



Evidence Report

December 2025



**LOCAL
DEVELOPMENT
PLAN**



North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

North Ayrshire’s third Local Development Plan

Contents

Introduction2

Evaluation of Adopted Local Development Plan5

Summary of Stakeholder Engagement11

Topic 1 - Liveable Places18

Topic 2 – Housing50

Topic 3 – Sustainable Places90

Topic 4 – Transport.....126

Topic 5 – Productive Places150

Topic 6 – Infrastructure174

Site Appraisal Methodology195

Position Statement.....200

Appendix 1 – Evidence Index.....204

Appendix 2 – Site Appraisal Matrix206

Evidence Report

Introduction

North Ayrshire Council, as the local planning authority for North Ayrshire, is preparing a new local development plan for the district. When adopted, the plan will become North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan (LDP3). It will replace the [Adopted Local Development Plan \(LDP2\)](#) [CD001], which was adopted in November 2019.

[Local development planning guidance](#) underlines that the planning system in Scotland is plan-led. This means decisions on planning applications are to be made in accordance with the development plan, unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise. The development plan for North Ayrshire comprises the local development plan and National Planning Framework, presently [National Planning Framework 4](#) (NPF4) [CD002].

LDP3 will be a new style plan. As part of wider planning reform, The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 makes significant changes to the development planning system and the way local development plans are to be prepared, with the aim of making them more effective, with greater community involvement and more focused on delivery. A statutory 'purpose of planning' has been introduced for development planning which is 'to manage the development and use of land in the public interest', defined as anything which contributes to sustainable development or achieves national outcomes.

This document represents the Evidence Report for LDP3 required under section 16B of the Town & Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended by the 2019 Act. A key change to the development planning system is that planning authorities must now prepare an Evidence Report prior to preparing their Proposed Local Development Plan. The purpose of the Evidence Report is to support the quality and effectiveness of the LDP. A robust evidence base will inform the process of plan making, justify the content of the plan and provide a baseline for future monitoring.

The legislative requirements and guidance on the form and content of Evidence Reports and what consultation and engagement should be undertaken are set out in the 1997 Act, The Town and Country Planning (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2023 and the [local development planning guidance](#).

Preparation of the Evidence Report

Preparation of our Evidence Report began in earnest in March 2023 with the launch of an online hub and survey – the 'Your Place' survey – aimed at gauging local people's views on the places they live, work, and visit in North Ayrshire. Alongside this early engagement, a detailed scoping exercise was undertaken to identify the matters to be addressed in the Evidence Report; the relevant baseline information needed for each issue, including where further evidence was needed; the stakeholders to be involved in collating and reviewing evidence; and all engagement

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

activity recently completed or underway in North Ayrshire relevant to the preparation of the local development plan.

Six [Place Profiles](#) [CD003 to CD008], one for each of North Ayrshire's localities (Arran, Garnock Valley, Irvine, Kilwinning, North Coast and Cumbraes and the Three Towns) have been prepared. These were published in November 2024. Updating and expanding previous profiles prepared by the North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership in 2017, the profiles summarise the main social, cultural, environmental and economic features of each area organised in line with the three key themes of NPF4, namely the planning and delivery of places that are sustainable, liveable and productive. Alongside the facts and figures presented, the profiles also highlight community opinions and priorities gathered through a range of engagement activities.

Evidence Papers were then prepared on the topics of [housing](#) [CD076], [environment](#) [CD109] and [transport](#) [CD166] to support preparation of and engagement on the Evidence Report, particularly with key agencies. The Environment Evidence Paper incorporates the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Scoping Report.

For the avoidance of doubt, the Place Profiles and Evidence Papers do not form part the Evidence Report but collate much of the evidence that underpins this report and will inform the preparation of the Proposed Plan. This Evidence Report does not contain all the detail of the evidence, including engagement. Instead, it aims to summarise the evidence with an emphasis on what it means for the plan. Further detail on the engagement undertaken in support of the preparation of this Evidence Report and how it has been taken into account is included within the Record of Engagement [CD009].

Structure of the Evidence Report

The evidence presented within the Evidence Report is structured into six topic-based schedules:

- Topic 1 – Liveable Places
- Topic 2 – Housing
- Topic 3 – Sustainable Places
- Topic 4 – Transport
- Topic 5 – Productive Places
- Topic 6 – Infrastructure

Appendix 1 sets out how evidence relating to the policies of the NPF4 has been incorporated into the Evidence Report.

Each schedule adopts the headings set out in the template for presenting information on issues in the Evidence Report included in the [local development planning guidance](#) (Figure 7), with the links to evidence moved to the end of each schedule.

Additionally, the Evidence Report includes an evaluation of LDP2; summary of the engagement undertaken in the preparation of the Evidence Report and overview of the site appraisal methodology. A Position Statement is provided to assist with the

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Gate Check, as recommended by the Planning and Environmental Appeals Division (DEPA), summarising the main areas where the evidence is disputed or uncertain.

Gate Check

Section 16B(5) and (6) of the Act require the Evidence Report to be approved by the full Council before it is submitted to Scottish Ministers. Upon submission, Scottish Ministers are to appoint a person to assess whether the report contains sufficient information to enable the planning authority to prepare a local development plan. This process is known as a 'Gate Check'.

The Evidence Report was considered and approved by North Ayrshire Council at the Local Development Plan Committee on 9 December 2025 [CD010 and CD011]. With cognisance of Section 16B(6) of the Act, which states that Section 56 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (arrangements for discharge of functions by local authorities) does not apply to the function of approving a proposed evidence report, the Local Development Plan Committee satisfies the requirement that the Evidence Report be approved by the full Council as all Elected Members are members of this committee.

Evaluation of Adopted Local Development Plan

North Ayrshire's current [Adopted Local Development Plan](#) (LDP2) [CD001] was adopted on 28 November 2019.

Paragraph 93 of the [local development planning guidance](#) states, as part of the preparation of the Evidence Report, the planning authority should evaluate whether the previous plan has delivered on its outcomes, and allocations, identify any lessons learnt for the preparation of the new plan and consider the appropriateness of the previous spatial strategy.

A Draft Delivery Programme [CD012] has been prepared alongside the Evidence Report and assists in the evaluation of LDP2. The Draft Delivery Programme sets out how the Council has progressed the implementation of LDP2 and identifies the further actions to be undertaken to deliver the policies, proposals, and site allocations of the Plan. It updates the previous [Action Programme](#) [CD013], which was published in February 2020. Changes to legalisation requires planning authorities to update their Action Programmes, redesign them and publish them as Delivery Programmes.

Spatial Strategy and Placemaking

LDP2's Spatial Strategy (Strategic Policy 1) is one of four strategic policies set out in the local development plan which, in turn, are supported by detailed policies and schedules of our housing sites, regeneration opportunities and employment locations.

The spatial strategy is the overarching policy for supporting the 2017 to 2022 Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) and North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership vision that every person in North Ayrshire is valued and should have the best opportunities to live their life to their full potential. The vision of 'North Ayrshire – A better life' looks forward 20 years to a North Ayrshire that is healthier, working, thriving and safer. Embedding our Locality Planning Partnership priorities within the plan and decision-making (Strategic Policy 4) further strengthens the links between LDP2 and North Ayrshire's communities.

LDP2's spatial strategy directs development to towns and villages to support our communities, economy and environment, while recognising the value that our countryside and coastal areas offer – both as natural resources and as an economic driver. Strategic Policy 1 includes objectives and policies for how development can enhance and protect our towns and villages, countryside and coast.

Overall, the spatial strategy has been successful in directing most development to within our towns and villages. No large-scale (more than four homes) housing developments have taken place outside of our towns and villages since LDP2 was adopted; retail development has been restricted outwith town centres; the regeneration of vacant and derelict land, including at Montgomerie Park, Ardrossan North Shore and Lochshore has been supported and the policy has provided more flexibility in supporting small scale developments on the Isles of Arran and Cumbrae.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

The supporting development objective concerns the capacity of infrastructure and services. The spatial strategy expects the majority of development to be directed towards sites that have infrastructure or services in place and the plan supports developments where there is sufficient public infrastructure, public services and where environmental impacts have been minimised. Only one development site has required a developer contribution to be made, in relation to education capacity. Developer contributions, including for affordable housing and open space are not required by the plan.

Strategic Development Areas

LDP2 identifies eight Strategic Development Areas. These locations are anticipated to be major areas of change within North Ayrshire and form Strategic Policy 3 of the plan. Delivery across the eight locations is varied; some are complete or within the development phase while others have seen limited progress.

Hunterston

In December 2021, a development framework for Hunterston PARC was approved by the Planning Committee and a Natural Capital Assessment has been undertaken to support development that enhances the biodiversity of the area. The site at Hunterston has been subject to several planning applications and investment interest, including for a high voltage undersea cable manufacturing facility; land-based aquaculture facility (RAS); and energy projects. No significant development across the wider site, incorporating the Hunterston Estate (referred to in LDP2 as 'Marketable Employment Land') and the Hunterston Nuclear sites has commenced to date. The 'Hunterston Strategic Asset' is now identified as a National Development by NPF4.

Ardrossan Cultural Quarter

Remediation of the site has been completed, along with a new coastal path supporting active travel. Construction of a new community campus incorporating a relocated Ardrossan Academy and Winton Primary, early years class, a six-lane swimming pool, library and health and social care accommodation commenced in July 2025.

Limited progress has been made on the significant infrastructure improvements required at Ardrossan Harbour to provide improved service reliability and resilience for Arran's lifeline ferry service. The Ardrossan Harbour Task Force continues to progress this project (see Topic 4 – Transport).

i3, Irvine

A Digital Process Manufacturing Centre (DPMC), to support companies' transition to digital manufacturing processes to improve productivity, efficiency and competitiveness and reduce carbon emissions, has been delivered alongside a flexible advanced manufacturing unit, increasing the provision of modern, energy efficient industrial floorspace at i3.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

A significant investment in the development of an AI data centre at i3 was announced in September 2025. i3 will become a 1 Gigawatt site and is expected to scale into one of the largest AI infrastructure hubs in Europe, with the future potential to expand to 1.5 Gigawatt.

Harbourside, Irvine

LDP2 supports the development of a 'Maritime Mile' at Irvine Harbourside, making use of the area's unique location, heritage and environment to promote new residential, commercial, leisure and tourism facilities. Detailed proposals have emerged via the Ayrshire Growth Deal 'The Great Harbour' project, a tourism-led regeneration, place making and destination development project.

The Great Harbour Masterplan was approved by the Council's Planning Committee in April 2024 and is a key step in the delivery of the Strategic Development Area. The Masterplan expands on the 'Maritime Mile' concept, incorporating three activity hubs: coastal, marine and creative arts and maritime heritage. Phase 1, the coastal hub, is in the delivery phase and includes a new outdoor play hub, currently under construction.

Montgomerie Park, Irvine

The Montgomerie Park Simplified Planning Zone (SPZ) was formally adopted in November 2019 and Bellway Homes are now on site and have commenced development of 146 homes. Remaining private sector housing phases are consented and will deliver a further 255 homes and the Council is developing plans to build 188 affordable homes on the site.

A new primary school opened in August 2024 and the site to the north of the school is consented for a neighbourhood retail opportunity.

Kilbirnie

The Lochshore Concept Masterplan was adopted by the Council in 2020. The Lochshore Park Hub, a sports and community space, was completed in 2022 alongside a regional play space and active travel route. Over 17,000 trees have also been planted, including a 2,400-tree community woodland.

Brodick Harbour

The new Brodick Ferry Terminal on the Isle of Arran officially opened on April 13, 2018. The £30 million investment transformed the harbour, delivering a new two-berth pier and a modern two-story terminal building with a departure lounge, ticket office, and other facilities. No further significant development has taken place within the Arran Gateway or Market Road areas.

Millport

The Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) for Millport was completed in March 2022. The scheme helped works to enhance numerous historic buildings with a total spend of approx. £2 million. The Millport Coastal Flood Prevention Scheme

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

became operative on 13 January 2021. The site works started in Spring 2023 with the offshore and onshore elements completed in October 2024.

Housing Delivery

A key focus of LDP2 is to stimulate the housing market in North Ayrshire in support of Council and Community Planning Partnership ambitions for population growth. We consider that LDP2 has delivered on this outcome.

We worked closely with industry body, Homes for Scotland, developers, and local communities to allocate additional effective housing sites, backed by builders with a track record, with the expectation that this could have a transformational impact on the housing sector by stimulating demand and demonstrating that land values and sales rates in the region could prove viable, and thereby promote other interests. Five additional housing sites were allocated by the LDP following this approach and form Schedule 2a of the plan.

LDP2 established a Housing Supply Target (HST) of 4,071 for the period 2019 to 2029. Completion data plus programming information for the plan period anticipates that 4,293 units will be delivered in total, exceeding the HST by 222 homes. Around 39 percent of these homes (over 1,600) are expected to be delivered by the social sector. Further detail on the performance of LDP2 in respect of housing delivery is set out under Topic 2 – Housing, 'Performance of LDP2'.

Delivery has been achieved on allocated sites (LDP2, Schedule 2a), housing supply sites (Schedules 2b and 3), regeneration opportunities (Schedule 4) and windfall sites. The Draft Delivery Programme notes the progress of all sites included in LDP2, with associated actions for those where there has been no development.

Detailed Policies

The overarching Strategic Policies are supported by detailed policies which are split into four chapters relating to a successful and sustainable; natural resilient; connected and low carbon North Ayrshire. The Draft Delivery Programme outlines the progress in delivering these policies, actions and indicators related to implementing these policies.

Implications for the Proposed Plan

Overall, it is considered that LDP2's spatial strategy remains appropriate. The adopted plan has directed most development to our towns, villages and developed coastline where we have infrastructure capacity to support new development, where there is access to existing services and where we have opportunities to re-use and redevelop brownfield land. A more flexible approach has been adopted for our island and rural communities, to promote a sustainable pattern of development that also empowers our rural economy and communities to develop and thrive, while protecting important natural assets.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

LDP2 has delivered on the outcome of housing delivery, particularly within the private sector, stimulating an increase in private sector housebuilders developing and interested in developing new homes in North Ayrshire.

National Planning Framework 4 was adopted by Scottish Ministers on 13 February 2023 and became part of the development plan for North Ayrshire. NPF4 and LDP2 have operated alongside each other for over two years with limited conflict arising, supporting the view that there is strong alignment between the policies of the respective plans.

The following implications for the Proposed Plan, based on the evaluation of the adopted local development plan and consideration of lessons learnt for the preparation of the new plan, are identified:

- The overall spatial strategy for the Proposed Plan must take cognisance of the spatial principles and importance given to the twin climate and biodiversity crises by NPF4. This will influence where and how new development should take place over the LDP3 plan period, with a stronger focus on making productive use of existing buildings, places, infrastructure and services; limiting urban expansion and local living that improves community health and wellbeing.
- A new Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) [CD014] has been agreed by the North Ayrshire Locality Planning Partnership since the preparation of LDP2 and community priorities may have evolved, particularly in the context of the intervening coronavirus pandemic and cost of living crisis. LDP3 should strengthen the strong alignment between spatial and community planning demonstrated by LDP2 to support the delivery of the LOIP vision.
- Most – but not all – of the Strategic Development Areas identified by LDP2 remain the key areas of focus in North Ayrshire. In some cases, projects have evolved, including Ayrshire Growth Deal projects as they have progressed through Outline and Strategic Business Case stages. The Proposed Plan should consider current proposals for these areas, including agreed Masterplans and Development Frameworks, to shape how these places and others identified as significant will change over the LDP3 plan period.
- [Local development planning guidance](#) expects new-style LDPs to be place-based, visual plans with the inclusion of a clear spatial strategy reflected more in a collection of maps, development briefs and masterplans than in lengthy written text and policy [para. 24]. This has implications for the format of LDP3, which is likely to be much different to the adopted plan. Consideration must be given to the need for 'local' policy guidance to support the implementation and application of NPF4's national planning policies.
- Not all the sites allocated in LDP2 for development have come forward during the anticipated timeframe, or at all. The Draft Delivery Programme [CD012] highlights the site allocations where no development has taken place. In

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

preparing the Proposed Plan, consideration must be given to the appropriate future use of these sites, rather than simply continuing these allocations into the new plan.

