

## **Regional Spatial Strategy**

*Does the planning authority have an up-to-date Regional Spatial Strategy in place/ or on track to adoption?*

Work to prepare the Glasgow City Region Regional Spatial Strategy is currently being scoped. On the 28th of June 2023, the Clydeplan Joint Committee agreed a recommendation to transfer the responsibility for oversight of the development of a Regional Spatial Strategy to the GCR Cabinet.

The Glasgow City Region member Local Authorities, which comprises the eight local authorities of East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow City, Inverclyde, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, South Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire Councils, will collaborate on the preparation of the Regional Spatial Strategy.

## **LDP Evidence Report Approval**

*Has the planning authority's Local Development Plan Evidence Report been approved by the Department of Planning and Environmental Appeals and/ or on track for approval?*

Work on the Evidence Report for the next Local Development Plan - LDP3 - is underway. Early evidence gathering engagement was conducted between November 2023 and January 2024. Additional targeted engagement has been ongoing.

It is anticipated that the Evidence Report will be submitted to the Department of Planning and Environmental Appeals in the first half of 2025. This is an approximate six- to-nine-month delay to the original work programme set out in the 2023 Development Plan Scheme. This delay has occurred for the following reasons:

1. Internal resources issues which have impacted on the ability to complete necessary data gathering, analysis, appraisal work and assessments within the previous timescale.
2. The introduction by the Scottish Government of Development Planning Regulations (and accompanying Local Development Planning Guidance) in 2023, which sets out more detailed requirements and expectations.
3. The recent publication of Gatecheck reports for other planning authorities, which has provided valuable insight and best practice, requiring thorough analysis.

Further information on the work programme for LDP3 can be found in the current [Development Plan Scheme](#).

### **Application of LDP Policies**

*Have the application of the Local Development Plan's policies been found to be deficient at appeal or judicial review?*

Six appeals were determined by the DPEA during the 23-24 reporting period comprising of a mixture of application types.

Of the appeals determined, four comprised of application types where the development plan took primacy in the assessment. For these, the decision of the reporter aligned with the recommendation made by the planning officer following assessment against the provisions of NPF4 and the East Dunbartonshire Local Development Plan 2. These decisions have endorsed the policies of the Development Plan. While the appeals noted relate to housing and/or alterations to existing dwellings, the assessment of each provides an overview of a number of policy areas and demonstrates that NPF4 and EDLDP2 have defined robust policies.

### **ATTRIBUTE 6 SUMMARY**

Local Development Plan 2 was adopted in November 2022 and constitutes an up-to-date plan for the area, alongside National Planning Framework 4.

Work is underway on the Evidence Report for Local Development Plan 3 to ensure that a new plan is in place approximately by February 2028.

Work to prepare the Glasgow City Region Regional Spatial Strategy will begin once statutory guidance is in place.

Appeal decisions in the reporting period have found that the policies in LDP2 are robust.

## ATTRIBUTE 7: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY MAKES BEST USE OF DATA AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

### **E-development Portal**

*Has the planning authority encouraged and promoted planning applications to be submitted through the e-development portal?*

With the focus on digital first, the planning service actively promote the use of the e-development portal for the submission of planning applications and related consents where appropriate and have done since its introduction in 2009. This advice is given through our duty service, at pre-application stage and is outlined on the relevant page of the Council's website.

Our latest figures from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 demonstrate that over 97% of all planning applications made to East Dunbartonshire Council are submitted via the portal. This demonstrates our focus on being a digital planning service has been successful.

### **Data Governance Strategy**

*Does the planning authority have a data governance strategy in place for the management of planning data?*

The Council has recently updated its Digital Strategy in 2024. As part of the Strategy, the Council has agreed its Digital Governance principles and has established a Cross- Council Governance Board. Executive Officers, through the Council's Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) provide oversight of the Digital Strategy including agreement of the Digital Development Programme. Members of SLT, acting as the Digital Development Programme Board, oversee future system developments aligned to strategic planning and service priorities.

The Digital Strategy provides the policy basis to drive digitalisation within the workforce. The Council was an early adopter of Smart Working, ensuring that employees are equipped with digital devices and equipment to deliver services as efficiently as possible. All staff in the planning service are equipped with equipment to enable hybrid working, including laptops, softphones and hardware to enable home working where required. Within the planning service we continue to review our service delivery and

adapt and update our processes and protocols making use of online platforms and digital solutions available to us.

The Council also has a Data Protection Policy which complies with the General Data Protection Regulations and the Data Protection Act 2018. The planning service follows the Council's Data Sharing Policy and Records Management Policy, and maintains a Data Retention Schedule in compliance with Council policy. The Land Planning & Development Service maintains the Council's integrated Impact Assessment Guidelines jointly with other services including colleagues in Legal Services. This includes a framework for Data Protection Impact Assessment and all relevant planning policy documents are subject to assessment in accordance with the guidance.

### **Spatial Data**

*Does the planning authority have the ability to use interactive web-mapping, GIS and spatial data?*

The Land Planning & Development Service has a GIS Team comprising three staff, covering GIS (provision of ArcGIS services), maintenance of gazetteer, management of street-naming and numbering and maintenance and management of planning case management software (Uniform). Over the past year we have expanded the use of ArcGIS Online (AGOL) to all planning policy staff and other staff supporting planning policy work, involving a comprehensive training programme and 1 to 1 support by qualified and experienced GIS staff where required. This has enabled all staff to take full advantage of the capabilities of the GIS system, including the preparation and sharing of interactive maps; managing, exploring and analysing data; development of surveys using Survey123 (see section below); and preparation of StoryMaps as a medium for sharing information and engaging others. StoryMaps have been used extensively in the last few years to share planning information in an easily accessible format, incorporating complementary images, diagrams, mapping and text which bring policies and proposals to life in an engaging way. The StoryMap format is being used as the basis for presenting information for the LDP 3 Evidence Report and will be developed and expanded as a key method of engagement to present spatial data and policy information for Draft LDP 3.

The Council deploys mobile devices to enable data to be captured onsite, for example to support the preparation of our open space and play sufficiency audits, which can then be uploaded directly into the GIS system. Webmaps prepared by planning officers can be connected directly to the Council's web site to enable customers to interact with

them. It is intended that this functionality will be used extensively for consultation on LDP 3.

During 2024-25, the Council is embarking on a server upgrade to enable the installation of the latest version of ArcGIS. This will bring further improvements to functionality, enabling improved handling of spatial data.

### **Digital Engagement Tools**

*Does the planning authority have the ability to use digital approaches to engagement, including website, social media and other platforms?*

The Council has an active and supportive Corporate Communications Team that works with officers to promote engagement opportunities on social media and the Council's website. The Corporate Communications team also produces videos for the Council's YouTube channel to further promote engagement opportunities and provides support in preparing the Local Development Plan Newsletter.

Where appropriate, the Council uses online questionnaires created in Survey 123 to seek opinions from stakeholders on the preparation of the Local Development Plan and other associated policies and guidance. Survey 123 has the ability to use conditional questions that helps to tailor the survey to the particular interests and needs of each stakeholder. Survey 123 also includes an interactive mapping tool and can host links to other relevant pieces of information.

Feedback and user testing on the Council's website has identified that improvements could be made to ensure that information is easier for users to find. As a result, the Council will be launching a new citizen centric website in late 2024.



### ***ATTRIBUTE 7 SUMMARY***

The planning service promotes the use of digital tools where possible and encourages applications to be submitted through the E-development Portal.

The Council has a digital strategy which provides a policy basis to drive digitalisation within the workforce. The Council also has a Data Protection Policy.

The Land Planning and Development Service area has a GIS Team that undertakes a number of functions related to the planning application and development planning processes.

The Council seeks to make best use of digital engagement tools such as the Council's website, social media, videos and Survey 123. A new Council website will be launched in 2024.

## ATTRIBUTE 8: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

### Planning Application Decisions

*Does the planning authority planning have the ability to make decisions on planning applications within the required timeframes?*

On average 85% of our applications consist of householder planning applications so, while delivering large housing sites and regeneration projects is undoubtedly important, a significant proportion of development management staff time remains dedicated to this area of work. These applications are very important to the homeowners involved and neighbours who may be affected by the works so we aim to ensure that adequate resources continue to be dedicated to making sure they are assessed appropriately. We are constantly seeking to improve our processes to ensure a timely decision, and also continue to aim to add value to the process and achieve the best outcome for all involved.