- Related, the deliverability of the proposals and site allocations included within the Proposed Plan should be established, with specific actions incorporated into the Delivery Programme. Compared to LDP2, the new plan would benefit from providing more detail on the requirements for specific development sites, including any developer contributions where justified, to achieve social, environmental and economic objectives.

Summary of Stakeholder Engagement

Local development plans seek to bring together many different sectors and interests to achieve the desired change for people and places. Accordingly, and in line with the Place Principle and aspirations for greater community involvement in plan making which underpin the latest reforms to the planning system, stakeholder engagement and the views of local communities are integral to the process of preparing LDP3.

Alongside being place-based and delivery-focused, new-style local development plans are expected to be people-centred. This means considering how LDP3 can best meet the needs and aspirations of the different people who have an interest in North Ayrshire; address longstanding inequalities and eliminating discrimination; implement community wealth building; and undertaking early, collaborative, meaningful and proportionate engagement, with all views taken into account.

The engagement undertaken in the preparation of the Evidence Report has taken many forms, including online surveys, public drop-in events, presentations to community bodies and meetings with key agencies. Engagement carried out by the Council's Planning Service directly, referred to below as 'primary engagement' is complemented by the outputs from engagement activities undertaken by other Council departments, community planning partners and community bodies.

Our approach to considering 'secondary engagement' activities recognises the multi-faceted nature of 'place' and that the views of communities on local issues, their needs, aspirations and priorities can be expressed in response to different engagements, not just in relation to development planning. It also seeks to counter issues of 'consultation fatigue', where communities and individuals become weary, disinterested, and distrustful when over-consulted or poorly consulted, often leading to low participation, cynicism, and backlash.

A summary of all engagement activities is provided below, with relevant outputs and how these has been taken into account noted within the six topic-based schedules. A more detailed overview of the engagement undertaken to date is set out in the Record of Engagement [CD009].

Requirements of the Act

Section 16B(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended, requires the planning authority to seek the views of particular groups of people, and have regard to those views when preparing the Evidence Report. These groups are:

- the public at large
- children and young people
- key agencies (defined by regulation 25 of the 2023 Regulations)

In accordance with Section 16B(4), a statement on how the planning authority has sought particular stakeholders' views, and how these views are taken into account in the report, is required to be provided within the Evidence Report. These groups are:

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

- the public at large
- children and young people
- disabled people
- Gypsies and Travellers (defined by regulation 4 of the 2023 Regulations)
- Community Councils

The Evidence Report must also set out how the authority have invited local communities to prepare Local Place Plans, and what assistance they have provided.

Primary Engagement

LDP3 Commonplace platform

To support the preparation of LDP3 we have used the online platform 'Commonplace'. The web-based service acts as a hub, containing updates, engagement opportunities and documents related to the LDP process. Since the beginning of the project, the website has attracted over 9,000 views with over 450 contributions and has 390 subscribers who are notified when something is posted on the platform.

See: [Have Your Say Today - North Ayrshire's Third Local Development Plan - Commonplace](#)

'Your Place' Survey

Our early engagement centred around the 'Your Place' survey. This was a predominantly online survey using the same themes as the Place Standard Tool, providing a well-established process of enabling discussion and a framework for learning what stakeholders felt about their place. Several meetings, presentations and drop in events were held to promote the survey, alongside social media posts. The survey was live from April 2023 until December 2024. A total of 253 responses were received to the 'Your Place' survey, including young persons (aged 13 to 17) and children's versions.

Place Profile Engagement

The second key stage of our engagement with local communities was around the Place Profiles. Views were specifically sought on the content of the profiles, any evidence gaps and the main priorities for each locality. To support this process, we hosted 11 drop-in events during October and November 2024 across North Ayrshire.

A cumulative total of over 250 individuals attended these events, to share their views or to hear more about the LDP process.

Evidence Papers

Engagement with key agencies has focused on the preparation of three Evidence Papers – on housing, environment and transport. The housing and environment papers were also published in March 2025 for wider stakeholder comment.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

As a more technical document, we did not publish the Transport Evidence Paper but stakeholder engagement was undertaken in the preparation of the paper, which also takes into account engagement carried out to inform the Council's Local Transport and Active Travel Strategy.

Play Sufficiency Assessment

Consultation was a significant part of the Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) process. The Planning Service liaised with the Council's Youth Participation Officer to make sure that the team reached as many young people as possible and, in total, more than 1,300 views helped inform the assessment. More information is contained within the PSA consultation report [CD033].

Local Landscape Designation Study

The Council commissioned a study to review North Ayrshire's locally designated landscapes in 2023. Community engagement workshops were held in April, May and June 2023 in Brodick, Largs, Kilbirnie and Millport on Great Cumbrae. Additional consultation comments were received from online questionnaires. A detailed breakdown of comments gathered can be found in Appendix B of the [Local Landscape Designation Evaluation Report](#) [CD127].

Retail Capacity Study

As part of a Retail Capacity Study, a telephone survey was undertaken in December 2023 to understand how people shop and access food and leisure in North Ayrshire. The survey returned 1,000 responses and asked questions such as where people liked to shop and what for. The survey also asked what their experience was like shopping where they shop. A detailed assessment of what was said in response to the surveys can be found in the [Retail Capacity Study](#) at Appendix B [CD069].

Draft Evidence Report

A full draft of the Evidence Report was shared with key agencies at the start of November 2025 for final comment. Prior to this, a draft of the Sustainable Places schedule was shared with Historic Environment Scotland, NatureScot and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and a draft of the Transport schedule was shared with Transport Scotland as part of a collaborative approach to developing the Evidence Report.

Homes for Scotland were also afforded the opportunity to comment on the Draft Evidence Report, having previously reviewed the Housing and Environment Topic Papers.

Secondary Engagement

Local Place Plans

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 introduced a new right for communities to produce Local Place Plans (LPPs): community-led plans setting out proposals for the development and use of land and buildings. The aim of LPPs is to enhance

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

engagement in development planning by empowering communities to play a proactive role in defining the future of their places.

We invited local communities to prepare Local Place Plans formally through the publication of an 'Invitation to prepare a local place plan' [CD015], as required by Section 15A(a) of the Act. The invitation was published on 19 May 2023 on the [Council's website](#) and shared with all active community councils and sent to other community bodies via the Community Planning Partnership.

In the first instance, Sunday 30 June 2024 was intimated as the deadline for submitting local place plans in order to be taken into account in the preparation of LDP3. This was informally extended to the end of 2025, reflecting a change in the timetable for preparing LDP3 and to enable all community bodies who intimated they wished to prepare an LPP to submit one.

A Draft Handbook [CD016] was prepared to support community bodies in deciding whether to prepare a Local Place Plan, explain the process and set out the assistance available to help them prepare an LPP. We have taken a pragmatic and personal approach to supporting community bodies to prepare Local Place Plans, working closely with them throughout the process to provide advice and practical and technical assistance where required.

To date, six Local Place Plans have been registered in North Ayrshire [CD17 to CD027], with a further one expected to be submitted before the end of 2025. Together, these Local Place Plans will cover nine of the thirteen areas in North Ayrshire where there is an active Community Council. Beyond the statutory requirement to take account of registered local place plans when preparing LDP3, these plans and the community engagement that has informed them contributes to developing a shared understanding of a place as the basis for placemaking.

See [Local Place Plan Register](#)

Place Frameworks

In 2022, the Council's Regeneration Service commissioned three 'Place Frameworks' – plans for Kilwinning, Largs and Saltcoats that identify priority issues and bring together actions and initiatives to improve these three towns. Adopting a place-based approach, the plans draw upon extensive community and stakeholder engagement involving local residents, businesses, community organisations and relevant departments from across North Ayrshire Council.

The plans [CD028, CD029 and CD030] were approved by the relevant Locality Planning Partnerships in March 2024.

Local Island Plans

In March 2022, ten-year local island plans for [Arran](#) [CD031] and [Cumbrae](#) [CD032] were published. These plans were developed with, and for, the island communities to drive the development of community, economic and environmental wellbeing of Arran and Cumbrae as part of an 'islands recovery and renewal' pilot, a partnership

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

between North Ayrshire Council, Scottish Government and Highland and Islands Enterprise.

The plans have been informed by short, focused engagement exercises to assess perceptions of how, and if, COVID-19 had changed the priorities for the islands.

Irvine Neighbourhood Board

Irvine is one of nine Scottish towns to be awarded £20 million as part of the UK Government Plan for Neighbourhoods. This funding is phased over 10 years, to fund regeneration and deliver new major improvements within the town. The Irvine Neighbourhood Board is undertaking community engagement to inform a long-term plan.

Community and Locality Planning

The Place Standard Tool has been used by the North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership and Locality Partnerships to identify local priorities.

People's Panel

The North Ayrshire People's Panel is a survey overseen by the Community Planning Partnership of 2000 local residents who have agreed to answer questions and provide their views on the areas in which they live. Focus groups for eight to twelve people in each locality are also held, to find out a bit more about their views.

The Partnership uses this information to decide what action to take on the issues that local residents tell us need to be improved. The most recent survey of the People's Panel was undertaken in 2024.

North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership engagement

The North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership (NAHSCP) have engaged with around 2,900 service users and professionals across 47 events, incorporating focus groups, surveys, workshops, and locality-based conversations between January 2023 and December 2024. With the main purpose of informing its new Strategic Plan, this engagement supports our understanding of the health needs of the population.

Statement of Engagement

The following section sets out how we have sought the views of stakeholders listed at Section 16B(4) of the Act, and how these views have been taken into account in the report.

Public at Large

The primary means of engaging with the 'public at large' in North Ayrshire has been via the 'Your Place' Survey and the Place Profiles. These have been promoted via the online hub and mailing list, social media and via the community planning partners, including Community Councils.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Acknowledging the limitations of the Planning Service's resources and reach, concerns around 'consultation fatigue' and value of related 'place-based' community consultation which has taken place in North Ayrshire, the outputs from a range of related engagement activities have also been incorporated within the Evidence Report.

This engagement approach has provided important qualitative evidence on the lived experience of those who live and work in places in North Ayrshire, providing information on people's aspirations for their area and the type of issues they may wish the LDP to address. Issues raised include the delivery of affordable housing and housing to meet the needs of a population which is growing older; supporting fragile island communities; access to health care services and public transport. These priorities are reflected in the discussion of implications for the Proposed Plan under each topic.

Children and young people

North Ayrshire has a well-established [Youth Participation and Citizenship Strategy](#) [CD034] which sets out how young people across North Ayrshire can play an active role in their schools and communities. A range of platforms exist to ensure young people's voices are heard, actioned and respected in North Ayrshire, including Joint Cabinet, Youth Council and Youth Forums.

We have supported children and young people to complete age-appropriate versions of the Place Standard, including at these events during the early stages of Evidence Report preparation in 2023. We have also engaged directly with children and young people in the preparation of the Play Sufficiency Assessment.

The Garnock Valley Youth Forum are one of the seven community group members of the working group that has prepared the [Garnock Valley Local Place Plan](#) [CD027], and the views of children and young people have also informed the [Cumbrae Local Place Plan](#) [CD023], [Cumbrae](#) and [Arran](#) Local Island Plans [CD031 and CD032] and Place Frameworks for [Kilwinning](#), [Largs](#) and [Saltcoats](#) [CD028, CD029 and CD030].

Engagement with children and young people has underlined the importance of climate change to the younger generation in North Ayrshire. Commonly expressed aspirations largely focus on the provision of spaces and facilities for leisure, sport and recreation. These are important components of what makes 'liveable places' and is reflected under Topic 1.

Disabled people

The Planning Service has connected with forums and groups that are aimed to support equal opportunities for those living with disabilities. One example is the Council's own Disability Access Forum. As one of the biggest employers in North Ayrshire, and one of the few employers that has staff working in every locality, the forum is considered a good sounding board for the views of disabled people living in North Ayrshire.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Gypsies and Travellers

There is one Gypsy/Traveller site in North Ayrshire at Redburn Grove, Irvine which is managed by the Council. The Planning Service have been liaising with the Gypsy/Traveller community via the Council's Tenant Participation Team, including directly supporting the Redburn Grove Tenants Group to undertake the Place Standard as the basis of engagement with Gypsy/Travellers in the area.

The Tenant Participation Team provide support to – and engage regularly with – the residents of Redburn Grove, including in relation to facilities at Redburn. Through this engagement we understand that Redburn Grove is their preferred housing solution and that there is sufficient accommodation for Gypsy/Travellers in North Ayrshire. Work is ongoing to improve the Redburn site, taking account of the needs and aspirations of the residents.

Community Councils

There are currently 13 active community councils in North Ayrshire. We have been in regular contact with active community councils throughout the process of preparing the Evidence Report and in relation to the invitation to prepare a Local Place Plan, providing updates and offers of support to engage in the process. We have attended 17 Community Council meetings since 2021; provided three community council training sessions and information sessions for locality planning partnerships on the LDP3 process, opportunities to engage and the role of Local Place Plans.

Eight of our community councils have progressed Local Place Plans; we consider these to be excellent ways of understanding the views of community councils and the wider communities they represent. A detailed assessment of submitted registered Local Place Plans has been undertaken and has informed the Evidence Report by highlighting the aspirations for local areas and the issues communities would like the LDP to address.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Topic 1 - Liveable Places

Place is where people, location and resources combine to create a sense of identity and purpose. North Ayrshire is a place, as are the localities, towns, villages, islands, streets, parks and landscapes within it. Places matter to people and influence our wellbeing, productivity and impact on the environment – and the impact of the environment on us.

Place-based approaches, underpinned by the Place Principle, consider all the physical, social and economic elements of a place collectively to support and enhance the potential of the people, physical and natural assets within that place. Understanding the issues, interconnections and relationships relating to a place and co-ordinating action to improve outcomes define place-based approaches. In collating and analysing relevant evidence and the views of communities, key agencies and other stakeholders, the Evidence Report plays a central role in taking a place-based approach to the preparation of LDP3.

Alongside sustainable (Topics 3 and 4) and productive (Topics 5 and 6) places, the [National Planning Framework](#) (NPF4) [CD002] aims to support the planning and delivery of liveable places where we can all live better, healthier lives. This chapter summarises the evidence and relevant stakeholder engagement that help us understand the social elements of North Ayrshire as a place, primarily focusing on its people. Evidence relating to the following NPF4 policies is specifically considered:

- 14. Design, quality and place
- 15. Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods
- 21. Play, recreation and sport
- 23. Health and safety

Information required by the Act and Regulations

Section 15 of the Planning Act concerns the form and content of local development plans. Subsection 1(a) requires the local development plan to take account of matters mentioned in subsection (5), including:

- the principal physical, cultural, economic, and social, built heritage and environmental characteristics of the district,
- the size, composition, health and distribution of the population of the district,
- the health needs of the population of the district,
- the extent to which there are rural areas within the district in relation to which there has been a substantial decline in population.

Section 16B of the Planning Act relates to the evidence report. As per subsection (3), the evidence report is to set out the planning authority's view on the matters listed in section 15(5), referred to above.

Sections 15(2A) and (2B) require a statement of the planning authority's policies and proposals as to the provision of public conveniences and water refill locations respectively to be included in the local development plan.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Section 16D requires the planning authority to assess the sufficiency of play opportunities in its area for children in preparing an evidence report. The Town and Country Planning (Play Sufficiency Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations set out the form and content of the Play Sufficiency Assessment and the persons who must be consulted in its preparation.