Application Type	2023/24	2022/23
Major Developments	25.5 weeks	11.1 weeks
Local Developments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local: less than 2 months</li> <li>Local: more than 2 months</li> </ul>	8.4 weeks 84.6% 15.4%	8.2 weeks 86.4% 13.6%
Householder <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local: less than 2 months</li> <li>Local: more than 2 months</li> </ul>	7.5 weeks 86.4% 13.6%	7.6 weeks 88% 12%
Local developments (non householder) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local: less than 2 months</li> <li>Local: more than 2 months</li> </ul>	14.0 weeks 74.0% 26.0%	12.5 weeks 74.3% 25.7%
Housing (local)	16.2 weeks	23.9 weeks

Application Type	2023/24	2022/23
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local: less than 2 months</li> <li>Local: more than 2 months</li> </ul>	52.9% 47.1%	69.2% 30.8%
Business and Industry (local) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local: less than 2 months</li> <li>Local: more than 2 months</li> </ul>	7.4 weeks 100% -	23.9 weeks 69.2% 30.8%
Other developments (local) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local: less than 2 months</li> <li>Local: more than 2 months</li> </ul>	14.1 weeks 78.0% 22.0%	10.3 weeks 73.2% 26.8%

*Are less than x% of planning decisions overturned at appeal or judicial review?*

	Original decision upheld				
	2023/24			2022/23	
	Total number of decisions	No.	%	No.	%
LRB	10	7	70	9	69.2
DPEA Appeals	6	2	33	3	27.3
Judicial Review	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Where Appeals to the Scottish Ministers were allowed, for 3 of 4 cases, this decision aligned with the recommendation of the planning officer.

## **Enforcement**

*Does the planning authority have an up-to-date Enforcement Charter in place?*

Our planning Enforcement Charter is published online on our website and is kept up to date. The current Charter is due for review in March 2025. We aim to manage expectation around the take-up of enforcement cases through our Enforcement Charter by outlining what is and what is not a planning matter and the way in which we prioritise investigating possible breaches of planning control.

*Does the planning authority have the ability to resolve enforcement cases?*

The Planning Service is currently experiencing staffing challenges in enforcement with only a part time post filled, within a team of two full time posts. This currently presents significant challenges in managing enforcement enquiries received by the Planning Service. In the interim, planning officers are providing support where possible by managing enforcement enquiries received in relation to planning applications and providing enforcement information through our duty service.

The below table provides an overview of our enforcement activity for this reporting period:

Planning Enforcement	Number
Cases Taken Up	86
Notices Served	1
Reports to Procurator Fiscal	0
Prosecutions	0
Number of breaches resolved	35

### **ATTRIBUTE 8 SUMMARY**

We are making good progress with effective decision-making processes and this is evidenced through our decision-making timescales. We endeavour to make best use of the systems and tools available to us to support improved performance and reporting. We aim to ensure that our systems support case officers and endeavour to ensure that all of our processes are transparent, efficient and effective.

The Council has an up-to-date Enforcement Charter which is due for review in March 2025. However, the planning service is currently experiencing staffing challenges in responding to, and dealing, with enforcement matters. We are reviewing strategies to manage this challenge, whilst establishing the most effective ways to communicate this to our customers in order to manage expectations of service delivery in this area.

### Improvement Action Plan (Tools theme)

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
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	3

Based on the grading above, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).

Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance High Medium Low	Timescale Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years	Resources
Attribute 6: Ensure timely approval of the Evidence Report for LDP3 at full Council	Heather Holland	High	Short	
Attribute 7: Ensure that the customer experience of accessing planning information is improved through the roll-out of the new Council website	Heather Holland	Medium	Short	
Attribute 7: We will investigate workflow tools to enable digital management of casework to improve decision making timescales.	Heather Holland	Medium	Long	
Attribute 8: We will share best practice with peer authorities and learn from others around	Heather Holland	Medium	Medium	

implementation of processes that lead to improvement.				
Attribute 8: 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.	Heather Holland	High	Short	



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.

## ATTRIBUTE 9: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS GOOD CUSTOMER CARE

### Pre-application Advice

*Does the planning authority have the ability to offer pre-application advice where it is requested*

We are committed to delivering a service that meets the needs and expectations of our customers and stakeholders. The planning service currently offer a comprehensive pre-application consultation service, full details of which are provided on the Council's [website](#) and an overview of which can be provided through our duty service. We utilise a response template to ensure a consistent approach by officers when responding to enquiries.

It is recognised that this process provides a number of benefits to both developers and the Council and is highly recommended. There is a charge for this service which is dependent on the scale of the development. We aim to issue a response within 21 working days.

A standard response will include the following an assessment of the proposal against the relevant local and national policies and guidance. Identification of any significant on- site constraints or opportunities that the development would be expected to address. An indication as to whether or not the proposal would be likely to be supported by the Planning Authority. Comments from the most significant consultees. A list of likely developer contributions due and, where possible, details of the likely figures involved.

For major applications or significant local applications, a draft processing agreement is also provided.

Our aim is to guide good-quality development proposals that will help us process planning applications more effectively with key issues identified early in the process. We continue to monitor take-up of our formalised pre application service.

### **Engagement with Communities and Developers**

*Has the planning authority held regular engagement events with developers and communities?*

As part of the early gathering for LDP3 the following engagement events were undertaken between November 2023 and February 2024:

- Drop-in events in all eight of the major town and villages in the authority area
- One in-person workshop in Kirkintilloch
- One online information session
- One dedicated high school session (including two MSYPs in attendance)
- Multiple visits to the authority-wide pupil forum (both primary and secondary levels)

As work on the Evidence Report for LDP3 has progressed five further 'Evidence Topic Group' sessions have been held and has provided a way for stakeholders to feed into the ongoing preparation of the document. The Council will continue to undertake engagement commensurate with each stage in the LDP preparation process and in accordance with the Participation Statement.

The Development Applications team do not hold regular/ rolling engage events with communities and developers. During the application stage, it is considered more effective to hold meetings with interested parties as and when required.

### **Stakeholder Survey**

*Do the results from the customer and stakeholder survey show that customers are satisfied with the service offer by the planning authority?*

We do not currently have a survey in place, however we are committed to implementing the national stakeholder survey and will ensure that this is circulated as widely as possible across key stakeholders and customers. This will allow us to more effectively measure customer



satisfaction and enable future benchmarking to help identify areas of

improvement and examples of good practice. It is recognised that this will help to strengthen the overall Planning service.

### **ATTRIBUTE 9 SUMMARY**

The planning service currently offers a comprehensive pre-application consultation service. This is chargeable and based on the scale of the development.

The Council holds engagement events with communities and developers at all key stages in the preparation of the development plan, including eight drop-in sessions across the breadth of East Dunbartonshire as part of the early evidence gathering process. The Council does not currently hold regular events related to the development management process.

The nationally consistent approach to feedback through the national survey is welcomed and will ensure that we can measure customer experience and expectation more effectively. The results of the customer feedback gathered through the national survey will be examined closely.

## ATTRIBUTE 10: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT AND COLLABORATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS AND COMMUNITIES

### **Community Engagement**

*Has the planning authority undertaken community engagement, for example consistent and effective use of the Place Standard Tool, to inform decision-making processes?*

As part of the early evidence gathering for Local Development Plan 3 the Council used a number of different methods to support engagement with stakeholders. This included an online survey (with paper copies being available for those who required them), in person drop-in events in all eight of the major town and villages in the authority area, one in-person workshop, an online information session and engagement sessions with school children (see further information below).

As part of this engagement participants had the opportunity to undertake the Place Standard Tool for their area. The Place Standard tool provides a simple framework for communities to evaluate their place. The Place Standard Tool was also used as part of the engagement on the current Local Development Plan (LDP2) and as such the most recent results can be compared with previous data to try to understand how our places have changed.

*Does the planning authority have a community engagement strategy and infrastructure in place to ensure engagement is early, collaborative, meaningful and proportionate?*

The Council has an adopted [Consultation and Engagement Strategy](#) setting out standards for how all services across the organisation will engage and consult with stakeholders. The strategy is built around the National Standards for Community Engagement and sets out core principles for conducting engagement, including the management and coordination of multiple different consultations to avoid confusion and ensure high participation rates.