The Town and Country Planning (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2023 (the 2023 Regulations) provide additional detail to the requirements set out in primary legislation. Regulation 9 sets out further information and considerations to which the planning authority are to have regard to in preparing a local development plan. Included within this list is the requirement to have regard to the location of Control of Major Accident Hazard establishments and pipelines.

Summary of Evidence

Policy Context

The [Place Principle](#) is the overarching context for place-based working in Scotland. Recent policy changes around empowerment, community planning and public service reform, alongside the complex challenges of the climate emergency and public health, have given a renewed energy and focus on the approach and closer alignment with the planning system.

The principle recognises that places are shaped by the way resources, services and assets are directed and used by the people who live and invest in them; that places are at the heart of addressing the needs and realising the full potential of communities; and that a more joined-up, collaborative, and participative approach to services, land and buildings, across all sectors within a place, enables better outcomes for everyone with increased opportunities for people and communities to shape their own lives. The Place Principle asks all those responsible for providing services and looking after assets in a place need to work and plan together, and with local communities, to improve the lives of people, support inclusive and sustainable economic growth and create more successful places.

Placemaking is a place-based approach which has a specific focus on creating good quality places that promote people's health, happiness and wellbeing. It concerns the environment in which we live; the people that inhabit these spaces; and the quality of life that comes from the interaction of people and their surroundings. Placemaking is a collaborative approach involving the design and development of places over time, with people and communities central to the process.

Development planning has a key role in placemaking. The [local development planning guidance](#) expects LDPs to be people-centred: putting people and communities first; meeting people's needs and aspirations; tackling inequalities and prepared collaboratively. The guidance states development planning has a leadership role to play in putting place-based approaches and the Place Principle into practice.

Scotland's Population Health Framework

In June 2025, the Scottish Government published [Scotland's Population Health Framework](#) [CD035], setting out Scottish Government's and COSLA's approach to

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

improving health and reducing inequalities over the next ten years. It highlights the intersecting challenges of stalling life expectancies, the legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic, widening inequalities, demographic trends, public sector financial pressures, and the climate crisis and advocates for a renewed emphasis on prevention. Places and communities are identified as one of the five interconnected drivers of health and wellbeing, with a focus on how health and wellbeing considerations can be embedded into the development and delivery of Local Development Plans, described as 'key to improving health outcomes'.

Figure 1 – Five prevention drivers of health and wellbeing (Scotland's Population Health Framework)



National Planning Framework 4

NPF4 has a place-focus, establishing a national spatial strategy to support the planning and delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places, acknowledging that the diverse character, assets and challenges of places across Scotland mean the strategy will be taken forward in different ways in different places.

A range of factors – from past industrial restructuring to the more recent coronavirus pandemic and cost crisis – have created a social legacy of disadvantage, child poverty and poor health outcomes in some areas of Scotland. NPF4 recognises that people living in Scotland have very different life chances, at least partly as a result of the places where they live.

In establishing spatial principles, a national spatial strategy and planning policies to support the planning and delivery of liveable places, NPF4 aims to significantly improve our places, address longstanding inequality and eliminate discrimination;

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

creating future places with homes and neighbourhoods that are healthier, affordable and vibrant places to live.

Our places can only work for everyone if the views of all users are properly understood. Ensuring a fair and inclusive planning system is a cross-cutting theme of NPF4, with the expectation that a wide range of people are involved in shaping their future places. The national spatial strategy and policies set out in NPF4 support development that helps to eliminate discrimination and promote equality. The national spatial strategy is clear that future development must support a just transition, and it highlights opportunities for development and regeneration that is designed to tackle social, economic and health inequalities.

Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 requires Community Planning Partnerships (CPP) to prepare and publish a local outcomes improvement plan which sets out the local outcomes the CPP will prioritise for improvement; tackling inequalities is a specific focus for all local outcomes improvement plans.

[The North Ayrshire Partnership Plan](#) [CD014] is North Ayrshire's Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP). It was agreed by the Community Planning Board on 3 March 2022 and covers the period 2022 to 2030. The Plan and Community Planning Partnership share a vision of 'North Ayrshire – Fair for All'.

The development of the North Ayrshire Partnership Plan takes account of what a [strategic needs assessment](#) [CD036] tells us about North Ayrshire, partner resource and expertise, as well as [public feedback](#) [CD037]. The plan has three key themes:

- Wellbeing – We will address inequalities. We will promote children and young people's wellbeing. We will enable community wellbeing.
- Work – We will increase employment. We will develop volunteering. We will better support our young people.
- World – We will work together to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate the impacts of climate change. We will increase active travel. We will increase carbon literacy within our organisations and communities.

Locality planning was also introduced by the Community Empowerment Act. North Ayrshire is organised into six localities, each with its own Locality Partnership: Arran, Garnock Valley, Irvine, Kilwinning, North Coast and Three Towns.

The six Locality Planning Partnerships have decided on local priorities based on information gathered about their own local areas. This includes national data, local statistics and the views of local people through the People's Panel survey and by using the Place Standard Tool to identify needs. The Arran Locality Partnership have decided to adopt the themes of the [Isle of Arran Local Island Plan](#) [CD031], following an extensive public engagement exercise. This ensures that the development of the Arran Island Plan and the work of the Locality Partnership align.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Table 1 – North Ayrshire Locality Priorities and Locality Action Plans

Locality Action Plan	Priorities
Arran [CD031]	• Community • Economy • Environment
Garnock Valley [CD038]	• Moving around (public transport, traffic and parking) • Work and local community • Facilities and amenities
Irvine [CD039]	• Supporting skills and work opportunities • Enhancing our mental health and wellbeing • Alleviating poverty • Championing green heath and the natural environment
Kilwinning [CD040]	• Supporting skills and work • Improving our local environment • Alleviating poverty and promoting equality of access to opportunities • Improving Community Wellbeing
North Coast [CD041]	• Improving access to financial services • Increasing social inclusion • Improving mental wellbeing • Supporting skills and work opportunities
Three Towns [CD042]	• Promoting the local economy and tourism • Regenerating community facilities • Increasing civic pride and community engagement • Improving community wellbeing

These locality priorities underpin the Locality Plans for each locality. These plans are updated annually and adopt a primarily action-focused format, setting out specific tasks aligned to locality and LOIP priorities.

Council Plan

[Our Council Plan 2023 to 2028](#) [CD043] is a five-year plan to deliver the aim of 'A North Ayrshire that is fair for all'. Four interlinked and interdependent priorities are identified:

- Wellbeing: a transition to a wellbeing economy, delivering prosperity, wellbeing and resilience to local people.
- Communities and Local Democracy: active, inclusive and resilient communities.
- Climate Change: achieving net zero by 2030.
- A Sustainable Council: a Community Wealth Building Council that is efficient and accessible, maximising investment and focusing resources on our priorities.

The plan was created, and will be delivered, in partnership with local communities. Placemaking is identified as a key activity to support the strategic aim to have active, inclusive and resilient communities and the strong focus on working together to

North Ayrshire’s third Local Development Plan

improve the lives of our people reflects a commitment to place-based working in North Ayrshire.

To inform and support the monitoring of the plan, the Council has developed a Wellbeing Economy Dashboard [CD044] which brings together a suite of socio-economic indicators to aid understanding of inclusive growth trends across North Ayrshire. The dashboard tracks data across five wellbeing domains: demographic indicators; climate; early years and education; economy and community.

Place and Wellbeing Outcomes

In response to reducing healthy life expectancy, the climate crisis, inequalities and increasing demand for services at a time of reduced funding and budget cuts, representatives from Public Health Scotland, Directors of Public Health, Heads of Planning Scotland, COSLA, the Health Improvement Managers Network and the Improvement Service have developed [Place and Wellbeing Outcomes](#).

As a key component of a place-based approach, the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes aim to support decision-making and implementation to focus on a common set of evidenced features that will enable each place to have a positive impact on the wellbeing of people and planet while reducing inequality. Incorporating evidence about the determinants of health and wellbeing in Scotland’s places, the resulting Place and Wellbeing Outcomes fall into five overarching themes of Movement, Spaces, Resources, Civic and Stewardship. They complement the Place Standard Tool, used to provide a structure for a comprehensive, considered conversation about a place between stakeholders, to provide a consistent and comprehensive set of outcomes for all stakeholders to take collaborative action on delivering in every place.

Figure 2 - Place and Wellbeing Outcomes



North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

The Collaboration for Health Equity in Scotland (CHES)

North Ayrshire Council is one of three Scottish local authorities that are collaborating with health experts on ways to improve health and well-being for residents. The local authority and health board in each of the three areas will work alongside Public Health Scotland (PHS) and University College London's Institute of Health Equity (IHE), on the two-year-long Collaboration for Health Equity in Scotland.

Over the next two years, this partnership aims to help local areas and Community Planning Partners to strengthen their local plans to reduce health inequalities and improve wellbeing in their communities. By identifying and understanding the actions which will have the greatest impact on health inequalities locally, and how the barriers to implementing these can be overcome, the ultimate goal is to enable people to live longer, healthier lives by addressing the root causes of health inequalities and preventing illness before it starts.

The Institute of Health Equity have adopted a place-based approach to health and health inequalities. Eight actions or recommendations, also known as the 'Marmot principles', which focus on reducing health inequity by addressing the social determinants of health have been developed to guide this approach.

Mapping of the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes against the Marmot Principles [CD045] shows strong alignment. The majority of the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes make a direct contribution to delivering the Marmot Principles. This highlights their essential role in driving long-term, preventative, place-based action across all areas of health equity.

North Ayrshire's People

As noted above, North Ayrshire's Partnership Plan (LOIP) has been informed by a Strategic Needs Assessment which was prepared by Public Health Scotland and published in January 2022. The assessment considers evidence in relation to demographics; housing; general health; lifestyle and risk factors; hospital and community care; children and young people; crime and fires, comparing figures for North Ayrshire with East and South Ayrshire, Ayrshire as a whole and Scotland.

The Wellbeing Economy Dashboard [CD044] and an updated Strategic Needs Assessment (2025) [CD046], supported by profiles prepared by the Public Health Scotland LIST (Local Intelligence Support Team) for the North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership [CD206], are useful resources for understanding the size, composition, health and distribution of the population of North Ayrshire. Source data is available from [National Records of Scotland](#), [Scotland's 2022 census](#) and [Scottish Public Health Observatory](#). The Council also prepares annual locality economic profiles and quarterly economic briefings.

All these sources have informed the [Place Profiles](#) [CD003 to CD008] prepared for each of North Ayrshire's six localities. A summary of this evidence is presented below with a focus on the key issues for North Ayrshire:

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Population

The population of North Ayrshire at the last census was 133,413. Around two-thirds of the population is concentrated in the adjacent localities of Irvine (39,237), the Three Towns – Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenston – (31,295) and Kilwinning (16,982). Overall, around 90 percent of the population live in urban areas. Around 5 percent of the population on the mainland is classed as living in accessible rural areas; the islands of Arran (population 4,643) and Cumbrae (1,173) are remote rural communities by the measure of the Scottish Government six-fold Urban Rural Classification.

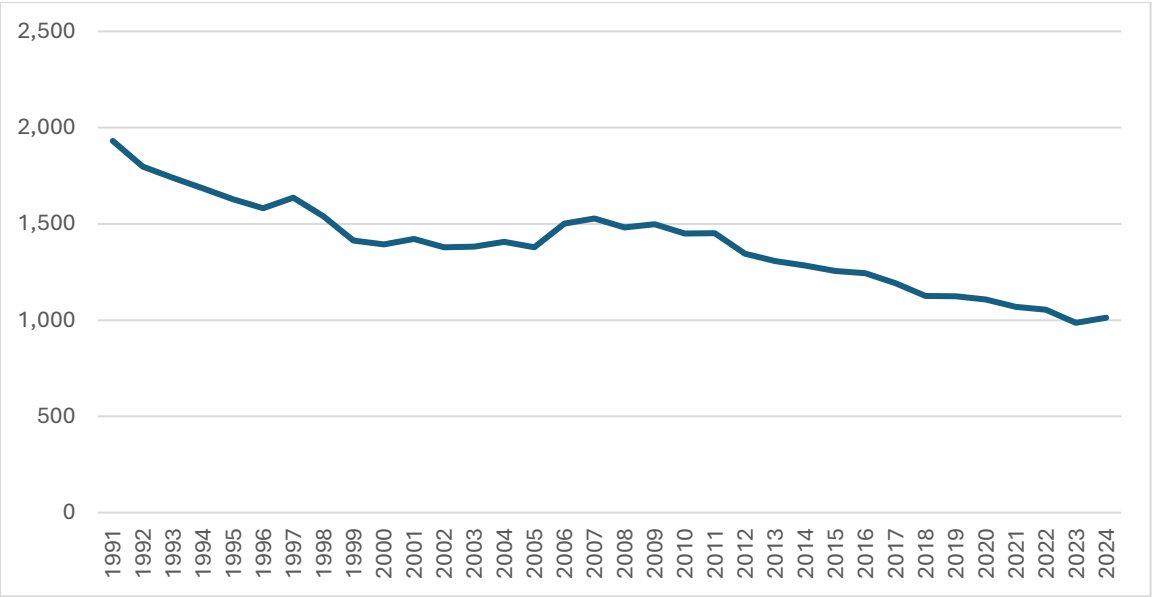
Between 2001 and 2023, the population of North Ayrshire decreased by 1.7 percent. This is the 29th highest percentage change out of the 32 council areas in Scotland. Over the same period, Scotland's population rose by 8.4 percent. The recent [mid-year populations estimate](#) (Mid-2024) indicates a 0.2 percent increase in the population over the 12 months. While there were 912 more deaths than births, net migration was 1,200, including 530 within Scotland. This could indicate a potential levelling off of the depopulation trend, however it is considered too early to determine whether this is a reversal of the trend.

Using data from the [Improvement Service](#), the population of the area is projected to decrease by 4 percent by 2030. 2022-based [sub-national population projections](#) for Scottish council areas and health boards were published by National Records of Scotland on 30 September 2025. This data indicates Scotland's population is projected to continue increasing; by 4.4 percent in the 10 years from mid-2022 to mid-2032. North Ayrshire, however, is one of nine Council areas projected to experience population decline. While North Ayrshire is projected to have positive net migration over the 10 years to mid-2032 (+3.93 percent), the population overall is anticipated to decrease by 3.1 percent due to natural change (births minus deaths) of -7.14 percent.

[Births time series data](#) for North Ayrshire available from the National Records of Scotland illustrates the long-term falling birth rate in North Ayrshire:

Figure 3 – Number of births, 1991 to 2024

North Ayrshire’s third Local Development Plan



In addition to a long-term declining population, North Ayrshire also has an aging population. Comparing the 2011 and 2022 Census, the percentage of the population aged 65 and over increased by 22 percent, from 25,898 to 31,660. This represents 23.7 percent of the total population. On Arran and within the North Coast localities, the proportion of people over the age of 65 is higher, at around 32 percent. Between 2001 and 2022, Kilwinning saw a 62 percent increase in the number of residents aged over 65.

Census data from 2022 indicates that 98 percent of the population of North Ayrshire is White (89 percent White Scottish, 7.5 percent Other White British or Irish, 1.4 percent Other White, including 0.08 percent Gypsy/Traveller). The largest other ethnic group is Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British accounting for 0.9 percent of the population. Of all people aged 16 and over who answered the question in the 2022 Census, 3 percent indicated they were gay, lesbian, bisexual or a sexual orientation other than heterosexual/straight.

Health

Life expectancy and healthy life expectancy in North Ayrshire are among the lowest in the country. This presents a challenging context in supporting our population, who also face some of the poorest health outcomes in Scotland. NHS Ayrshire and Arran’s Department of Public Health [NHS2_03112025] have advised that not only are life expectancies low, but they are also stagnant or declining. This is a very unusual and concerning trend as until the last decade, life expectancies in high-income countries had been steadily increasing, for over a century. Healthy life expectancy is also declining for both males and females in North Ayrshire and this trend exceeds that seen for Scotland as a whole. These are very concerning indicators from a public health perspective.