The Participation Statement for Local Development Plan 3 (contained within the [Development Plan Scheme](#)) sets out in detail the ways in which the Council will engage with key stakeholders at all stages of preparing LDP3. The Participation Statement sets

out the engagement that will be undertaken at Evidence Gathering, Call for Ideas/ Sites and Proposed Plan Stages. The Participation Statement also sets out what to expect during the examination and final stages of the plan-making process, how the Council will support communities in preparing Local Place Plans and that the Council may seek to use mediation to overcome locally contentious issues.

The content of the Participation Statement itself was subject to engagement with stakeholders, which was undertaken during May and June 2023.

*Has the planning authority engaged with a good representation of the community including young people, gypsies and travellers, people with protected characteristics, including disability, race, age, sex and sexual orientation, and including people from a range of socio-economic backgrounds?*

As part of the early evidence gathering engagement for LDP3 officers from the Land Planning Policy Team have engaged with the following groups:

- British Sign Language Access Panel in Bishopbriggs
- Schools' session attended by six high schools, including pupils from Woodland View additional support needs school and two recently-elected MSYPs
- East Dunbartonshire Schools Forum – both at primary and secondary levels

Additionally, during the day before drop-in sessions in the 4 main towns (see attribute 9) officers handed out leaflets in the town centre to promote the engagement to those who may not have become aware of the engagement through the usual promotional methods.

Officers are continuing to ensure that stakeholders from a range of backgrounds and with protected characteristics are engaged within the LDP process.

Participants at the Peer Review Workshop stated that it would be useful if the Development Applications Team also conducted some engagements events as an opportunity to improve overall understanding of the planning application and enforcement processes.

*Do the results from the customer and stakeholder survey show that stakeholders are satisfied with their collaboration with the planning authority?*

We do not have customer and stakeholder survey in place as of yet, although as detailed are committed to undertaking this when it becomes available.

### **Local Place Plans Support**

*Has the planning authority supported the production of Local Place Plans when requested?*

The Council launched an [invite to community groups to prepare a Local Place Plan](#) for their area in May 2023. The Council has continued to promote LPP's on the Council's website and through the LDP Newsletter. The Land Planning Policy Team has been having discussions with a number of community groups who have expressed an interest in preparing an LPP for their area. These discussions remain at a very early and informal level and at this stage no LPP's have been submitted to the Council for registration. However, in order to ensure that the Council is prepared for the submission of any LPP's that may be forthcoming, a robust and efficient process for registering LPPs needs to be put in place, including ensuring that effective governance and delegated powers are in place.

### **ATTRIBUTE 10 SUMMARY**

As part of the early evidence gathering for Local Development Plan 3 the Council used a number of different methods to support engagement with stakeholders, including online surveys and in-person events, and utilised the Place Standard Tool to gather data from participants.

The Council has an adopted Consultation and Engagement Strategy and the engagement that will be undertaken as part of preparing LDP3 is set out in the Participation Statement section of the Development Plan Scheme.

The engagement undertaken as part of the early evidence gathering for LDP3 has sought to get opinions from a range of stakeholders. The planning service will continue to work to broaden representation in the process. Engagement sessions related to development management processes could be useful.

The Council has invited community groups to prepare Local Place Plans for their local area and is providing further information and support to any group that contacts the planning service to express an interest in preparing one.

### Improvement Action Plan (Engage theme)

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
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, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).

Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance High Medium Low	Timescale Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years	Resources
Attribute 9: We will participate in the national customer survey and analyse the results to allow us to prepare an improvement action plan.	Heather Holland	High	Long	
Attribute 10: Ensure that a robust and efficient process for registering Local Place Plans is developed and in place.	Heather Holland	Medium	Short	
Attribute 10: 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.	Heather Holland	Medium	Medium	



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.

#### ATTRIBUTE 11: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY SUPPORTS THE DELIVERY OF SUSTAINABLE, LIVEABLE AND PRODUCTIVE PLACES

*Is the planning authority aware of the [Place and Wellbeing Outcomes](#), the evidence that sits behind them and is it using them in decision-making processes?*

The Place and Wellbeing Outcomes have been incorporated into the draft Evidence Report for LDP3, particularly in reference to National Planning Framework 4 Policy 15: Local Living and 20-Minute Neighbourhoods and Policy 23: 'Health and Safety.'

This includes reference to the 'Integrating Land Use Planning and Public Health in Scotland' guidance document published by the Improvement Service. Relevant opportunities for the new LDP have been identified, including:

- Raising awareness and knowledge of issues
- Improving communication and engagement between the planning and public health professions
- Integrating health into planning policies
- Better consideration of health in planning decisions
- Aligning planning and health strategies
- Sharing data and evidence
- Addressing health impacts



The intention is that these will be included as part of the evidence base and then used to help inform preparation of the relevant policy/policies in the Proposed LDP3. The principles of Place and Wellbeing have also provided a basis for the ongoing development of a 'Site Assessment Methodology', which will also form part of the LDP3 Evidence Report.

*Has the planning authority identified tools and approaches to delivering sustainable, liveable and productive places and is implementing them?*

The Council is supporting the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places through the use of the following approaches and tools:

1. **Place Standard Tool** – The Council has used the Place Standard Tool to support development of the current and forthcoming local development plans (LDP2 & LDP3). Please see Attribute 10 above for further information.
2. **Six Characteristics of Place** – The Council provides substantial guidance on good design through the Design and Placemaking Supplementary Planning Guidance.
3. **Local Living and 20 Minute Neighbourhoods** - To support the implementation of NPF4 Policy 15 the Council is developing a 20-minute neighbourhood mapping tool for East Dunbartonshire. This project gives an understanding of how communities in East Dunbartonshire currently fare in their ability to meet their daily needs locally, across a range of indicators including those associated with place and wellbeing outcomes. The mapping tool will help the Council improve local living through planning processes and other local authority services.
4. **Sustainability and Energy Form** – The Council has prepared a form and associated guidance to enable applicants to meet the requirement of LDP2 Policy 9 to provide a Sustainability and Energy statement for all qualifying planning applications.
5. **Network of Centres of Audit** – In addition to a unit-by-unit appraisal of use types, occupancy, essential services and town centre living, the Audit also provides a qualitative appraisal and ranking of larger centres against twelve indicators of town centre health, including public realm, sense of vitality, pavements and streets. For town centres the Audit provides feedback from a survey of public opinion, on accessibility, evening economy, pavements and streets, retail, safety and security. As well as being referred to in the Evidence Report, the findings of the Audit can also be used by the Development Applications team within the Council's Planning Service when assessing centre- related planning applications.

6. **Town Centre Strategies** – Supported by the findings of the Network of Centres of Audit, an assessment of the extent to which the area’s town centre strategies and masterplans have met their objectives has been undertaken. The review finds that the implementation of placemaking and other initiatives has been mixed in terms of success, and that some actions remain undelivered. The findings of the strategy/masterplan review have been incorporated into the Evidence Report.

#### **ATTRIBUTE 11 SUMMARY**

The Planning Service has included the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes into the preparation of the Evidence Report for LDP3 and is exploring options to integrate them into decision making processes.

The Council has made significant process in identifying tools and approaching to support the delivering sustainable, liveable and productive places and will continue to work to implement the tools and integrate them into decision making processes.

## ATTRIBUTE 12: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY SUPPORTS THE DELIVERY OF CONSENTED DEVELOPMENT

### Planning Obligations and Conditions

*Has the planning authority provided clear and proportionate expectations of Section 75 agreements and set these out in the LDP and pre-application discussions and they are concluded within 6 months of resolution to grant?*

Policies relative to contributions to infrastructure (Section 75 agreements) are specifically addressed in the Local Development Plan within Policy 24 – Developer Contributions and [LDP Supplementary Guidance – Developer Contributions](#). The circumstances where the need for contributions is likely to be triggered is outlined within these and such contributions will only be sought where necessary and in accordance with then five tests set out in Planning Circular 3/2012.

The planning service sets out the need for contributions to infrastructure secured through a Section 75 legal agreement within their pre-application advice with applicants where applicable. This advice sets out the policy context and considerations, highlighting this potential requirement at an early stage.

Eleven applications subject to a legal agreement were decided in 2023/24, with an average timeframe of 46 weeks to process. It is worth recognising that the delays experienced do not result from the Council's legal services who are currently well- resourced and actively seek timely processing of agreements. It is acknowledged that establishing regular meetings between the Development Applications Team Leader and legal services would enable closer monitoring of the progression of legal agreements and a clearer understanding of issues encountered during this process.

*Does the planning authority take a proportionate approach to imposing conditions?*

A proportionate approach is taken by the Planning Service when applying conditions. The imposition of conditions is reflected in the scale of development for all applications, whereby conditions are only imposed where they are considered to meet the six tests set out within Planning Circular 4/1998: the use of conditions in planning permissions. With larger scale local or major applications where a larger number of conditions are likely to be applied to consent, the Planning Service will look to advise the applicant of

these prior to issuing a decision, particularly where those applied could impact upon project viability or require further detailed information to be provided and thereby impact upon delivery timescales for a project. It is our aim to bottom out as much as possible through the application process to reduce the need for conditions requiring further information to be submitted post- consent. In this respect, where conditions are applied for key local development sites and major application sites, the planning team undertake formal site monitoring. This includes active monitoring of condition compliance on-site. A record of this monitoring is updated on a quarterly basis and published on the Council's website for review.

### **Processing Agreements**

*Are the number of processing agreements the planning authority has agreed with applicants increasing?*

The Planning Service offer processing agreements with all major applications and many local development applications where possible through pre-application consultation. The uptake of these is however low as evidenced by no processing agreements having been registered against an application during the 2023/24 period. It is important to note that given the relatively low number of major applications received by the Council results against this measure are considered to be particularly volatile. This evidence does however highlight the need for better promotion of Processing Agreements amongst the planning team. Whilst these are offered through pre-application consultation, a draft agreement could be provided at this stage to provide more meaningful encouragement of this.

### **Local Housing Land Requirement**

*Does the planning authority have an ambitious local housing land requirement that exceeds the Minimum All Tenure Housing land requirements in NPF4 and is it on track to support delivery?*

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) requires the next Local Development Plan (LDP3) to identify a Local Housing Land Requirement (LHLR) for the area. The LHLR should be based on - and exceed - the Minimum All Tenure Land Requirement identified in NPF4. The Council is currently in the process of preparing the Evidence Report for LDP3. As part of this process the Council will work with stakeholders to formulate an LHLR that seeks to balance the expectations of NPF4 with the

characteristics of the local area. The work programme for LDP3 can be found within the [Development Plan Scheme](#).

### **LDP Delivery Programme**

*Does the planning authority have an effective delivery programme in place that supports the delivery of development on the ground?*

Following the adoption of Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) in November 2022 the Council published an Action Programme that sets out how the policies and sites within the plan will be delivered. The Scottish Government have advised that as a transitional arrangement whilst authorities are preparing their first plan under the new system, and to ensure compliance with the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, existing LDP Action Programmes should be reviewed and republished as Delivery Programmes. As a result, the Council is currently considering options to upgrade the current Action Programme to a Delivery Programme.

**ATTRIBUTE 12 SUMMARY**

Local Development Plan 2 and associated guidance sets out clear requirements for developer contributions, however the average time to conclude s75 legal agreements exceeds the target of 6 months.

The Planning Service takes a proportionate approach when applying planning conditions, reflecting the scale of the development and meeting the six tests set out within Planning Circular 4/1998

Despite the Planning Service offering processing agreements with all major applications and many local development applications take-up of processing agreements is very low.

The Council is currently in the process of preparing the Evidence Report for LDP3 which will set out an indicative Local Housing Land Requirement for the area.

An Action Programme for LDP2 is in place however in line with the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 this will be revised and republished as a Delivery Programme.

### Improvement Action Plan (People theme)

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
11.The planning authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places	2
12.This planning authority supports the delivery of appropriate development	3

Based on the grading above, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).

Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance High Medium Low	Timescale Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years	Resources
Attribute 11: Ensure that the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes are integrated into the Proposed LDP to support local decision-making	Heather Holland	Med	Long	
Attribute 11: Continue to develop and use identified and innovative tools to deliver sustainable, liveable and productive places	Heather Holland	Med	Med	
Attribute 12: Ensure the development and approval of a Local Housing Land Requirement through the preparation of LDP3	Heather Holland	High	Long	
Attribute 12: Ensure that the Action Programme for LDP2 is revised to the standard of a 'Delivery Programme' to meet the	Heather Holland	High	Short	

requirements of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019				
Attribute 12: Continue to actively carry out site monitoring of Major planning applications. This will involve updating the Major site Monitoring document on a quarterly basis and having a copy published on the Council's website to ensure officer responsibility for delivery on site and compliance with conditions.	Heather Holland	High	Short	
Attribute 12: Establish regular meetings between Development Applications Team Leader and legal services to review all outstanding legal agreements.	Heather Holland	Medium	Short	
Attribute 12: Develop a standardised condition monitoring spreadsheet for locally significant planning applications.	Heather Holland	Low	Short	
Attribute 12: Commence provision of draft processing agreements alongside pre-application consultation.	Heather Holland	Medium	Short	



## **Monitoring and Implementation of Improvement Actions**

To ensure that the actions identified in this document are delivered, the planning leadership team will report progress to the Land Planning and Development Management Team Meetings on a quarterly basis. This will provide opportunities to:

- Advise on the overall progress in terms of implementing the actions.
- Advise of any changes to procedures as a result of actions coming into force.
- Quickly identify actions where delivery within the period up until March 2027 is at risk and to allow remedial action to be taken where possible.
- Promote cross-team working to improve efficiency.

Where relevant, progress on implementing the actions will be reported publicly through the monthly 'How Good is Our Service' reports published on the performance section of the Council's [website](#).

The National Planning Improvement Team has confirmed that the full assessment and setting of the improvement actions will only be conducted every 3 years to allow sufficient time for authorities to implement the actions that they have identified. This therefore means that the document will require to be updated in 2027.

It is expected that performance update reports on the Council's progress will be required on an annual basis to meet the requirements of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. The process for carrying out and submitting these progress reports is still in development and the Council will ensure that these updates are made as and when required by the National Planning Improvement Team.

# **Case Studies**

# Good Practice Case Study 1

Which attributes of a high performing planning authority does this relate to:

- ☒Attribute 1: The Planning Authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity
- ☒Attribute 2: The Planning Authority has a valued and supported workforce
- ☐Attribute 3: This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement
- ☐Attribute 4: This Planning Authority has sound governance
- ☐Attribute 5: This Planning Authority has effective leadership
- ☐Attribute 6: This Planning Authority has a robust policy and evidence base
- ☐Attribute 7: This Planning Authority makes best use of data and digital technology
- ☐Attribute 8: This Planning Authority has effective and efficient decision-making processes
- ☐Attribute 9: This Planning Authority has good customer care
- ☐Attribute 10: This Planning Authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities
- ☐Attribute 11: This Planning Authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places
- ☐Attribute 12: This Planning Authority supports the delivery of consented development

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Planning Authority: East Dunbartonshire Council

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Title: Grad Plus

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## Context

In recent years, it is recognised that the planning profession has faced challenges in attracting fresh talent at a National Level. The Graduate Plus (Grad Plus) scheme, a Skills Development Scotland initiative designed to offer graduate work placements with additional support, provides an opportunity for planning teams to enhance their workforce, provide valuable mentorship, and attract new talent into the planning profession.

## What happened?

The Grad Plus scheme aims to recruit graduate talent for a fixed-term placement. For Land Planning & Development, taking on a Grad Plus placement meant we could bring in a recent graduate eager to develop practical skills, while also benefiting from government support to reduce the initial employment costs. Formal recruitment was undertaken through support with the Council's Early Careers Team and HR.

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## Areas of collaboration

With the support of the Council's Early Career Programme Lead the Land Planning & Development Service were able to appoint two recent graduates to provide experience and exposure of working as part of the Council's Development Application Team and Land Planning Policy Team.

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## What was the overall result?

One of the primary advantages of hiring two graduates was the fresh perspective they have brought to both teams with enthusiasm and eagerness to make the most of the two-year temporary opportunity. This has also allowed more experienced staff members to take on a mentoring role within the team.

Taking on a Grad Plus placement has allowed Land Planning & Development to assess the graduate's fit for the team over a defined period before potentially committing to a permanent hire.

It is hoped that following the completion of the Grad Plus program, there will be an opportunity for the graduate(s) to apply for a full-time position in the Council where possible, securing a talented and well-trained employee who understands and gained insight into the statutory functions of the planning system alongside the Council's culture and processes.