Table 2 – Life expectancy indicators

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Indicator	North Ayrshire	Scotland	North Ayrshire Rank (/ 32)
Life expectancy of males	74.9	76.8	29
Life expectancy of females	79.3	80.8	27
Healthy life expectancy of males	56.5	60.4	28
Healthy life expectancy of females	52.1	61.1	32

These figures mask further inequality between and within areas and localities in North Ayrshire, highlighted in further detail within the [Place Profiles](#) [CD003 to CD008].

Approximately 29 percent of the population is living with at least one physical long-term condition (LTC), which compares to a figure of 21.7 percent across Scotland. The prevalence of long-term physical health conditions increases with age, as does the co-occurrence of two or more conditions, known as multimorbidity. Overall, 4.2 percent of those under the age of 65 have more than one LTC, compared to 39.3 percent of those aged over 65.

The most common conditions across North Ayrshire are asthma (7.47 percent of the population), cancer (7.38 percent), arthritis (7.24 percent), coronary heart disease (6.99 percent) and diabetes (4.94 percent). All these conditions are more prevalent in North Ayrshire than in the Scottish population, particularly asthma for which the national rate is 4.72 percent.

Mental and physical wellbeing is shaped by the places and circumstances in which we are born, grow, live, work, and age. Issues can develop when alcohol, smoking or drug use shape lives. Alcohol and drug-related hospital admissions in North Ayrshire, at 632 and 424 per 100,000 age-sex standardised population are both higher than Scotland (621 and 211 admissions per 100,000).

Overall, emergency hospital admissions, unscheduled acute specialty bed days, delayed discharge bed days and potentially preventable hospital admissions per 100,000 population are all higher in North Ayrshire than in Scotland.

Mental health indicators, including psychiatric patient hospitalisations, unscheduled mental health specialty bed days and the percentage of the population prescribed medication for anxiety, depression, and psychosis are also above the national average. In 2020/21, 22 percent of people were prescribed medication for anxiety, depression, or psychosis in North Ayrshire HSCP. This is a 35.3 percent increase from the rate 10 years prior in 2010/11.

Deprivation and unemployment

The [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation](#) (SIMD) is a relative measure of deprivation across 6,976 data zones covering all of Scotland. The most recent data is from 2020. SIMD looks at the extent to which an area is deprived across seven domains: income, employment, education, health, access to services, crime and housing.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Analysis of the SIMD data shows North Ayrshire is the fifth most deprived council region in Scotland with 28 percent (52) of all data zones within the 15 percent most deprived. 41 percent of North Ayrshire's population live within the most deprived quintile (SIMD 1).

Deprivation is concentrated in The Three Towns and Irvine localities, but Kilwinning and the Garnock Valley also have above average deprivation and, as with life expectancy, there are significant inequalities between and within areas and localities in North Ayrshire. Deprivation in North Ayrshire is predominately attributed to opportunities of employment, income and health domains; in Arran access to services is a contributing factor to deprivation.

Table 3 – The percentage of population living in SIMD data zone quintiles by locality

Locality	SIMD1 (most deprived)	SIMD2	SIMD3	SIMD4	SIMD5 (least deprived)
Arran	0 percent	0 percent	39.1 percent	60.9 percent	0.0 percent
Garnock Valley	40.3 percent	24.5 percent	13.6 percent	14.4 percent	7.3 percent
Irvine	45.7 percent	28.4 percent	9.4 percent	13.5 percent	2.9 percent
Kilwinning	55.0 percent	7.9 percent	9.7 percent	19.2 percent	8.2 percent
North Coast	9.3 percent	12.1 percent	31.1 percent	16.7 percent	30.9 percent
Three Towns	57.3 percent	15.5 percent	13.5 percent	7.5 percent	6.3 percent
North Ayrshire	40.9 percent	18.5 percent	15.8 percent	15.0 percent	9.7 percent

The Council's August 2025 Economic Briefing [CD047], reporting employment and unemployment data for North Ayrshire for the period April 2024 to March 2025 sourced from the NOMIS labour market profile, puts North Ayrshire's employment rate at 65.6 percent. This compares to 74.0 percent for Scotland and 75.3 percent for the UK (UK rate is April to June 2025). North Ayrshire's unemployment rate is 5.3 percent. This is 1.9 percentage points higher than the Scottish rate of 3.4 percent. At 30.7 percent, North Ayrshire's economic inactivity rate is one of the highest in Scotland.

The North Ayrshire claimant count (as a proportion of the working age population) in March 2025 was 3.9 percent. This rate remains one of the highest in Scotland, however, North Ayrshire's position has improved slightly in this respect.

Child poverty

Child poverty is identified, including in [Our Council Plan](#) [CD043], as a significant challenge for North Ayrshire. In North Ayrshire, 20.8 percent of children live in relative poverty before housing costs. Relative to other local authorities, this is the second-highest rate of child poverty in Scotland. [Data published by the End Child Poverty coalition](#), which is made up of more than 130 organisations including child

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

welfare groups and social justice groups, shows the child poverty level after housing costs reduced from 29.2 percent in 2022 to 2023 to 24.3 percent in 2023 to 2024. This is against national averages of 24 percent and 23 percent respectively.

The percentage of children in poverty varies across North Ayrshire. Local area statistics available from the Improvement Service on children in low-income families indicate around 50 percent of children are in poverty in some areas of North Ayrshire, including: Hayocks in Stevenston; Central Saltcoats; Ardeer; and Central Largs. The percentage of children living in poverty has been mapped spatially.

[Improvement Service Child Poverty Map](#)

Addressing child poverty is the number one priority for North Ayrshire. In 2023, the [North Ayrshire Child Poverty Action Plan](#) [CD048] was published. The plan is part of a broader effort to meet the Scottish Government's statutory targets set by the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. These targets aim to significantly lower the percentage of children living in poverty by 2030.

The [North Ayrshire Child Poverty Action Plan Progress Report 2024 to 25](#) [CD049] highlights actions that North Ayrshire Council, NHS Ayrshire and Arran and partners in the Community Planning Partnership have taken to reduce and mitigate the impact of child poverty, focused around the three key drivers of child poverty: income from employment; reducing the cost of living; and income through social security and benefits in kind.

Island populations

North Ayrshire is home to two populated islands, Arran and Great Cumbrae. As noted above, these are remote rural communities by the measure of the Scottish Government six-fold Urban Rural Classification. Local Island Plans published for [Arran](#) [CD031] and [Cumbrae](#) [CD032] in May 2022, summarise key economic and demographic evidence in relation to the two islands.

Additionally, the [Scottish Islands Data Dashboard](#) presents a compilation of Scottish Islands data available from a range of published sources, designed to be used to monitor progress against the strategic objectives outlined in The National Plan for Scotland's Islands (2019) and for Island Community Impact Assessments (ICIA).

The dashboard was first published in December 2023 and updated in spring/summer 2025, with an accompanying [overview report](#) [CD050] published in September 2025.

Combined with Bute, Arran and the Cumbraes, the Dashboard shows that these Clyde Coast Islands have seen the largest population decline between 2002 and 2022, at 13.2 percent. As with the mainland, population change by age group shows substantial decreases in island populations below the age of 44, with increases in those aged 65 to 74 (17.6 percent) and 75 and over (22.6 percent).

Reporting data from the James Hutton Institute, the Scottish Islands Data Dashboard shows that North Ayrshire's islands will suffer population loss of children and working age population of 23 percent and 35 percent respectively from 2018 to 2043. This is

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

the highest projected population loss of working age population among all island region sparsely populated areas.

Design, quality and place

The planning system's role in applying the Place Principle is underlined by NPF4 policy 14 on design, quality and place. NPF4 aims to encourage, promote and facilitate well designed development that makes successful places by taking a design-led approach. Together, all NPF4 policies will contribute to creating more successful places, which are consistent with the six qualities of successful places and deliver the Place and Wellbeing outcomes.

In accordance with NPF4, LDP3 is required to be place-based and created in line with the Place Principle. The Spatial Strategy of the LDP should be underpinned by the six qualities of successful places: healthy, pleasant, connected, distinctive, sustainable and adaptable. LDP3 is expected to provide clear expectations for design, quality and place taking account of local context, characteristics and connectivity of the area.

Our historic environment is particularly important to sense of place and placemaking. 'Identity and belonging' is identified as one of Scotland's Place and Wellbeing Outcomes and can have a positive impact on people when everyone can benefit from a place that has a positive identity, culture and history, where people feel like they belong and are able to participate and interact positively with others. The Sustainable Places schedule (Topic 3) highlights evidence relating to historic assets in North Ayrshire; residents identify with these buildings and sites.

This Evidence Report summarises a wide range of primary and secondary community engagement activities, including using the Place Standard tool, carried out across North Ayrshire, with further detail set out in the Record of Engagement [CD009]. The outputs of this engagement include the Council's plan; the Community Planning Partnership's Partnership Plan; Locality priorities and action plans; Islands plans, Place Frameworks and Local Place Plans. Together, along with the evidence set out in this report on the principal physical, cultural, economic, social, built heritage and environmental characteristics of North Ayrshire, these plans provide a strong basis for understanding the local context, characteristics, connectivity of places in North Ayrshire as a basis for preparing LDP3.

A number of places in North Ayrshire are already the focus for significant change and have been subjects of masterplanning exercises. These include [Ardrossan North Shore](#) [CD051], Irvine Harbourside [CD052] and [Hunterston](#) [CD053].

Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods

The concept of local living centres on the ability of people to meet most of their daily needs within a reasonable distance of their home, preferably by sustainable and active travel methods. Local living encourages, promotes and facilitates the application of the Place Principle and the creation of connected and compact neighbourhoods which prioritise quality of life, help tackle inequalities, increase

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

levels of health and wellbeing and respond to the climate emergency. 20-minute neighbourhoods are an approach to assessing places against this concept.

NPF4 requires local development plans to support local living, including 20-minute neighbourhoods within settlements through the spatial strategy, associated site briefs and masterplans. This should take into account the local context.

[Planning guidance published by the Scottish Government](#) [CD054] sets out in further detail the benefits and context for local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods; the key considerations for local living, introducing the 'Local Living Framework' as a tool to consider the daily needs of a place; ways to support local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods; and a range of case studies showing how place-based interventions are supporting the implementation of local living across Scotland.

Understanding existing settlement patterns, characteristics and challenges faced by places with respect to local living is important to placemaking and to take account of NPF4 policy, recognising that the principle of local living can be adjusted to include varying geographical scales from cities and urban environments to rural and island communities.

To inform LDP3, prior to the publication of the Scottish Government guidance and [technical guidance](#) developed by the Improvement Service Spatial Information Service on mapping and analysing 20-minute neighbourhoods, we developed our own methodology for understanding whether current settlements in North Ayrshire operate as '20-minute neighbourhoods' and for assessing new proposals in the context of local living. The methodology and outputs of this analysis are set out in the [20 Minute Neighbourhood Analysis Report](#) [CD055].

Our approach analyses what access people have to essential daily facilities and amenities within a 10-minute walk in each direction from their home, with a 10-minute distance equated to 800 metres. A 10-minute cycle, representing 3.5 kilometres, was also assessed. Using residential address points, Ordnance Survey Points of Interest data and our Open Space Audit data, all residential points throughout North Ayrshire received a score of 0 to 6, with 0 being the lowest score and indicating no access to essential daily facilities and amenities within the distance threshold. The assessment was carried out at two levels: Tier 1 considered just food and drink and open space, whereas Tier 2 introduced health facilities, including pharmacies, GPs, dentists and hospitals, and educational facilities covering nurseries and primary schools.

Overall, the assessment found that – as would be expected – residential properties in urban areas scored on average higher (5.21 for Tier 1A) than those in rural areas (1.16). Table 1 within the report provides the average Tier 1A and Tier 2A scores for all settlements within North Ayrshire. Most towns in North Ayrshire scored highly (4.5 out of 6 and above) in terms of accessibility to open space and food and drink; exceptions include Fairlie and smaller villages in the Garnock Valley, Barmill and Gateside, and on the Isle of Arran.

Associated mapping further illustrates how scoring varies within settlements. Irvine, for example, scores relatively low at 4.68 (Tier 1) compared to other towns in North

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Ayrshire and the mapping shows scores reducing towards the periphery of the town, particularly to the north-east. Similarly, residential areas to the west of Kilwinning; Seamill, West Kilbride; and to the north and south of Largs have below average scores indicating poorer accessibility to green space and/or food and drink provision. This pattern is also replicated with the more detailed Tier 2 analysis.

Map of 20-minute Neighbourhood Analysis

Beyond the location of health facilities, primary schools and nurseries, our analysis does not include other facilities that are used for community functions, such as for the purposes of sport, leisure, arts, and cultural activities, or to support lifelong learning or social interaction and which may also be used for support services within a community for health and wellbeing. Town and village halls, community centres libraries, and so on, which offer these services have been highlighted within the [Place Profiles](#) (see Culture, Creativity and Community within the Liveable section of each profile) and are referred to with regard to culture and creativity within the Productive Places schedule.

There are also interrelationships between the 20-minute neighbourhood concept and nature networks (see Topic 3) and active travel (Topic 4). The Nature Network Framework states that 'local nature network will connect people and communities to nearby important areas for nature, deliver local priorities and work with other mechanisms of delivering connectivity at the local level for example enhancing active travel routes'.

Public conveniences and water refill locations

Sections 15(2A) and (2B) of Act require the local development plan to include a statement of the planning authority's policies and proposals as to the provision of public conveniences and water refill locations respectively.

North Ayrshire Council's agreed approach to the provision of public conveniences is to support models of delivery which provide a good standard of facility and which are delivered in an affordable and sustainable way. There are currently five Council operated facilities: Gallowgate, The Pencil and Broomfields in Largs and the Braes and Melbourne Gardens in Saltcoats. Further provision is made at Eglinton Park in Kilwinning (during café opening hours).

Some public conveniences in North Ayrshire have been transferred to community groups via Temporary Occupational Licences or a Community Asset Transfer, including nine facilities in Arran; three on Cumbrae; at Irvine Beach Park and the Ardrossan South Beach Public Toilets (now refurbished into a café facility) have been leased to Ardrossan Community Development Trust.

The approach for the future operation of Council operated sites and current outcomes were [agreed by the Council's Cabinet in February 2025](#) [CD056]. There is no capital funding available to invest in the remaining Council-owned facilities, hence the agreed approach to seek alternative models and funding, including community asset transfer. The three sites in Largs are now funded via the Largs Car Park Fund, with Gallowgate recently receiving significant investment to bring it to a very good standard of facility.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Scottish Water have installed four 'Top Up Taps' in North Ayrshire: at Brodick; Irvine Harbourside; Largs; and Millport as part of the wider 'Your Water Your Life' campaign. The campaign is aimed at highlighting the vital role water plays in the lives of people across the Scotland and encourages everyone to refill bottles and drink water, described as the 'nation's greatest natural resource', straight from the tap. The locations of these taps can be [viewed online](#). The planning authority currently does not have a policy as to the provision of water refill locations, as required to be included in the LDP by the Planning Act.

Play, recreation and sport

North Ayrshire has a lower proportion of adults meeting physical activity guideline than Scotland as a whole (59 percent vs 65 percent in 2019 to 2023) and this proportion is static and among the highest burden of ill-health and premature death associated with physical inactivity of all council areas in Scotland, after accounting for age (source: [The burden of disease attributed to physical inactivity](#)) [CD057].

The greatest benefits for health would be seen if the people who currently have very low levels of activity become slightly more active – one of the most effective and equitable ways of achieving this is likely to be through creating places which enable people to be physically active as part of their daily lives.