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## Lessons learned

Please detail here what worked well and what did not work and on reflection what you would do in future under the following headings:

### **Successes**

Participating in such schemes demonstrates the Council's reputation as an organisation committed to fostering young talent. It is hoped that this reputation, in turn, will help attract future applicants and retain existing employees. It also shows that we are a forward-thinking organisation, demonstrating a

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willingness to invest in the future of the planning profession recognising the need to have a valued and supported workforce whilst planning for the future.

The graduate within Development Applications Team was a recent graduate who had struggled to find entry-level positions due to the competitive job market and COVID. Joining the Council through the Grad Plus scheme has given him the opportunity to gain hands-on experience, learn from experienced planners, and contribute meaningfully to live planning applications and take an active role in enforcement cases and offer support to members of the team by taking on tasks such as Certificate of Lawfulness.

During his placement, the Grad Plus has worked closely with Planners, Enforcement Team and Team Leader on various types of planning applications from householder, residential, change of use and Listed Building. He has learned how to assess planning applications, create site assessments, and attend site visits, all of which helped build his practical knowledge in the field.

The Grad Plus has also received mentorship from experienced team members who guided him through the intricacies of planning enforcement law, customer relationships, and duty calls relative to development management cases. This one-on-one mentorship gives a deeper understanding of the planning profession and how to navigate real-world challenges.

With an additional team member, the Development Application Team have been able to reduce some of the burden on the Planners and Enforcement officers allowing task to be reallocated to ensure resources are more effectively prioritised. The Grad Plus support with research, data analysis, historic enforcement cases and Certificates of Lawfulness has freed up Planners to focus on more complex tasks. This increased overall productivity within the team and allowed the planners to stay focused on deadlines and Committee deadlines.

The graduate within Sustainability and Planning Policy was actively seeking an entry-level position that offered a variety of experience related to her Masters in Environmental Futures and was a perfect fit for the role which sits between both the Land Planning Policy and Sustainability Policy Teams.

During her placement, the Grad Plus has worked closely with team members across preparation of the Evidence Report for LDP3, Climate Action Plan, Greenspace Strategy (including Play Sufficiency) and the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy. This has not only allowed her to gain experience in these fields but has also ensured consistency and synergies between the various workstreams.

Whilst the graduate has received mentorship from more experienced team members, it is clear that they have brought their own strengths to the team, particularly with regards to digital and mapping skills.

By working with experienced professionals in the field, the graduates have been able to expand their professional networks, connecting with other planners, environmental professionals, architects, local authorities, and stakeholders. This provided valuable insights into career paths and potential job opportunities within the planning industry.

Furthermore, the Grad Plus placement included access to additional professional development opportunities, such as team meetings, workshops, training sessions, public consultation. These experiences enhanced their qualifications and help them stand out to future employers.

The addition of graduates to the team has allowed for a shared knowledge exchange. While the graduates have brought fresh academic insights and technical skills, the experienced team members had the opportunity to refine their mentoring and leadership abilities. This mutual learning environment helped improve team morale and cohesion, as staff members shared knowledge and developed new approaches to problem-solving.

The experience of mentoring and developing a young professional also had a positive impact on staff morale. Experienced planners were energised by the opportunity to contribute to the professional growth of a new graduate and appreciated the positive energy that the graduate brought to the office. Furthermore, the team saw the value in fostering new talent, which aligned with the Council's commitment to creating a supportive, and valued workplace culture.

### **Challenges**

The main challenge was around recruitment and finding the relevant candidates who understood the opportunity being offered and role expectation. It took two rounds of advertising the posts to successfully recruit to the two newly created temporary 2-year posts.

### **Lessons Learned**

Taking on a Graduate Plus placement within a small planning team has clear benefits for both the employer and the graduate. For the employer, it provides an opportunity to bring in fresh talent and create a long-term talent pipeline. For the graduate, it offers invaluable work experience, mentorship, and the chance for career progression within a supportive team environment.

It has been our experience that taking on a Grad Plus graduate has not only provided immediate value to the teams in terms of increased capacity and innovation but also contributed to the long-term development of the planning profession by fostering young talent. By participating in such schemes, Council planning teams can help address the sector's skills gap while benefiting from a diverse, skilled workforce that can help drive the growth and success of the planning profession by showcasing the benefits of working within the public sector.

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## **What contribution will it aim to make towards delivering outcomes?**

Please tick all the outcomes below that this example aims to work 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

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Contact/ Further details: [planning@eastdunbarton.gov.uk](mailto:planning@eastdunbarton.gov.uk) or  
[development.plan@eastdunbarton.gov.uk](mailto:development.plan@eastdunbarton.gov.uk)



# Good Practice Case Study 2

Which attributes of a high performing planning authority does this relate to:

- ☐ Attribute 1: The Planning Authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity
- ☐ Attribute 2: The Planning Authority has a valued and supported workforce
- ☐ Attribute 3: This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement
- ☒ Attribute 4: This Planning Authority has sound governance
- ☐ Attribute 5: This Planning Authority has effective leadership
- ☐ Attribute 6: This Planning Authority has a robust policy and evidence base
- ☒ Attribute 7: This Planning Authority makes best use of data and digital technology
- ☒ Attribute 8: This Planning Authority has effective and efficient decision-making processes
- ☐ Attribute 9: This Planning Authority has good customer care
- ☐ Attribute 10: This Planning Authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities
- ☐ Attribute 11: This Planning Authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places
- ☐ Attribute 12: This Planning Authority supports the delivery of consented development

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Planning Authority: East Dunbartonshire Council

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Title: Elected Member Planning Committee Enhanced Briefing Sessions

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## Context

Prior to COVID-19 it was usual practice for the development applications team to conduct in-person drop-in sessions with Elected Members ahead of any planning committee meeting and this was held within the Council offices. The intention of these sessions was to allow members to view plans and information relative to applications they would be required to determine at the upcoming planning committee and ask any questions they may have had.

During the COVID-19 lockdown and the associated restrictions on working practices, the service was conducted fully remotely and no planning site visits were permitted to be undertaken. For applications

required to be determined by planning committee, we introduced enhanced briefing sessions as a method to provide information to Elected Members on applications ahead of planning committee and in place of site visits and the drop-in sessions.

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## What happened?

For enhanced briefing sessions, the planning case officer prepares a detailed presentation providing an overview of the application being presented to planning committee. This presentation generally includes existing and proposed plans, site photographs to provide context, an outline of the key policy considerations and an overview of comments received in relation to the proposed development if relevant.



This work was undertaken to ensure a level of continuity in the level of information provided to Elected Members despite site visits being restricted and in-person drop-in sessions not being possible. These sessions have been well received and as a result have been permanently implemented due to the positive impact they appear to have on Elected Members understanding of planning considerations and opportunities for discussions to further enable them to make informed planning decisions at Planning Committees.

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## Areas of collaboration

This project was undertaken by the development applications planning team and the information provided has in part been informed by questions and requests of the Planning Committee over time.

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## What was the overall result?

The implementation and consistent delivery of enhanced briefing sessions prior to planning committee has been well received by Elected Members. Having a template for these presentations ensures a level of consistency in the information provided, as well as providing a forum for queries related to proposed developments ahead of planning committee. It has been found that the convenience of this service being online has made it more accessible and the rates of attendance are higher and more consistent in comparison to the previous drop-in sessions. This method allows the presentation of an application to be very comprehensive compared to in-person or on-site meetings where attendance was variable, although a site visit can still be requested by Elected Members. In addition, this format allows for information to be revisited and explored on-screen (i.e. zoom in for example), compared to previous paper copies used for drop-in sessions and site visits. It is notable that we have seen a decline in the number of site visits requested following implementation of these sessions given the extent of site information that we are able to provide. It also provides a platform where if further information is requested by Members, which is not already within the presentation, this can generally be referred to quickly given the technology available, and is subsequently discussed.

## Lessons learned

### Successes

- This was implemented on a temporary basis in response to the challenges presented by the COVID-19 lockdown and associated restrictions. However, the benefits of this approach were recognised and the decision was taken to implement this on a permanent basis.
- The format of the enhanced briefing sessions, including presentations, allow for visual information such as aerial imagery and annotated site photographs to be provided for review in place of, or in addition to, an on-site visit.
- Where site visits were conducted prior to the implementation of enhanced briefings, it was often the case that Elected Members would spread out across the site and ask the case officer the same questions at different times or catch the end of an answer and request this was repeated. The enhanced briefing sessions provide a consistent format for delivery of information relative to the planning application for which the Elected Members are required to determine.