Universal access to a range of high quality, safe, well-maintained, accessible places with opportunities for play and recreation can have a positive impact on people's health and wellbeing. Alongside streets and spaces and natural spaces, play and recreation is identified as one of the three place and wellbeing outcomes within the 'Spaces' theme. The evidence-based benefits of this outcome are set out in the relevant [Place and Wellbeing Outcome Briefing](#) [CD058].

NPF4 seeks to encourage, promote and facilitate spaces and opportunities for play, recreation and sport and states that LDPs should identify sites for sports, play and outdoor recreation for people of all ages. To aid this requirement, the Council has produced an Open Space Audit, Play Sufficiency Assessment and consulted with stakeholders, including the general public, young people and sportscotland.

'[Physical Activity For Health: Scotland's National Framework](#)' [CD059] provides a framework for action to improve levels of physical activity which is founded on evidence-based international guidance from the World Health Organization. The document is intended to provide a context for developing plans and strategies across transport, education, planning and the environment, at both national and local level, such that these plans can consider the importance of improving levels of activity to help improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities.

[Scotland's Play Vision Statement and Action Plan 2025 to 2030](#) [CD060] is a Scottish Government publication designed to reflect the vision of play for Scotland for the next five years and the steps the Scottish Government will take within that time to achieve their vision and aims. It highlights how spaces can be designed to help encourage play and supplements the six qualities of successful places set out in NPF4.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

The '[Make Space for Girls](#)' campaign raises awareness of the lack of facilities for teenage girls.

KA Leisure is the registered charity committed to creating opportunities, inspiring people and changing lives using sport and physical activity in North Ayrshire. The company is responsible for the management and operation of [public facilities in North Ayrshire](#) and also deliver physical activity programmes in collaboration with a range of partners, including North Ayrshire HSCP, which cover a range of health conditions.

There is currently no sports pitch or playing field strategy for North Ayrshire.

Recreation is one of many ecosystem services gained from blue and green infrastructure and spaces for play, recreation and sport can come in many different forms and deliver a range of benefits, not just to community wellbeing. Further discussion is provided under the blue and green infrastructure section of the Sustainable Places schedule, including commentary on the Council's [Open Space Strategy](#) [CD061], which was published in 2016, and [open space audit](#) [CD062].

As highlighted by NHS Ayrshire and Arran's Public Health Directorate [NHS2_03112025], alongside formal opportunities for play, recreation and sport (for instance people purposefully being active), informal opportunities for people to be physically active as a routine part of their daily lives are also important. This includes through active travel and public transport, which usually involves some degree of associated physical activity, for example to reach stops or stations, underlining the importance of transport (Topic 4) to creating liveable places which enable physical activity and therefore improving health and tackling inequalities.

Play Sufficiency Assessment

As required by Section 16D of the Act, the Council as planning authority has assessed the sufficiency of play opportunities in North Ayrshire for children in preparing this Evidence Report. The [Play Sufficiency Assessment](#) (PSA) [CD063] was published in March 2025. It assesses the quality, quantity and accessibility of both formal and informal play spaces in North Ayrshire and derives standards to establish sufficiency.

In terms of quantity, a standard of one play area per 1,000 people has been established. Informed by the open space audit, the PSA distinguishes different types of play space in North Ayrshire: Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP); Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP); Local Area for Play (LAP), Natural Play Space and Activity Zones for aged 12+ years. The assessment identified 134 formal equipped play spaces in North Ayrshire, including 38 spaces privately owned and managed but accessible to the public.

[Map of play spaces in North Ayrshire](#)

Table 1 of the PSA shows the number of play spaces per 1,000 population for North Ayrshire's main settlements. While overall there is an average of approximately one play area per 1,000 people in North Ayrshire, provision does fall below this in eight

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

towns and villages, notably Stevenston (0.2 play spaces per 1,000) and West Kilbride (0.4).

To assesses quality, the criteria set in Play Scotland's 'Getting it Right for Play' toolkit has been used to set a 'Play Quality Standard' that provides an overall score with three outcomes: good provision, acceptable provision and underperforming. Only Council-owned, formal play spaces have been quality assessed using the PSA assessment tool. From the 108 play spaces scored, 10 sites were identified as underperforming, 33 as acceptable with the majority (60 percent of the sites) considered to be good provision. Average quality scores were provided for sites across each locality, with averages ranging from 60.06 percent in Irvine to 68.96 percent in Kilwinning.

The accessibility standard is an amount of a particular type of open space within a specified distance, that is, a distance threshold. An inclusivity assessment has also been undertaken, considering the accessibility of play spaces for people with disabilities and limited mobility. A commentary on play area accessibility is provided for each locality within the PSA report, with areas falling out with distances thresholds for specific types of play space identified. Such areas include residential areas to the south of Skelmorlie and West Kilbride and Seamill; Chapelhill, to the northwest of central Ardrossan; Hawkhill at the top end of Stevenston; areas to the north of Irvine (Lawthorn and Perceton) and residential areas to the west of Kilwinning at Corsehill.

Bringing together the four components of the Play Sufficiency Assessment (quality, quantity and accessibility assessments and consultation, noted below under 'Summary of Stakeholder Engagement') has highlighted that, in general, the experience of playing in North Ayrshire is a positive one.

The quality of play space provision is generally well spread throughout the Council area, and all settlements contain play spaces considered good or acceptable. With regards to quantity, all settlements are considered to have a good provision of open space that is considered acceptable or good that can provide opportunities for play. Issues have been identified in relation to accessibility to certain types of provisions in some of our towns and villages.

Sports provision

sportscotland have provided information on facilities and draft extract from their Facility Planning Model (FPM) outputs for halls, pools and synthetic grass pitches. This has been cross-referenced with data from the Council's Estates team. Included within North Ayrshire's sports provision is 144 pitches; 55 sports halls across 32 different facilities and 31 outdoor tennis courts. Additionally, there are 22 golf courses and 34 bowling greens in North Ayrshire across 25 bowling clubs.

[Map of sports provision in North Ayrshire.](#)

The FPM is a tool which provides an objective assessment of the relationship between the likely demand for the following sports facilities (sports halls over 3 courts in size; swimming pools and full-size synthetic pitches) and their supply. Further information on it is available on sportscotland's [website](#).

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

The FPM is a model which predicts likely patterns of demand, it does not predict actual usage. What is needed and where in relation to places for sport requires more detailed analysis and local engagement.

In summary some of the key outputs of the FPM are as follows:

- The average age of North Ayrshire's pools, halls and synthetic grass pitches (SGP) is newer than the national average.
- Courts per head are higher than the national average, non-commercial waterspace per head is lower than the average and the SGP per head is similar to the national average.
- Unmet demand is mainly due to people living too far from a facility.
- At Council level, used capacity is predicted to be lower than the national average across the facility types.
- Walking accessibility to halls and pools is better for those in the 10 percent most deprived areas compared to the Council average. For SGPs, accessibility is worse for those in the 10 percent most deprived areas.
- The model predicts that the Portal in Irvine and Garnock Community Campus will be the two busiest facilities in 2033 with the Portal predicted to reach 100 percent capacity for its halls and pools.
- At Council level, used capacity is predicted to be lower than the national average across the facility types providing halls.

Health and safety

A place-based approach can support improved health outcomes and address health inequalities. Placemaking specifically focuses on creating good quality places that promote people's health, happiness and wellbeing. NPF4 seeks to protect people and places from environmental harm, mitigate risks arising from safety hazards and encourage, promote and facilitate development that improves health and wellbeing.

LDP3 and its spatial strategies should seek to tackle health inequalities, particularly in places which are experiencing the most disadvantage and create healthier places, for example through opportunities for physical activity, healthier lifestyles, land for community food growing and allotments, and awareness of locations of concern for suicide.

The Act also requires the evidence report to set out the planning authority's view on – and the local development plan to take account of – the infrastructure of the district, including health care facilities and how that infrastructure is used. LDP3 should identify the health and social care services and infrastructure needed in the area, including potential for co-location of complementary services, in partnership with Health Boards and Health and Social Care Partnerships. This is addressed within the infrastructure schedule of the Evidence Report (Topic 6).

Evidence regarding the health and health needs of the North Ayrshire population – including the inequalities in health experienced in the area – is considered above under 'North Ayrshire's People'.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Air quality

Environmental factors which influence health and wellbeing can include: the nature and distribution of poor air quality; noise; odour; lighting and blue green infrastructure.

Air pollution has significant effects on public health and the environment. Exposure to air pollution is harmful to human health in terms of premature mortality and morbidity, mainly related to respiratory and cardiovascular disease. Air pollution can impact on the more vulnerable members of society – the very young, the elderly and those with existing health conditions such as asthma, respiratory and heart disease, thus making air quality an important health inequalities issue. Evidence indicates these conditions are more prevalent in North Ayrshire than elsewhere in the country.

Air pollution also effects ecosystems; pollution and its deposition onto vegetation, soil and water can damage vegetation directly or indirectly through the addition of nutrients or changes in acidity levels within a habitat.

Air quality in Scotland has generally significantly improved since the mid-twentieth century, particularly in relation to CO and SO₂, with a significant fall in both NO₂ and PM₁₀ emissions since 2008. Currently, drivers of air pollution include fine particulates from the combustion of fuels (such as from road transport, biomass and waste disposal), as well as from other energy generation and industry, such as agriculture. Ferries and other marine vessels also release a significant proportion of total anthropogenic air pollutants, including NO_x, SO_x, PM and VOCs.

Since the Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) review and assessment process was introduced, local authorities across Scotland have been required to review and assess the air quality. Where targets are not met, local authorities must declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and produce an action plan setting out measures to address the issues identified. No AQMAs are currently in place in North Ayrshire.

Environmental Health monitor pollutants in 23 different locations and submit detailed reports on the various stages of the review process both to the Scottish Government and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA). There is one continuous monitoring station measuring PM₁₀/PM_{2.5} (particulate matter less than 10 microns and 2.5 microns) and NO₂ (Nitrogen dioxide) situated on the High Street in Irvine. Air quality is generally good, most notable NO₂ and PM₁₀ being recorded as low throughout 2023.

Previous monitoring reports identified two areas of concern in terms of emissions from road traffic – High Street, Irvine and New Street, Dalry – due to congestion. The 2022 Local Air Quality Management Progress Report [CD064] set out the changes in air quality following the implementation of mitigation projects to address these issues, which included public realm improvements on High Street Irvine, and the Dalry bypass. The report demonstrated that these measures resulted in improvements in air quality.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Food environment

The food environment encompasses facilities for home cooking; retail shops; out-of-home food provision (including restaurants and takeaways); allotments and other opportunities for individual and community involvement in food production (such as private and community gardens); and local agricultural production.

Obesity Action Scotland have [produced headline statistics](#) [CD065] which cover the Ayrshire and Arran Health Board in relation to obesity prevalence (adults, children and maternal), levels of fruit and vegetable consumption, food insecurity, type 2 diabetes prevalence and rates of physical activity. They have found that 70 percent of the adult population are overweight, 34 percent are obese and 5 percent are severely obese. These are both higher than the national figures which are 67 percent, 29 percent and 4 percent respectively. Figures are higher amongst men compared to women.

There is an improving picture in relation to children, based on Primary 1 Body Mass Index (BMI) statistics. The percentage of children at risk of becoming overweight and at risk of obesity has fallen over the last three years and is lower than the national average.

Less than one in five adults (15 percent) in the health board area meet the recommended guidelines for five or more portions of fruit and vegetables per day. 72 percent reported eating fewer than five portions per day and 13 percent reported eating no fruit and vegetables. Across the health board, 10 percent of adults report being food insecure, that is, worried that they would run out of food. This is over national average of 9 percent (2022). In obesogenic environments, inactivity and overconsumption of energy dense foods is easy, affordable and widely accepted, making an unhealthy lifestyle the default option.

Health policies, including [Scotland's diet and healthy weight delivery plan](#) [CD066] reflect the importance of places which provide opportunities for access to healthy food. The Scottish Government has set out a vision for Scotland to be 'a [Good Food Nation](#)', where people from every walk of life take pride and pleasure in, and benefit from, the food they produce, buy, cook, serve, and eat each day.' The Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act 2022 provides the legislative framework that enables this vision. The Act places duties on Scottish Ministers, local authorities and health boards to produce Good Food Nation Plans. These Plans will set out the main outcomes to be achieved in relation to food-related issues, the policies needed to do this and the measures that will be used to assess progress.

Alongside people's health and physical and mental wellbeing, the Good Food Nation policy and plans aim to support the environment, social and economic wellbeing and tackle child poverty.

Access to opportunities for food growth and allotments are important elements of local living, our blue green infrastructure and creating healthier places. LDPs should identify areas where proposals for healthy food and drink outlets can be supported and land for community food growing and allotments.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

North Ayrshire Council has four allotment associations or organisations who lease and occupy Council land with a total of 521 plots:

- Eglinton Growers – Irvine Road, Kilwinning
- Garnock Valley Allotment Association – Sersley Drive, Kilbirnie
- Organic Growers of Fairlie - Fairlie Community Garden, Pier Road
- Three Towns Growers - Elm Park, Ardrossan

In addition to the above sites, the following organisations manage allotments:

- The Arran Community Land Initiative (Whiting Bay)
- West Kilbride Allotments (Ballees Farm near Dalry Road, West Kilbride)

In October 2025, Dalry Community Sports Club were awarded grant funding from the Council's Communities and Place Fund for phase 1 of the Dalry Community Allotment Project, delivering new community growing space within the town.

The Council does not directly manage any of the allotment sites. All aspects of the allocation, management and maintenance of the allotments are the responsibility of the respective allotment organisation or association and their tenants. However, the Council's Connected Communities service liaises directly with the allotment groups, and the Streetscene service monitors and administers the Council's dedicated allotments mailbox for all allotment related enquiries.

The Council produces an [Allotments Report](#) [CD067] each year which details waiting lists and plot availability at each location. In 2025, the allotment sites across North Ayrshire have a combined total of 640 allotment plots (of varying sizes), including polytunnel and raised beds. North Ayrshire Council is aware of a collective total of 32 individuals awaiting allocation of an allotment plot, with no individual being on a waiting list for five or more years. This is below the statutory 50 percent ratio between waiting lists and plot numbers across North Ayrshire which is the trigger threshold that would require the Council to take action and consider new allotment provision.

The Council's [Food Growing Strategy](#) (2024) [CD068] sets out the range of activity and an action plan to develop closer links between food growing and community food provision through the North Ayrshire Food Forum.

An analysis of the food environment has been undertaken as part of a [Retail Capacity Study](#) [CD069], covered under Topic 5 in relation to town centres and retail. This analysis has been informed by a review of the distribution of food shops; analysis of responses to questions about food shopping habits and experience from the household survey; results from North Ayrshire Council's People's Panel on access to food/fresh food and survey responses from foodbank/community larder operators.

Alongside the distribution of shops selling food, affordability is identified as a key issue. Deprivation and rurality are identified as key factors in accessing affordable food, including in limited more-affluent areas where there is less choice resulting in higher prices/limited ranges of food goods available in shops. The study also shows the location of North Ayrshire's Foodbanks and Community Larders. There were 15

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Community Larders as of December 2023, with a total average footfall of 589 across North Ayrshire. The Study concludes that there is high widespread usage of community larder/foodbanks in North Ayrshire and that this would normally indicate that there is difficulty (for one reason or another) in accessing fresh food in local shops.

Research published in 2018 on the [relationship between the food environment and the planning system](#) [CD070] sought to consider how the planning system could best support the creation of an improved food environment in Scotland. Bad or unhealthy food environments are defined as a consequence of poor access to fresh food and increased exposure to readily available energy-dense food. Overall, the research notes that evidence suggests that increased exposure to outlets selling unhealthy food increases a person's likelihood of gaining weight.