### Lessons Learned

By making this information more accessible through online sessions and in a user-friendly, yet comprehensive format, it has proven to be very successful in ensuring Elected Members are provided with an opportunity to query recommendations of case officers ahead of Planning Committee meetings.

## What contribution will it aim to make towards delivering outcomes?

Please tick all the outcomes below that this example aims to work towards.

### **NPF4**

#### ☐ Sustainable places

- ☐ Climate change and nature crisis
- ☐ Climate mitigation 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

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Contact/ Further details: [planning@eastdunbarton.gov.uk](mailto:planning@eastdunbarton.gov.uk)

# Good Practice Case Study 3

Which attributes of a high performing planning authority does this relate to:

- ☐ Attribute 1: The Planning Authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity
- ☐ Attribute 2: The Planning Authority has a valued and supported workforce
- ☐ Attribute 3: This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement
- ☐ Attribute 4: This Planning Authority has sound governance
- ☐ Attribute 5: This Planning Authority has effective leadership
- ☒ Attribute 6: This Planning Authority has a robust policy and evidence base
- ☐ Attribute 7: This Planning Authority makes best use of data and digital technology
- ☐ Attribute 8: This Planning Authority has effective and efficient decision-making processes
- ☐ Attribute 9: This Planning Authority has good customer care
- ☐ Attribute 10: This Planning Authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities
- ☐ Attribute 11: This Planning Authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places
- ☐ Attribute 12: This Planning Authority supports the delivery of consented development

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Planning Authority: East Dunbartonshire Council

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Title: Robust Policy – Old Bearsden Conservation Area Planning Application and Conservation Area Consent

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## Context

This was a local scale, residential development proposal seeking to deliver a flatted development within Bearsden Town Centre and within the Old Bearsden Conservation Area. The existing building on site formed the Old Halls associated with the Church of Scotland. The existing building dated from the 1930's and had been in community use until 2019 when it was identified as being surplus to requirements. The proposals sought to demolish this existing building and the full planning application outlined detailed

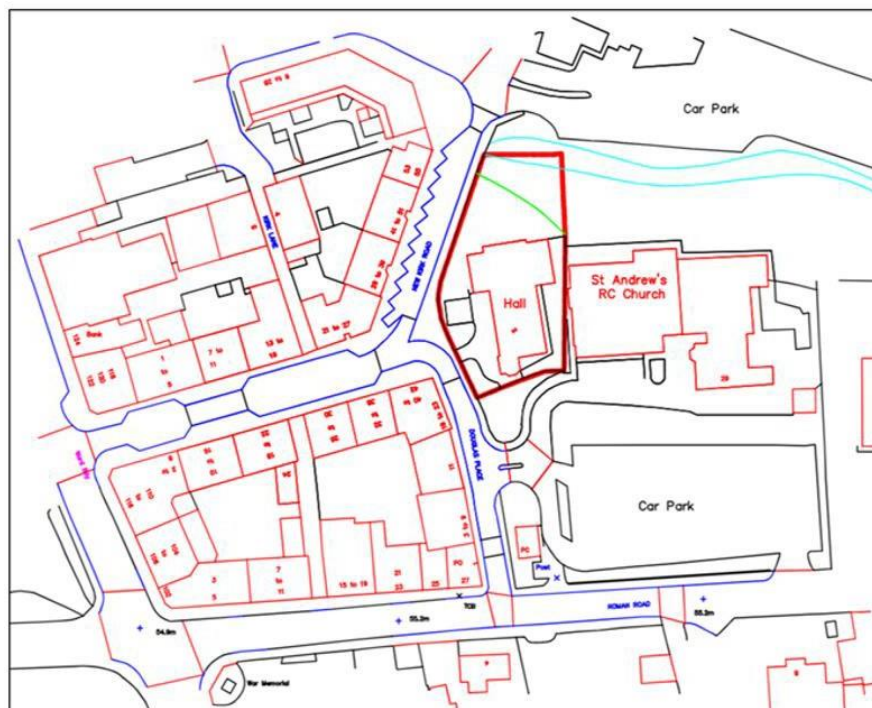
plans for a new development for six flatted properties. The principle of the demolition of the existing Old Halls was subject to Conservation Area Consent.

## What happened?

Upon initial consideration of the proposed demolition of the existing building through the Conservation Area Consent application, it was considered to contribute to the character of the Old Bearsden Conservation Area and requests were made to explore retention of this. This requirement came through consideration of the relevant development plan policies including Policy 19 – Historic Environment of the East Dunbartonshire Local Development Plan 2 which encourages retention of buildings in Conservation Areas where they make a positive contribution.

Consideration of LDP2 Policy 2. TC – Bearsden was also undertaken whereby it states that any development that is within or likely to affect Bearsden Town Centre must contribute to the vision and objectives in the Bearsden Town Centre Strategy. This encourages a range of retail, service, social and leisure uses in the town centre and within this, an action to encourage the refurbishment or renewal of the Old Halls as a community resource is identified.

The below snip demonstrates the location of the Old Halls in respect of Bearsden town centre to the west.



Following discussions regarding the retention and reuse of the existing building, a structural survey and building survey reports were submitted demonstrating that the existing building would require extensive works to repair and refurbish it internally and externally in order for it to be converted into another use. In addition, further information in the form of a commercial property market appraisal

report and cost analysis for conversion to residential were provided, demonstrating that the conversion would not be commercially viable. Evidence was also provided outlining all efforts undertaken to explore the refurbishment and renewal of the building for community use as per the policy requirements. It was only following detailed consideration of this information, in the context of the policy provisions, that the principle of demolition of the existing Old Halls building was considered to be acceptable.

In respect of the detailed planning application which provided full details of the proposed development on the site of the Old Halls, this comprised of the development of six flatted dwellings with associated parking and landscaping. The assessment of this application required detailed consideration of the proposals against a number of policies within the development plan relative to the principle of the proposed development, acceptability of the design, scale, mass and form, as well as the materiality of the proposed development, consideration of impact upon the established character of the site and wider town centre and Old Bearsden Conservation Area, impact upon residential amenity, biodiversity, as well as sustainability.

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## Areas of collaboration

The case officer collaborated with the applicant and their agent, as well as their consultants, throughout the application process. There was of course collaboration with internal consultees through consultation when assessing the proposed development in the context of the local development plan policies and requirements.

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## What was the overall result?

The case officer worked closely with the applicant and their agent over the course of the assessment, holding a number of meetings to discuss the principle of the proposals, the acceptability of the scale, mass and design within such a sensitive setting, with a number of iterations resulting. The strong policy context provided in particular by the East Dunbartonshire Local Development Plan 2 provided a robust policy framework for such an assessment and enabled a thorough evaluation of the proposals to be undertaken. The positive outcomes of this assessment include a case officer recommendation for approval subject to conditions and Section 75 legal agreement which was subsequently agreed by Elected Members.

Site photograph (prior to demolition works beginning)





Site photograph incorporating computer generated visuals of proposed new development



## Lessons learned

### Successes

Pre application enquiry process meant that the Planning Authority gave the agent comments on the proposal in terms of relevant planning policies. It was emphasised early that to meet the requirements of Local Development Plan 2, Policy 19 Historic Environment the agent would need to demonstrate why the existing building could not be reused and refurbished, in their application for Conservation Area Consent to demolish the building. The agent then commissioned a building conservation consultant to produce a Heritage Statement, which provided information on the townscape value of the building to the Conservation Area and how the proposed replacement building had been designed to be in character with the Conservation Area.

The Draft Conservation Area Appraisal for Old Bearsden, 2021, provided an up-to-date summary of the special architectural and historic value of the Conservation Area that provided a sound basis for assessment of the proposed demolition and design, scale and material of the replacement proposed six flats.

### Challenges

The submission of a planning application for six flats at the same time as the application for Conservation Area Consent to demolish the halls meant that the principle of demolition had not been established. This meant that the recommendation for the flats, which was supported by many policy areas, was dependent on Conservation Area Consent being granted.

The range of potential uses for the halls in the Bearsden town centre was wide. This was why further information was requested on the viability of conversion of the building to residential use along with an appraisal of potential commercial/ community property uses.

### Lessons Learned

On reflection, it would have been helpful at the pre application enquiry stage to have advised the applicant that a commercial property appraisal for potential other uses, and converting the building to residential use, would be required at the planning application stage.

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## What contribution will it aim to make towards delivering outcomes?

Please tick all the outcomes below that this example aims to work 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

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Contact/ Further details: [planning@eastdunbarton.gov.uk](mailto:planning@eastdunbarton.gov.uk)

# Good Practice Case Study 4

Which attributes of a high performing planning authority does this relate to:

- ☐ Attribute 1: The Planning Authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity
- ☐ Attribute 2: The Planning Authority has a valued and supported workforce
- ☐ Attribute 3: This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement
- ☐ Attribute 4: This Planning Authority has sound governance
- ☐ Attribute 5: This Planning Authority has effective leadership
- ☒ Attribute 6: This Planning Authority has a robust policy and evidence base
- ☒ Attribute 7: This Planning Authority makes best use of data and digital technology
- ☒ Attribute 8: This Planning Authority has effective and efficient decision-making processes
- ☐ Attribute 9: This Planning Authority has good customer care
- ☐ Attribute 10: This Planning Authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities
- ☒ Attribute 11: This Planning Authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places
- ☐ Attribute 12: This Planning Authority supports the delivery of consented development

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Planning Authority: East Dunbartonshire Council

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Title: 20-Minute Neighbourhoods and Local Living – An Interactive Mapping Tool for East Dunbartonshire

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## Context

To support implementation of the Local Living and 20-Minute Neighbourhood Approach, we have created a mapping tool which allows for a detailed spatial understanding of local communities throughout the area. The ultimate aim of the tool is to support the alignment of policy, investment and service delivery around the principle of local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods, so that all our priorities including reducing inequality, tackling climate change, effective healthcare provision and quality education are fully embedded in the decision-making process.

## What happened?

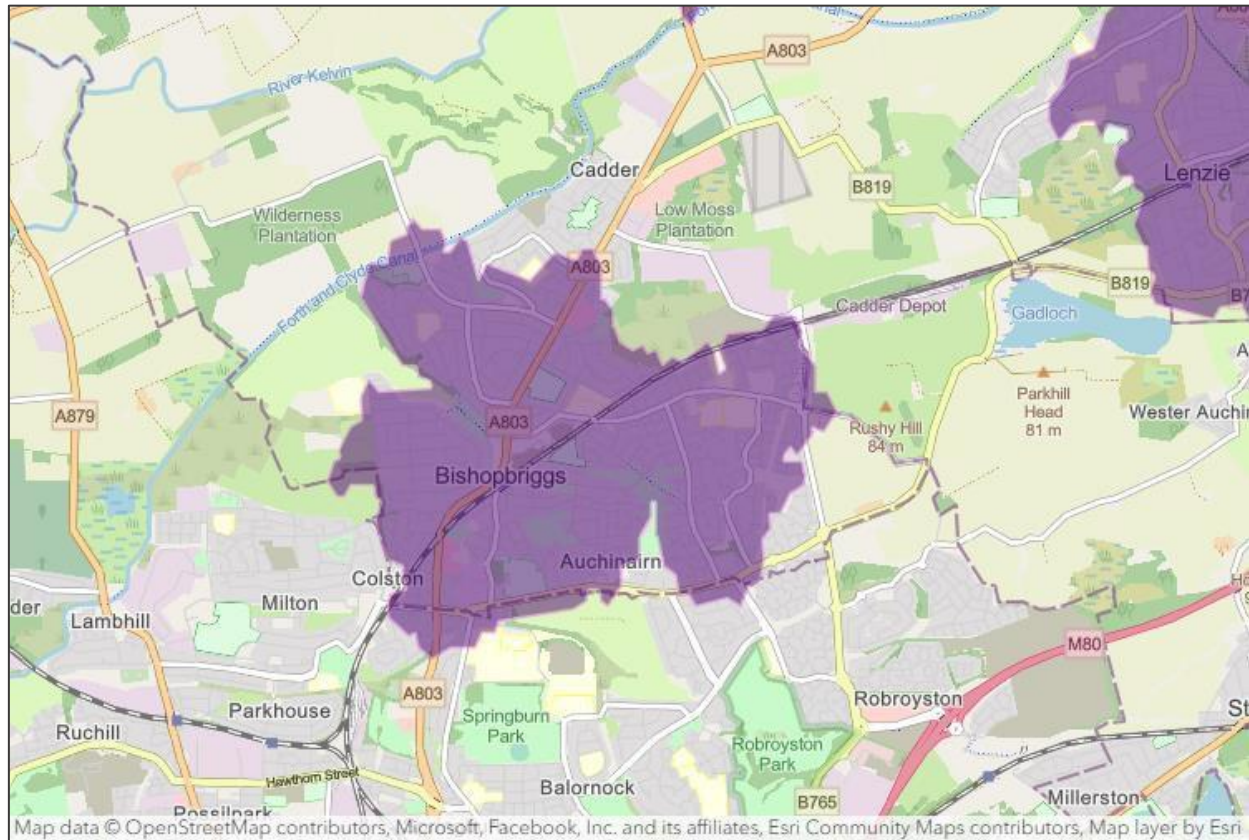
The first step in creating the tool involved identifying features of local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods, focusing on those most relevant to East Dunbartonshire. A number of resources were used to support this, including Policy 15 of NPF4 (Local Living and 20 Minute Neighbourhoods), the 20-Minute Neighbourhoods in a Scottish Context report published by ClimateXChange, and the [Our Place online resource](#). A total of 24 individual features or 'daily needs' were identified. These features were then grouped into six different themes, allowing for easier and more effective presentation of the mapping and data. Working alongside GIS colleagues, the Land Planning Policy team undertook mapping of these features using existing data and creating new mapping data where this had not already been mapped. In addition to this, a series of walking distance 'buffers' were applied to each feature, allowing for an analysis of accessibility.

An overview of these features and themes is shown below:

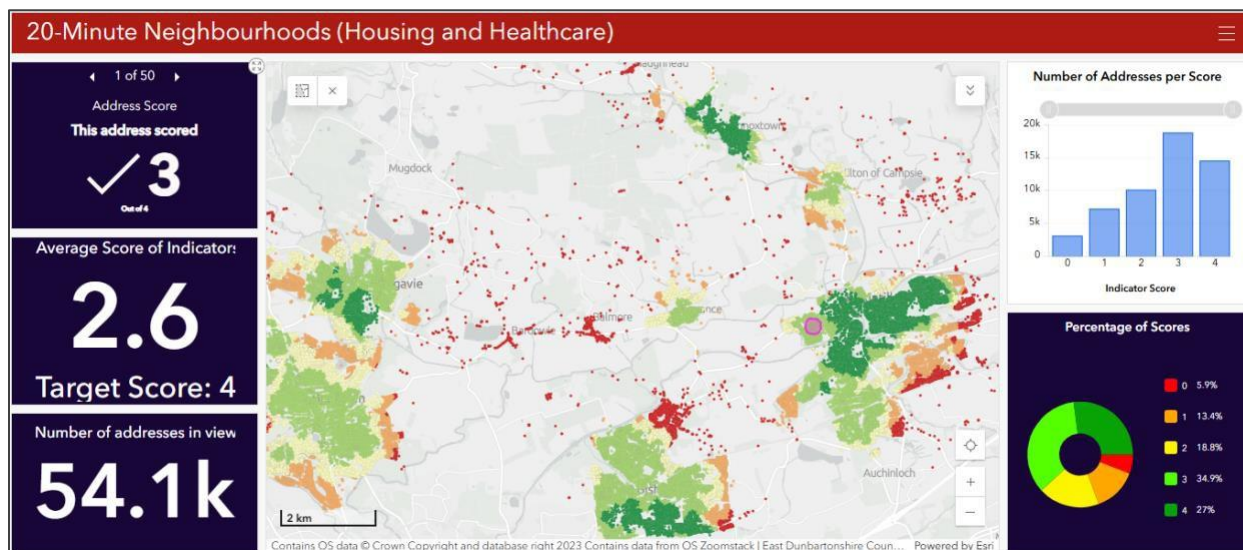
<b>Economy and Retail</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Local employment opportunities</li><li>• Food shopping</li><li>• Restaurants, bars and cafes</li><li>• Digital connectivity</li></ul>	<b>Transport and Accessibility</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bus access</li><li>• Train access</li><li>• Active travel network</li></ul>	<b>Housing and Healthcare</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Affordable housing</li><li>• Housing for Older People</li><li>• Health Centres, GPs and Pharmacies</li><li>• Dental services</li></ul>
<b>Education and Learning</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Childcare and nursery education</li><li>• Primary education</li><li>• Secondary education</li><li>• Lifelong learning</li><li>• Libraries</li></ul>	<b>Community Services</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Community Centres and halls</li><li>• Hubs and post offices</li><li>• Community gardens</li><li>• Food growing and allotments</li><li>• Public toilets</li></ul>	<b>Physical Activity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sports and recreation facilities</li><li>• Playgrounds and informal play opportunities</li><li>• Parks and open spaces</li></ul>