Subsequent to this research, NPF4 Policy 27, relating to town, local and commercial centres allows for development proposals for hot food take aways to be resisted if further provision would undermine the character and amenity of the area or the health and wellbeing of communities. Data from the Council's Environmental Health service indicates there are 235 premises in North Ayrshire providing hot food takeaway, distributed as follows:

Table 4: Premises providing hot food takeaway by Locality

Locality	Number of premises	Population	Population per premises
Arran	8	4643	580
Garnock Valley	32	19995	625
Irvine	71	39237	553
Kilwinning	23	16982	738
North Coast	31	21259	686
Three Towns	70	31295	447

The location of these premises has also been mapped:

[Map of premises providing hot food takeaway](#)

Locations of concern for suicide

Suicide is a complex issue that affects all communities and sectors across Scotland. Suicide is not caused by a single factor and the pathway to suicide is not straightforward, it involves an interplay of risk factors, circumstances and life events. When these factors come together, people may experience feelings of hopelessness, entrapment and despair, often leading to an increase in suicidal thoughts and behaviours.

By addressing the locally identified priorities across North Ayrshire's six Locality Planning Partnerships—such as reducing deprivation, improving mental health support, tackling isolation, and enhancing community cohesion, we can create protective environments that contribute to reducing the risk factors associated with suicide and strengthen the resilience of individuals and communities. Enhancing people's mental health and wellbeing has been identified as a priority in North

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Ayrshire, including specifically within the Irvine locality by the Locality Planning Partnership.

In September 2022, the Scottish Government published the [Creating Hope Together: suicide prevention strategy 2022 to 2032](#) [CD071] and [suicide prevention action plan 2022 to 2025](#) [CD072], jointly with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA). The strategy uses an outcomes-based model to set out the range of changes (outcomes) that we understand are needed to achieve the vision of reducing the number of suicide deaths in Scotland, whilst tackling the inequalities which contribute to suicide.

One of four priorities of the strategy is to build a whole of Government and society approach to address the social determinants which have the greatest link to suicide risk. Social determinants of health – the social, cultural, political, economic and environmental conditions in which people are born, grow up, live, work and age, and their access to power, decision making, money and resources that give rise to these conditions of daily life – play a central role in mental wellbeing at a population level and among those who may or may not have a diagnosed mental illness and who are prescribed medication. Experiences of relationship and structural inequality such as insecurity of income, housing and food, are all factors which can impact on the mental health of individuals, families and communities and may increase risk of suicide.

In relation to placemaking, factors such as: transport; access to services, training, employment, safe, secure and appropriate housing and green space; and the cost of living can all impact on people's health and wellbeing, including mental health.

Suicide prevention in Ayrshire and Arran is being taken forward through coordinated efforts both at a pan-Ayrshire level and within each local authority area, with work focused on addressing risk to suicide, increasing awareness and improving interventions and support, in line with the national Creating Hope Together strategy's emphasis on compassionate, community-led, and multi-agency approaches.

The Pan Ayrshire Suicide Prevention group is a long-standing strategic suicide prevention group. In recent years this group has offered opportunities for a wide range of partners to attend learning events aimed at increasing knowledge and understanding in relation to specific areas of suicide prevention work. The Locations of Concerns learning event was attended by the Planning Service and offered the opportunity to learn about good practice from practitioners working in this area of suicide prevention across Scotland.

Guidance has been published by Public Health Scotland on [action to address suicides at locations of concern](#) [CD073] to support community planning partnerships (CPPs) and local multi-agency steering groups to develop strategies to prevent suicides at identified locations of concern; to prevent the emergence of further locations of concern by incorporating suicide prevention measures into infrastructure development and maintenance; and support multi-agency collaboration, recognising that suicide prevention is a whole-community responsibility. The guidance can inform local planning processes to help make suicide safe places and communities.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Coal mining and Major Hazard Sites

Regulation 9 of the 2023 Regulations sets out further information and considerations to which the planning authority are to have regard to in preparing a local development plan. Included within this list are the objectives of preventing major accidents and limiting the consequences of such accidents for human health and the environment and the need in the long term to maintain appropriate safety distances from major hazard sites and major accident hazard pipelines.

Large areas of North Ayrshire, particularly the Garnock Valley, Three Towns and Irvine are included within a Coal Mining Reporting Area which represents the known extent of coal mining activity. The Mining Remediation Authority (previously known as the Coal Authority) holds information on mine entries and development high risk areas, these representing the part of the coal mining reporting area which contain one or more recorded coal mining related features at surface or shallow depth. These features pose a potential risk to surface stability and public safety [see [Mining Remediation Authority Map Viewer](#)].

There are Major Hazard Sites in North Ayrshire with associated Health and Safety Executive (HSE) consultation zones. An Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) consultation zone also exists for development in the vicinity of Hunterston A & B power stations. Decommissioning of both power stations has commenced.

There are ten Health and Safety Executive (HSE) 'Consultation Zones for Major Hazard Sites' and four 'Explosive Safeguarding Zones' in North Ayrshire, including in relation to pharmaceutical plants, explosives works and bonded warehouse complexes. With regards to major accident hazard (MAH) pipelines, there are two high-pressure transmission gas pipelines in North Ayrshire.

GIS data on the location of major hazard sites is available to the Council for internal use only, supplied by HSE on the understanding that it is to be used to help determine HSE's planning advice only.

Summary of Stakeholder Engagement

The Place Principle encourages better collaboration and community involvement in order to promote a shared understanding of place and a clear vision on how better outcomes for people and communities can be delivered.

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 introduced measures to put community voices at the heart of the planning system in Scotland. Measures include the preparation of guidance to assist with engagement activities in the preparation of local development plans. [Effective Community Engagement in Local Development Plans – People and planning](#) describes the context and benefits of engagement. As highlighted by the guidance, places matter to people. By engaging in planning, people have an opportunity to help shape the future of their places and influence outcomes.

The Stakeholder Engagement schedule describes how we have met the requirements of the Act and Regulations in relation to stakeholder engagement

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

relevant to the preparation of the Evidence Report and the separate Record of Engagement [CD009] details the engagement activities considered as relevant to the preparation of the Evidence Report and LDP3. Key outputs are summarised within the Evidence Report in relation to the topic-based schedules.

The Place Standard has been used in North Ayrshire to inform local priorities by each of our six Locality Planning Partnerships. We have engaged with local communities via the 'Your Place Survey' – based on the Place Standard tool – and on Place Profiles, which present an overview of evidence relating to North Ayrshire's six localities. The engagement on the profiles, including public 'drop-in' meetings, focused on the needs and wants of communities.

Place-based plans

Local Places Plans for West Kilbride, Stevenston, Cumbrae, Largs, Fairlie, the Garnock Valley and a draft plan for Skelmorlie; Place Frameworks completed for Kilwinning, Largs and Saltcoats; the Local Island Plans for Arran and Cumbrae and emerging Long-Term Plan for Irvine, in addition to the Masterplan for Irvine's Great Harbour, have been developed following engagement with local people alongside wider place-based engagement, provide us with an understanding of the local context of our places; their qualities, challenges and the priorities and aspirations of the people who live, work and visit.

Health needs

Between January 2023 and December 2024, North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership (NAHSCP) conducted an engagement programme to inform its 2025 to 2028 Strategic Plan. The process involved nearly 2,900 participants across 47 events, incorporating focus groups, surveys, workshops, and locality-based conversations. The engagement prioritised inclusivity, with targeted outreach to seldom-heard groups such as unpaid carers, rural residents, neurodiverse individuals, and minority communities, including Gypsy/Travellers. Specific engagement was carried out with children and young people in 2025.

The engagement was designed not only to hear from a broad cross-section of service users and professionals but to reflect the real experiences of those living and working within the local health and social care system. In doing so, it sought to understand what people value, where they encounter barriers, and what they would like to see change. The Engagement Report [CD074] and Youth Engagement Report 2025 [CD075] set out what was learned from this engagement.

Access to services is identified as the most consistent concern. Barriers to timely and equitable access—especially in rural and island communities—were widely reported. Infrequent public transport and the centralisation of services leave many in Arran, Garnock Valley, and the North Coast feeling isolated. Transport barriers compound existing access issues, especially for those without personal vehicles. Among children and young people, mental health; substance use; neurodiversity and support for families facing challenges are the biggest priorities.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Play sufficiency

An extensive consultation programme was designed to gain understanding of the experience of children and play in North Ayrshire and inform the Play Sufficiency Assessment. This consisted of two in-person, conference style events (one for primary school children and one for secondary school pupils), online promotion and surveys. The Council's Youth Participation Officer and team was crucial in designing the consultation and the content of the in-person events, which included a selection of pupils from every secondary school and at least one primary school from each locality. In addition to the events, three different online surveys were designed (one for primary school, secondary school and one for parents of any age). In total, the engagement activities managed to consider more than 1,300 views have been considered to inform the PSA, albeit some people may have responded to more than one survey or took part in more than one event. Full details of the consultation can be found in the [Play Sufficiency Assessment report](#) [CD063] and PSA Report of Consultation [CD033].

Key agencies input

The Planning Service hold quarterly meetings with the North Ayrshire's Health Improvement Lead from NHS Ayrshire and Arran's Department of Public Health. The Health Improvement Lead's input has informed the Evidence Report.

A draft of the full Evidence Report was shared with NHS Ayrshire & Arran on 7 October 2025. Within a combined response [NHS2_03112025], the Public Health Directorate focus on substantive issues regarding data interpretation or presentation, which in their view, affect the sufficiency of the evidence. They additionally made comments on the draft document regarding the potential inclusion of other relevant data sources (and some minor typographical errors). These comments relate to sections on 'Health', 'Child Poverty', 'Play recreation and sport' and 'Food environment' within this scheduled of the report. These sections have been updated accordingly, as detailed in the Record of Engagement [CD009].

Additional guidance on locations of concern for suicide was provided by the Senior Health Improvement Programme Officer on 21 October 2025 [NHS1_21102025].

Early engagement with sportscotland was undertaken to ensure that the Evidence Report contains the most relevant, accurate and up to date data. In addition to the Facilities Report and draft extract from the Facility Planning Model (FPM), sportscotland shared evidence detailing the importance of the contribution of physical activity and sport to Scotland. This included how physical activity and sport contributes to meeting the aims of the National Performance Framework Outcomes, the Public Health Priorities, the Active Scotland Outcomes and the COSLA Policy Priorities.

sportscotland have reviewed the play, recreation and sport section of the draft Evidence Report, providing comments and suggested changes relating mainly to the FPM, to ensure the data is appropriately caveated given it is a model which makes a

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

range of assumptions. The suggested changes have been made to the final Evidence Report.

Summary of Implications for the Proposed Plan

Our view on what this evidence and stakeholder engagement means for LDP3 is summarised below:

Tackling demographic challenges

North Ayrshire's population is facing a range of challenges relating to child poverty, health inequality, a declining and aging population, deprivation and employment. These challenges underline the importance that LDP3 supports NPF4 in delivering liveable, sustainable and productive places. Supported by the provision of affordable, warm homes (Topic 2) and reducing the need to travel (Topic 4), new development can contribute to reversing population decline, particularly among the working-age population, and help increase income from employment and reduce the cost of living for local communities.

Challenges faced on the mainland are often magnified on our islands, Arran and Cumbrae, due to their rurality and the inherent difficulty in accessing services. Appropriate island-specific approaches within LDP3 are required here.

A place-based approach

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan (LDP3) will be central to how NPF4 and the Place Principle is implemented in North Ayrshire. LDP3 should be place-based and use the place principle to tell a clear and compelling story about the future of the places in our area. By adopting a placemaking approach, the spatial strategy, policies and proposals of the new plan should seek to create good quality places that promote people's health, happiness and wellbeing and tackle health inequalities.

This must be a joined-up, collaborative, and participative approach based on a shared understanding of how local places are experienced in the context of wider data about socio-economic and environmental characteristics. The wide range of evidence and community engagement outputs summarised within this report provide the basis for this and underpins the preparation of LDP3.

Through North Ayrshire's Partnership Plan (our Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP)) and the Locality Planning Partnership Locality Action Plans, clear priorities have been established by our communities relating to wellbeing, work and the world in which they live. These themes align well with NPF4's focus on the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places.

The vision of the North Ayrshire Partnership Plan: 'North Ayrshire – Fair for All' – must be shared by LDP3, reflecting a coherent approach consistent with the Place Principle. LDP3 must explain how the development and use of land can contribute to delivering this vision.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

As per the Equality Act 2010, the Public Sector Equality duty is applicable and Equality Impact Assessments, Fairer Scotland Duty Assessments and Island Communities Impact Assessments will be undertaken in the preparation of the Proposed Plan. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child also means that young people must be encouraged to play an active role in planning.

Design, quality and place

LDP3 should provide clear expectations for design, quality and place taking account of the local context, characteristics and connectivity of the area. Consideration of the six qualities of successful places: healthy, pleasant, connected, distinctive, sustainable and adaptable will underpin this. The use of design frameworks, briefs, masterplans and design codes can support this approach. Where not incorporated as part of the new local development plan, the requirement for detailed design guidance for new development proposed by LDP3 should be identified within the Delivery Programme.

Various engagements with children and young people have stressed the importance of spaces and facilities for leisure, sport and recreation; generally, places where they can meet and spend time with friends. Well-connected, well-designed and maintained streets and spaces which are inclusive, attractive places to use, enjoy and interact with others are identified as one of the 13 Place and Wellbeing Outcomes. In providing a framework for future development, including site-specific design guidance, LDP3 should seek to safeguard and create appropriate public spaces. Evidence included within open space audit and Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) can support this approach (see Play, recreation and sport below).

Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods

LDP3's spatial strategy should support local living. This means new and existing communities planned together with homes and key local infrastructure, informed by local communities and businesses, in a manner that enables people to meet the majority of their daily needs within a reasonable distance of their home. The creation of high-quality, compact and connected neighbourhoods will support health and wellbeing, reduce inequalities and are resilient to the effects of climate change.

By adopting the principles of placemaking, local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods, LDP3 can create opportunities to enable more people to be more active – particularly those at highest risk of illness related to physical inactivity – and therefore to improve physical and mental health at an individual and population level.

To support the achievement of this, we have developed a methodology that enables the accessibility of places, including proposed development sites, to basic needs to be assessed: food and drink, open space, education and health care. It is noted that policy 15 provides a more detailed list of the elements that having local access to supports local living, including sustainable modes of transport; employment; opportunities for food growth and allotments and diverse housing options. These elements should also be considered. A site assessment methodology has been developed to support this.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

In addition to delivering new development that is consistent with the principle of local living, opportunities to strengthen existing places, for example through the creation of new, high-quality blue and green infrastructure and improving sustainable transport infrastructure that is accessible to all, should be explored.

Play, recreation and sport

Our new local development plan must identify sites for sports, play and outdoor recreation for people of all ages. The loss of outdoor sports facilities and children's outdoor play provision should generally be avoided; instead, opportunities to improve natural and built environments, with more equitable access to opportunities for play, recreation and physical activity should be considered as part of enhancing and expanding blue and green infrastructure. New provision should be well-designed, high quality, accessible and inclusive.

The open space audit and Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) help identify such sites and where existing provision could be improved in relation to the quality, quantity and accessibility of open space, including formal and informal play spaces in North Ayrshire.

Health and safety

The evidence and implications for the Proposed Plan set out in this section align to the overall requirement that North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan must encourage, promote and facilitate the creation of healthier places through development that improves health and wellbeing. By committing to the adoption of the Place Principle and placemaking, LDP3's spatial strategy and specific development proposals should deliver high-quality, well connected and inclusive places.

Consideration of local priorities, including those highlighted by the Locality Planning Partnerships; the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes and emerging outputs from the work of the Collaboration for Health Equity in Scotland will inform the preparation of the Proposed Plan with the aim of reducing health inequity by addressing the social determinants of health.

In view of the health challenges and inequalities faced in some parts of North Ayrshire, the spatial strategy and policy framework established by LDP3 should consider how improvements can be made to the food environment, including in relation to hot food takeaways.