As an example, the map extract below shows the areas in Bishopbriggs that are currently within an approximate 15-minute walk of dental services:

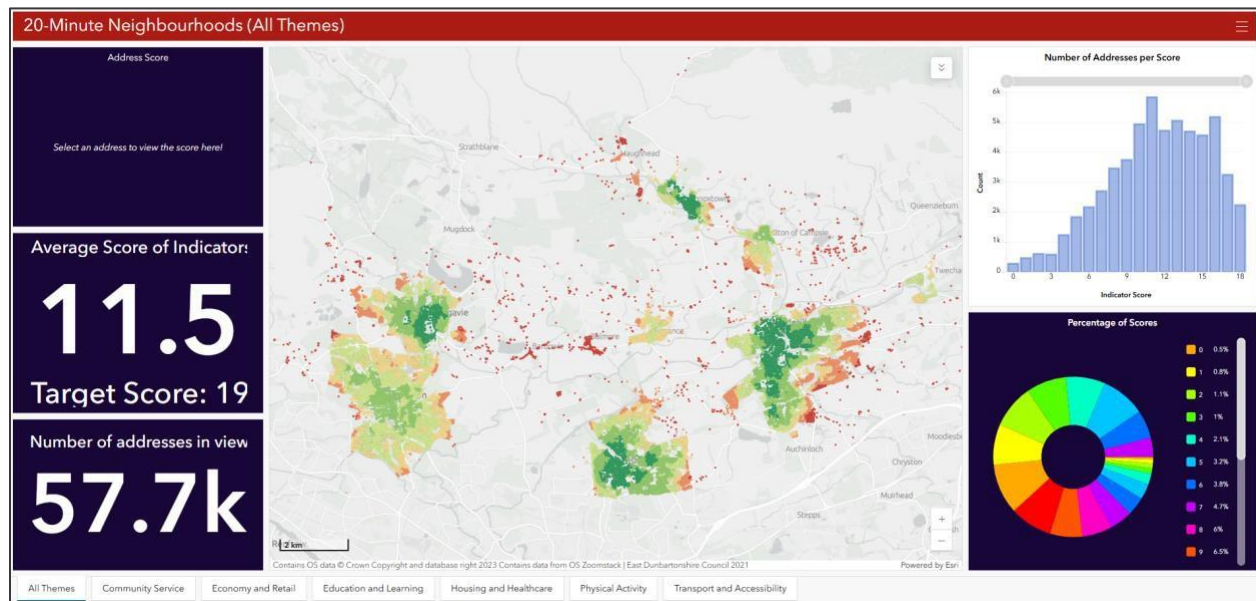




In addition to this, Arc GIS mapping has allowed for the creation of an area wide ‘dashboard’, in which every registered property in the area is assigned a score, based on the number of features under each theme that are considered walkable and within the parameters of the 20-minute neighbourhood principle. An example of this is shown overleaf, for the Housing and Healthcare theme (showing overall access to affordable housing, housing for older people, health centres, GP surgeries, pharmacies and dental services).



When looking at the whole of East Dunbartonshire, the dashboard allows us to identify those areas that are currently underperforming in terms of each theme, and which may need future intervention to improve the availability of relevant ‘daily needs.’ Similarly, the data for all six themes can be combined to provide an overall picture of current performance against 20-minute neighbourhood features. This is also shown in the form of an Arc GIS dashboard for the whole of East Dunbartonshire – see extract below:



This work, which commenced in 2022, is ongoing and will continue to be refined as part of developing a new Local Development Plan – LDP3 – for East Dunbartonshire.

## Areas of collaboration

The project was jointly led and undertaken by the Land Planning Policy and GIS teams. This included the collating and mapping of relevant data. Additional input was provided by other Council services such as Place and Community Planning, Assets and Facilities, Roads and Environment, Housing and Education, mainly in relation to data sharing and general feedback. We also collaborated with the Health and Social Care Partnership in relation to existing assets and locational data.

To aid this collaboration a cross-service 20-Minute Neighbourhoods Working Group was established, with the aim of establishing and agreeing an ‘East Dunbartonshire approach’ and developing the tool jointly. Through the Working Group, we were also able to share information and provide advice on its use and implementation.



## What was the overall result?

From a planning policy perspective, the mapping tool allows for effective implementation of NPF4 Policy 15, in regards to supporting the local living and 20-minute neighbourhood approach. In particular, it will allow for an accurate and evidenced analysis of 'local circumstances' to support the Place Principle, in line with the Policy Intent and Policy Outcomes of NPF4 Policy 15. This will be of particular benefit when assessing proposed development sites as part of the LDP3 site assessment exercise which forms part of the Proposed Plan preparation.

The tool will also be of value as part of the Development Applications process, when assessing the merits of relevant proposals and weighing up compliance with the local living and 20-minute neighbourhood principle. In addition, the tool may also help to inform the approach to developer contributions for certain proposals, by helping to identify priority needs and requirements within each local community.

Finally, the tool may also have a key role in aiding the preparation of Local Place Plans by local community groups or organisations. As part of the promotion of Local Place Plans and through early discussions with interested groups, the Council has made it clear that it will be made available for use by any interested party. For example, it could be used to help groups understand the particular needs and opportunities within their local area and this in turn could help to inform the overall vision for their Local Place Plan.

Overall, the mapping tool will help to significantly enhance our understanding of 'daily needs' for communities across the local authority, and it will also help to strengthen our linkages with organisations, groups and stakeholders through the Local Place Plan mechanism.

However, it must be stated that the scores and outputs of the tool are a guide and must be considered against other factors in the round.

## Lessons learned

### Successes

- The project has provided an ideal mechanism for the Council's Land Planning Policy team to collaborate with a wide range of other services on land use matters. In addition, it has been an opportunity to explain the importance of local living and accessibility to various stakeholders and explaining the role of planning in achieving this.
- The development of the tool has provided an opportunity to change perceptions of 20-minute neighbourhoods by outlining the background and ultimate aims of the policy approach.
- The project has reinforced our wider evidence base in relation to a wide range of land use issues and provided a platform for the spatial representation of valuable data.

### Challenges

- Given the nature of the data being collected, it will require regularly updating to ensure it remains accurate and robust. Given the large number of daily need features (across six separate themes), this is a significant task and could require a large amount of staff resources.
- The mapping of data can be quite technical and dependent on specialist GIS skills. Successful and efficient processing of the data therefore requires careful project management and prioritization of tasks.
- Data is not always available in an accessible format and it can be challenging to convert this into a format that is easily understood and compatible with ArcGIS.

### **Lessons Learned**

- Data is much more meaningful and accessible when mapped in a way that is familiar and relatable to people.
- Based on presentation of the maps at various information sessions, people are naturally drawn towards simple maps, however the evidence that sits behind the maps must be robust and stand up to scrutiny.
- It is important that the methodology of the tool is explained succinctly and in a way that people understand. Failure to do this will often result in a lack of confidence in using the tool and in some cases a lack of acceptance in recognising its value.
- On reflection, it would have been useful to have prepared a very succinct written guide on how the tool was developed, including a simple explanation of the mapping format and what it is showing. This may have avoided some confusion around the 'scoring' for certain features and within local community areas.

## What contribution will it aim to 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
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- ☐ Energy
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- ☒ Sustainable transport

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

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Contact/ Further details: [development.plan@eastdunbarton.gov.uk](mailto:development.plan@eastdunbarton.gov.uk)