LDP3 must support the creation of suicide safe places and communities, taking account of locations of concern. We will continue to engage with pan-Ayrshire work to prevent suicide, the North Ayrshire Strategic Suicide Prevention Group and the suicide review process to inform the LDP3, enabling consideration to be given to reducing suicide risk in our communities. This includes steps to mitigate risks associated with buildings and other infrastructure and spaces.

The spatial strategy of LDP3 should allow for appropriate distances between new development and major hazard sites, pipelines and sites with hazardous substances.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Statements of Agreement / Dispute

No statements from stakeholders have been received highlighting agreement or disputes with the evidence presented in this schedule. The comments of NHS Ayrshire and Arran and sportscotland have been taken into account and the Evidence Report updated accordingly.

Links to Evidence

CD014	The North Ayrshire Partnership Plan – Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2022 to 2030 (March 2022)
CD031	Isle of Arran Local Island Plan
CD032	Isle of Cumbrae Local Island Plan
CD035	Scotland's Population Health Framework 2025 to 2035
CD036	North Ayrshire HSCP Strategic Needs Assessment – January 2022
CD037	North Ayrshire CPP Survey of Local Outcomes Improvement Plan Report – February 2022
CD038	Garnock Valley Locality Partnership, Locality Action Plan 2023/24
CD039	Irvine Locality Partnership, Locality Action Plan, 2023/24
CD040	Kilwinning Locality Partnership, Locality Action Plan, 2023/24
CD041	North Coast Locality Partnership, Locality Action Plan, 2023/24
CD042	Three Towns Locality Partnership, Locality Action Plan, 2023/24
CD043	Our Council Plan 2023 to 2028 – June 2023
CD044	Wellbeing Economy Dashboard (August 2025)
CD045	Improvement Service Mapping of the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes against the Marmot Principles (June 2025)
CD046	North Ayrshire HSCP Strategic Needs Assessment 2025
CD047	Economic Briefing – August 2025
CD048	North Ayrshire Child Poverty Action Plan 2023
CD049	Child Poverty Action Plan Progress Report 2024 to 25
CD050	Scottish Islands Data Overview (2025)
CD051	Ardrossan North Shore Development Framework Plan
CD052	Great Harbour Masterplan
CD053	Hunterston PARC Development Framework
CD054	Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods: planning guidance (April 2024)
CD055	20 Minute Neighbourhood Analysis Report (February 2025)
CD056	North Ayrshire Council Cabinet Paper – Public Conveniences (18 February 2025)
CD057	The burden of disease attributed to physical inactivity – September 2024
CD058	Improvement Service, Place and Wellbeing Outcome Briefing, Spaces: Play and Recreation
CD059	Physical Activity For Health – Scotland's National Framework – September 2024

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

CD014	<u>The North Ayrshire Partnership Plan – Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2022 to 2030 (March 2022)</u>
CD060	<u>Play: vision statement and action plan 2025 to 2030 (March 2025)</u>
CD061	<u>North Ayrshire Open Space Strategy 2016 to 2026</u>
CD062	<u>North Ayrshire Council Open Space Audit 2022</u>
CD063	<u>North Ayrshire Play Sufficiency Assessment (March 2025)</u>
CD064	<u>2022 Air Quality Annual Progress Report (APR) for North Ayrshire Council</u>
CD065	<u>Obesity Prevalence – Ayrshire & Arran Health Board (August 2024)</u>
CD066	<u>A healthier future: Scotland's diet and healthy weight delivery plan (July 2018)</u>
CD067	<u>North Ayrshire Allotments annual report 2025 – July 2025</u>
CD068	<u>North Ayrshire Food Growing Strategy – June 2024</u>
CD069	<u>North Ayrshire Retail Capacity Study – June 2024</u>
CD070	<u>Relationship between food environment and planning system: research summary – November 2018</u>
CD071	<u>Creating Hope Together: suicide prevention strategy 2022 to 2032 (September 2022)</u>
CD072	<u>Creating Hope Together: suicide prevention action plan 2022 to 2025 (September 2022)</u>
CD073	<u>National guidance on action to address suicides at locations of concern (November 2022)</u>
CD074	NAHSP Strategic Plan Engagement Report 2025
CD075	NAHSP Locality Planning Youth Engagement Report – August 2025

Topic 2 – Housing

Affordable and warm homes that meet our needs and are in a thriving community we want to be part of, near the services we rely on, are central to creating liveable places.

National planning policy seeks to encourage, promote and facilitate the delivery of more high quality, affordable and sustainable homes that meet the diverse housing needs of people and communities across Scotland. Local development plans have a key role in housing delivery, including by establishing a local housing land requirement and the allocation of deliverable land to meet this target.

To support and inform the preparation of this Evidence Report and LDP3 in relation to housing matters, a [Housing Evidence Paper](#) [CD076] was prepared. This sets out information on housing need, housing delivery and housing land in North Ayrshire. This chapter of the Evidence Report summarises this evidence, relevant stakeholder engagement and considers the implications for the Proposed Plan. The corresponding NPF4 policies are: 16. Quality homes; and 17. Rural homes.

The [Local Development Planning Guidance](#) provides advice on how planning authorities can take account of policies 16 and 17 when preparing the Evidence Report. The Evidence Report is expected to:

- include a section specifically on housing
- include an indicative Local Housing Land Requirement (LHLR), when setting out what the evidence means for the Proposed Plan; and
- provide a transparent and understandable explanation of how the indicative LHLR has been arrived at.

Information required by the Act & Regulations

Section 15 of the Act concerns the form and content of local development plans. Subsection 1(a) requires the local development plan to take account of matters mentioned in subsection (5), including:

- the housing needs of the population, including, in particular, the needs of persons undertaking further and higher education, older people and disabled people;
- the availability of land in the district for housing, including for older people and disabled people.

Subsection 1A requires the local development plan to include targets for meeting the housing needs of people living in the plan area.

Section 16(2)(ab) states, in preparing the LDP, the planning authority are to have regard to the list of persons seeking to acquire land in the authority's area for self-build housing. This list is required to be prepared, maintained and published in accordance with section 16E.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Section 16B of the Act relates to the Evidence Report. As per subsection (3), the evidence report is to set out the planning authority's view on the matters listed in section 15(5), referred to above; a summary of the action taken to support and promote the construction and adaptation of housing to meet the housing needs of older people and disabled people; a summary of the action taken to meet the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers; and an analysis of the extent to which the action has helped to meet those needs.

The Act also includes the requirement at Section 3A(3)(d) that the National Planning Framework contain 'targets for the use of land in different areas of Scotland for housing'. This has been met at Annex E of NPF4 which sets out the Minimum All-Tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR) for each planning authority in Scotland.

The 2023 Regulations provide additional detail to the requirements set out in primary legislation. Regulation 9 sets out further information and considerations to which the planning authority are to have regard to in preparing a local development plan. Included within this list are any local housing strategy prepared and submitted to the Scottish Ministers in accordance with section 89 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and the resources available or likely to be available for the carrying out of the policies and proposals set out in the local development plan.

Summary of Evidence

The summary of the housing evidence is structured into the following sub-sections:

- Policy Context
- Housing Need
- Housing Delivery
- Housing Land and Stock
- Meeting the housing needs of older people and disabled people
- Meeting the needs of Gypsy/Travellers

The proposed indicative Local Housing Land Requirement and Council's position on developer contributions are covered under the summary of implications for the Proposed Plan.

Policy Context

The planning system has an important role to play in supporting the delivery of homes which meet our future needs. In March 2021, Scotland's first long-term national housing strategy, [Housing to 2040](#) [CD077], was published by the Scottish Government. Housing to 2040 aligns with the Government's ambition that everyone in Scotland should have access to a warm, safe, affordable and energy efficient home that meets their needs, in a community they feel part of and proud of.

It is also recognised by [Scotland's Population Strategy](#) [CD078] that planning at national, regional and local levels plays a key role in considering the spatial implications of population change, proactively shaping future land use. The planning

North Ayrshire’s third Local Development Plan

system can direct development to areas where change is needed to help maintain the viability of local infrastructure and can also manage pressures on infrastructure arising from high demand for new homes, enabling good quality development in a way that is sustainable and reflects the needs of existing communities alongside new residents.

Scotland’s housing and population strategies are reflected in the country’s long-term spatial strategy set out in NPF4. The intent of NPF4’s policy for housing is to encourage, promote and facilitate the delivery of more high quality, affordable and sustainable homes, in the right locations, providing choice across tenures that meet the diverse housing needs of people and communities. There is a specific focus on the housing needs of older people and disabled people and homes that meet the needs of people throughout their lives.

NPF4 directs local development plans to identify a ‘Local Housing Land Requirement’ for the area they cover. This is to meet the duty established by Section 3A(3)(d) of the Act for a housing target and is to represent how much land is required by reference to the number of housing units. To promote an ambitious and plan-led approach, the Local Housing Land Requirement is expected to exceed the 10-year Minimum All-Tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR) figure set out in Annex E of NPF4 for each planning authority in Scotland. The MATHLR figure for North Ayrshire is **2,950**.

An [Assessment Report](#) [CD079] published by Scottish Government in September 2021 explains North Ayrshire’s MATHLR figure has been determined as follows:

Household Projection + Existing Need + Flexibility (25 percent) = MATHLR
50 + 2,300 + 588 = 2,938 – rounded up to 2,950

The household projection, representing newly forming households, used in the calculation is derived from the NRS 2018-based high migration scenario. The HNDA tool default existing housing need figure of 350 has been adjusted to 2,300, representing the backlog housing need from the North Ayrshire Housing Register. This aligns with the approach taken to establishing the housing estimate for North Ayrshire in the latest HNDA (see below).

The [North Ayrshire Local Housing Strategy](#) (LHS) [CD080], covering the period 2023 to 2028, was approved by Cabinet in June 2023. The strategic ambition is for people to live in the right homes, in great places, with access to any support services they need. Four overarching outcomes have been established and align to the four key strategies in ‘Housing to 2040’:

- More homes at the heart of great places
- Affordability and choice
- Affordable warmth and zero emissions
- Improving the quality of our homes

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

The LHS recognises the importance of housebuilding to North Ayrshire's economy and as a way of reversing population decline. An increase in the demand for housing because of economic recovery and renewal and community wealth building approaches, linked to the Ayrshire Growth Deal, is anticipated. To support the outcome of delivering more homes, the LHS sets out minimum housing supply targets for new build housing in the area. The Housing Supply Target (HST) for the period of the strategy (2023 to 2028) is **2,925** homes: 1,625 social housing units and 1,300 delivered by the private sector.

This HST was set considering factors including housing need, taking account of the HNDA; recent and anticipated build rates; and committed investment in affordable housing. The approach used to calculate the Housing Supply Target is detailed in a supporting paper: 'Setting a Housing Supply Target for North Ayrshire' (April 2023) [CD081].

The LHS aligns with North Ayrshire's five-year [Council Plan](#) [CD043], with the documents sharing the same timeframe (2023 to 2028). The Council Plan includes as key activities within the 'Wellbeing' strategic aim: increasing the number of homes in the area through a mix of private and social developments; bringing empty buildings back in to use and providing good quality, affordable homes for life that meet the needs of residents through our own housebuilding programme and wider housing investment.

Since the publication of Housing to 2040, NPF4 and the LHS, the Scottish Government formally declared a national Housing Emergency in the Scottish Parliament on 15 May 2024. Between June 2023 and November 2024, thirteen local authorities in Scotland declared local housing emergencies. A housing emergency has not been declared in North Ayrshire. In November 2024, the Scottish Government published [Planning and the housing emergency: delivery plan](#) [CD082], setting out actions within the remit of planning to tackle the housing emergency. On 2 September 2025, the Cabinet Secretary for Housing announced the publication of [Tackling Scotland's Housing Emergency: Housing Emergency Action Plan](#) [CD083] to step-up action and lead Scotland through and out of the housing emergency. It includes immediate and medium-to-long term measures to deliver affordable, quality homes of all tenure, and to unlock land and investment to meet the needs of communities now and in the future.

The action plan expects an 'an emergency-led approach' to decision making both in the preparation of local development plans and in the determination of planning applications, with the delivery of more affordable homes central.

Housing need

Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA)

A [Housing Need and Demand Assessment](#) [CD084] has been prepared to inform the LHS and LDP3. It was submitted to the Scottish Government Centre for Housing Market Analysis (CHMA) on 16 December 2021 and confirmed as 'robust and credible' by CHMA on 7 February 2022 [CD085]. HNDA20 sets the housing estimate

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

– the number of additional housing units required in North Ayrshire – for the period 2022 to 2042 at **2,330** new units.

Three scenarios are considered within HNDA20 (see Figure 87 of HNDA for full details). For Scenarios 2 (Principal Migration) and 3 (Economic Resilience), the backlog need figure used in the HNDA tool is derived from the North Ayrshire Housing Register and is set at 2,300 households. This is instead of the built-in figures from the HNDA tool (those referred to as 'HoTOC' and which includes only homeless households in temporary accommodation plus households who are both concealed and overcrowded). It is considered the HoTOC figure for North Ayrshire of 350 does not represent the number households with an assessed need for housing. How the backlog need figure has been derived from the Housing Register is explained below.

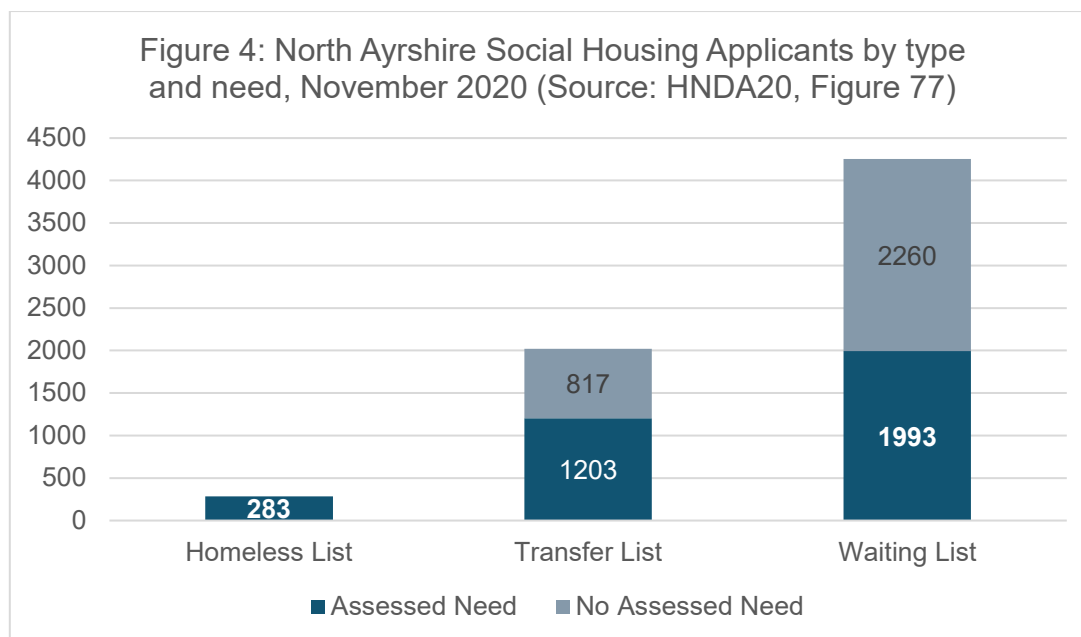
North Ayrshire Council, Cunninghame, Trust, and Irvine Housing Associations and ANCHO operate a 'groups plus points' [Common Allocation Policy](#) [CD086] and housing register, called the 'North Ayrshire Housing Register.' When applying to the register, applicants are awarded points based on their housing need and are placed in a housing needs group. Those with greatest need have more points; applicants with no points are adjudged not to have a housing need.

The North Ayrshire Housing Register comprises the following groups:

- Group 1 – Homeless
- Group 2 – Strategic housing needs
- Group 3 – Accessibility needs
- Group 4 – Transfer applicants
- Group 5 – Overcrowding
- Group 6 – General needs
- Group 7 – Location needs

In November 2020, there were just over 6,500 households, comprising 283 homeless, 2,020 transfer and 4,253 waiting list applicants, on the register. Subtracting the number of households with no assessed need (having no points) and all transfer applicants, as when they are rehoused, they release a property which can then be reallocated to another waiting list applicant (effectively cancelling themselves out of the calculation), gave the 'backlog' need figure of 2,300 ($283 + 1993 = 2,276$, rounded up to 2,300), representing the existing demand for social housing in North Ayrshire. This is the figure used by HNDA20 and by the Scottish Government in setting the MATHLR.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan



The population and household projections used for the HNDA are 2018 based. Population projections based on several migration and other scenarios all indicate that the number of people living in North Ayrshire will reduce by between 8 percent and 14 percent by 2043. The average of these scenarios suggests a 10 percent reduction in population over this time, a number that correlates with the 'principal' migration forecast [see HNDA20, Figure 11]. The 'Economic Resilience' scenario included in HNDA20 is based on 'high migration' data. Whilst the population is expected to decline to 2041, over the same period household numbers will remain more stable with a projected decrease of only 3 percent (or c.2,000) over the next 25 years.

The housing estimate of **2,330** established in HNDA20 for the period 2022 to 2042 is predicated on the most positive of three scenarios, referred to as 'Economic Resilience' (Scenario 3), rounded up to the nearest 10. This scenario is based on a more optimistic view which anticipates a positive outcome from local economic strategies [see Productive Places schedule]. The high migration projection is used in the HNDA tool for this scenario along with assumptions of higher income growth, meaning more people currently on the social housing list or in social housing will be able to afford a private solution. These units are all front-loaded to the first five years: it is anticipated that the need is met within five years.

Table 5 – Estimate of additional future housing units for North Ayrshire 2022 to 2042 – Economic Resilience (Scenario 3)

Tenure	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28 to 41/42	Total
Owner Occupation	215	215	215	215	215	0	1075
Private Rent	88	88	88	88	88	0	440

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Tenure	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28 to 41/42	Total
Below Market Rent	16	16	16	16	16	0	80
Social Rent	146	146	146	146	146	0	730
Total	465	465	465	465	465	0	2325

Existing housing need is the main component of the housing estimate, with only a very small amount (1.3 percent) driven by newly forming households, that is future need.

The key difference between Scenario 2 (Principal Migration) and Scenario 3 (Economic Resilience) set out in the HNDA is the tenure. In Scenario 2, the total estimate of additional future housing units required is 2310, with just 5 units of 'owner occupation' and the remainder social rent.

It is noted that LDP3 is expected to be adopted in March 2027 ([Development Plan Scheme 2024](#) [CD087]), five years into the HNDA projection period of 2022 to 2042, and at which point HNDA20 estimates additional future housing need is zero units across all tenures. It is acknowledged that delays in the preparation and submission of the Evidence Report mean that adoption of LDP3 is likely to be later than March 2027. An updated Development Plan Scheme is required to be prepared, setting out a revised timetable.

Specific need

The HNDA also considers the specific housing needs of persons undertaking further and higher education, older people, disabled people, Gypsy Travellers and Travelling Show people. This is summarised below:

- **Persons undertaking further and higher education**

Ayrshire College is the only further education provider in North Ayrshire. Over 7,000 students are taught at various campuses in North (Irvine and Kilwinning), South (Ayr) and East Ayrshire (Kilmarnock). With almost 96 percent of the college's students originating from the Ayrshire region, Ayrshire College does not provide student accommodation. When necessary, the college will provide support to students moving to the area for study, in order that they can find suitable accommodation [see HNDA20, para 178]. Accordingly, no requirement to build student accommodation in North Ayrshire has been identified.

- **Older People and Disabled People**

North Ayrshire has an ageing population. The number of residents aged 65 and over has increased from 25,898 at the 2011 census to 31,663 in 2022 – an increase of 22.3 percent. This compares to a 3.4 percent decrease in the total number of people during the same period.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

The NHS provides [advice on housing options for older people](#), recognising that as people get older, their homes may become unsuitable, uncomfortable or unsafe. People may wish to move to a home which is smaller and easier to maintain; somewhere which is more suited to their physical needs, such as properties without stairs; nearer friends and family; or with easier access to facilities and services. There are several options available, which may or may not involve moving home, including:

- Adaptation of existing property
- Exchanging a council or housing association property
- Amenity or sheltered housing
- Extra care housing
- Close care

The HNDA considers specialist provision, including accessible and adapted housing and housing for wheelchair users. Level access homes which support bathing and food preparation, which are flexible enough to allow for future adaptations and care/support services and where the use of assistive technology can be maximised can meet the housing needs of older households, people with physical disabilities and people with medical conditions which limit mobility.

While the overall number of households in North Ayrshire is not expected to change significantly, the HNDA estimates that the types of homes we need to provide will change, with an emphasis of more specialist accommodation. By considering forecast changes to household patterns by head of household and applying the proportion of the population who have long term health conditions by age, the HNDA forecasts that by 2043 we will need specialist accommodation for approximately 23,500 households, compared to 20,000 in 2018. This is a 16 percent increase in demand. [HNDA 20, para. 166, p. 90].

To support independent living, the North Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership offers a range of bespoke options. Residents or their representatives can request an assessment of need, which is carried out by the Community Occupational Therapy Service. If the need for an adaptation is identified, this will be provided based on priority of need, with those presenting with high level needs being provided their adaptation first (this can be subject to demand and budget availability).

A snapshot of the position in March 2025 illustrates how need for property adaptations presents. Half of those on the list can be supported at home with just the installation of handrails or grabrails (including bannisters). Solutions to bathing problems, be it the installation of a shower or a bath, are the second most frequent type of adaptation required, but do not account for even a quarter of total need.

In March 2020, the North Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership advised that there were 1,300 people on their list for adaptations. Applying the same forecast increase in people who need an adaptation, this suggests the list would be at around 1,500 in 2043 [HNDA20, para 169, p. 92].

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

In terms of supported housing, there are just over 900 care homes spaces in North Ayrshire, almost all of which are independently owned. The exception is a single Council owned facility on Arran, which has capacity for 30 people.

- **Gypsy Travellers**

No demand issues have been identified by the HNDA in relation to accommodation for gypsy/travellers. North Ayrshire Council manages the only site in the area for gypsy/travellers, Redburn Grove in Irvine. The site provides 16 pitches, each of which includes an external utility building with a shower room, kitchen, and utility area. Four pitches are level access. HNDA20 reports that in February 2021, there were 10 families on the waiting list for a pitch. The figure in October 2024 was 16.

Between 2010 and 2023, there were an average of nine void pitches per annum at Redburn Grove, representing a 50 percent turnover. This exceeds the turnover rate for mainstream accommodation and suggests that need is met in a timely manner, with those on the list waiting around a year, on average, for a pitch [see HNDA20, paras 208 to 214 – updated with figures to 2023].

The Council's Tenant Participation Team provide support to, and engage regularly with, the residents of Redburn Grove, including in relation to facilities at Redburn. Through this engagement, there has been no indication that additional pitches are required. Housing Services also provide support to families within temporary and unauthorised encampments in line with the Council's [Unauthorised Encampment Policy](#) [CD088]. Data on the number of unauthorised encampments within North Ayrshire indicate there were 64 during 2024, higher than previous years (51 in the previous two years). These figures do not equate to individual households, with multiple counts of the same family who may stay at various locations during their time in our area included.

A statement on how the Council is meeting the housing needs of Gypsy/Travellers is noted below.

- **Travelling Showpeople**

Travelling Showpeople are a distinct and separate group from Gypsy/Travellers, with their own history and culture. While shows are a regular feature in North Ayrshire, including at Ardrossan South Beach and the Towns Moors in Irvine, we do not have a history of Travelling Showpeople wishing to reside in the area. Our assumption is that, with over 80 percent of Travelling Showpeople in Scotland living in Glasgow, Showpeople will 'commute' to North Ayrshire from Glasgow and base themselves here temporarily, rather than seeking a more permanent base, albeit we have been unable to confirm this [see HNDA20, paras 215 to 217].

Further evidence

A robust and credible HNDA is the established starting point for establishing housing need. Where CHMA is satisfied that the HNDA is robust and credible, the approach used is not anticipated to be considered further at the Gate Check. Where stakeholders consider further evidence may be relevant after a robust and credible HNDA has been achieved, this may be raised in engagement and reflected in the Evidence Report [[Local Development Planning Guidance](#), p.63].

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Further evidence is presented below in relation to population projections backlog need, our islands, and an alternative approach to establishing housing need promoted by Homes for Scotland.

- **2022-based sub-national population projections**
2022-based [sub-national population projections](#) for Scottish council areas and health boards were published by National Records of Scotland on 30 September 2025. North Ayrshire's population is projected to decrease by 3.1 percent in the 10 years from mid-2022 to mid-2032. The projections anticipate positive net migration over the 10 years to mid-2032 (+3.93 percent) which is outweighed by natural change – more deaths than births – accounting for a projected decrease of 7.14 percent.

The projected components of population change in North Ayrshire between mid-2022 and mid-2032 due to migration are migration within Scotland (3.2 percent) and migration from the rest of the UK (1.74 percent). The contribution from international migration is expected to fall 1.05 percent. Across Scotland, there is a pattern of projected negative internal migration from the cities, with more people leaving these council areas for other parts of Scotland than arriving from other council areas. This figure for Glasgow is -9.9 percent.

The last set of projections, used within the HNDA, were based on the mid-year population estimates for 2018. They were rolled forward from Scotland's Census 2011. This set of 2022-based projections are the first to be based on Scotland's Census 2022. This also includes the rebased time series for mid-2012 to mid-2021 following the release of 2022 census data. There is a nominal percentage difference (0.3 percent) between 2018-based and 2022-based projections for North Ayrshire to mid-2032.

As well as the principal population projections, a number of variant projections are available. These are based on alternative assumptions of future fertility, mortality and migration. The high migration projection variant anticipates population decrease in North Ayrshire of 5.916 percent by 2042, compared to the larger decrease shown in the Principal scenario (7.387 percent).

Homes for Scotland [HFS4_14112025] note that both the NRS Local Area Migration Statistics (Mid-2024) and Household Projections for Scotland (2022-based) are due to be published before the end of 2025 and may indicate additional population growth.

- **Backlog need**
As noted above, HNDA20 uses the North Ayrshire Housing Register, rather than the 'HoTOC' figure, to determine housing need within the HNDA. The backlog need figure (2,276, rounded up to 2,300) – which accounts for the majority of the HNDA housing estimate figure – used within HNDA20 and the NPF4 MATHLR figure was drawn from analysis of the North Ayrshire Housing Register carried out in November 2020.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

A more recent review of backlog has been undertaken to inform our understanding of housing need. At 11 July 2025, there were 6,111 applicants on the North Ayrshire Housing Register, with 3,466 assessed as having a housing need. These figures are noted in the latest [Strategic Housing Investment Plan \(SHIP\)](#) [CD089].

Table 6 – Breakdown of Total Applications by Group (including Housing Need), July 2025

North Ayrshire Housing Register Group	All applicants	Applicants with an assessed housing need	Applicants with and assessed housing need (excluding transfer applicants)
Group 1 – Homeless	354	354	354
Group 2 – Strategic needs	44	44	31
Group 3 – Accessible housing needs	1,180	1,180	631
Group 4 – Transfer	1,126	475	0
Group 5 – Overcrowded	607	607	567
Group 6 – General needs	2,267	675	669
Group 7 – Relocation needs	533	131	71
Total	6,111	3,466	2,323

Source: [Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2026 to 2031](#) [CD089]

The comparative July 2025 backlog need figure – with transfer applicants removed - is 2,323. This represents an increase of 47 households or 2 percent compared to November 2020, recognising that position on these two dates is just a snapshot in time. This backlog need has increased despite over 800 new social houses being delivered between April 2021 and March 2025 (see Housing Delivery).

- **Location of need**

Applicants to the North Ayrshire Housing Register are not restricted in the number of letting areas (locations) they can select. An exercise to assess demand proportionally has been undertaken as part of the SHIP which identified the Three Towns and Irvine as the most pressured localities in terms of demand for social housing. Further analysis is required to determine housing pressures within the Arran and Cumbrae localities as the proportionate analysis is not effective in determining pressure within smaller localities.

Table 7 – Proportionate demand for social housing by locality, July 2025

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Locality	Applicants with an assessed housing need	Percentage of applicants with an assessed housing need
Arran	153	4 percent
Garnock Valley	336	10 percent
Irvine	1397	40 percent
Kilwinning	494	14 percent
North Coast (excluding Cumbrae)	317	9 percent
Cumbrae	21	1 percent
Three Towns	736	22 percent

Source: [Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2026 to 2031](#) [CD089]

- Housing on Arran and Cumbrae

The HNDA concludes that North Ayrshire is a single, contained housing market [para 10 to 11]. Analysis of the HNDA Data Pack 2020 shows that in 2018/19, 62 percent of local house purchases were to people who already lived in North Ayrshire. A further 26 percent of purchasers originated from across South Ayrshire, East Ayrshire and Greater Glasgow, but with no significant linkages to any one area. HNDA20 also concluded that North Ayrshire does not have functional sub-housing market areas [para 13].

Notwithstanding the conclusions made within the HNDA that North Ayrshire operates as a single, contained housing market, it is acknowledged that the islands of Arran and Cumbrae have different housing issues, challenges and needs. Both islands are classified as 'Remote Rural' by the Scottish Government 6-fold Urban Rural Classification. Their housing markets are typified by a much higher proportion of second-homes, short-term lets and house sales to purchasers from beyond the islands.

In January 2023, the Arran Housing Task Force was established, aimed at finding long-term solutions to Arran's housing challenges. The Task Force involves a wide range of partners to address the issues which face island residents and businesses. The Terms of Reference [CD090] further set out the role of the Task Force and the purpose and scope of commissioned research aimed at providing an independent, evidence-based assessment of demand for affordable housing on Arran.

The Arran Affordable Housing Demand Report [CD091] concludes there are issues with affordability for those on low and moderate incomes in accessing owner occupation and that the private sector rented sector is difficult to access. While this is a similar issue for households across Scotland and the UK, Arran compares to some of the most expensive areas in Scotland in terms of house prices. Affordable housing solutions identified include the provision of Mid-Market Rent, Shared Ownership and Shared Equity properties.

The Housing Demand calculation set out in the report concludes that, with the recent and committed new build developments, the supply of social housing is set to increase significantly (by 12 percent), and this is expected have a positive impact in reducing the number of households on the social housing register. The backlog need

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

of those in affordable housing need will be addressed in one year, and in four years if those not in housing need are included.

The report, however, also notes that ambitions for economic growth and to reverse predicted population decline mean that housing register data should not be the sole source of demand for housing. Current and future business needs in terms of employee housing requirements, in addition to concerns over village depopulation and means of regenerating these settlements should also be considered to fully understand housing need on the island, including affordable housing.

The Arran Housing Task Force launched a survey in January 2025 to learn more about current housing provision on the island as well as future aspirations as part of the effort to help shape housing provision on the island. Analysis of the results of the survey will inform the work of the Task Force and the approach LDP3 takes.

On Cumbrae, 18 additional units were delivered by the Council in 2022, comprising 3 General Needs, 9 Amenity, 3 wheelchair user and 3 ground floor living properties. The demand for further new build development on Cumbrae is considered annually as part of the review of the Strategic Housing Investment Plan.

The matters the local development plan must take account of, set out in the Act, and which the Evidence Report is to include the planning authority's view on, include the desirability of allocating land for the purposes of resettlement. No such areas have been identified, on Arran, Cumbrae or remote rural and accessible rural areas on the mainland.

The [Rural and Islands Housing Action Plan](#) (2023) [CD092] recognises that delivering homes on islands is often more complex and costly than in other parts of Scotland and highlights the often-generational impact that even a small number of homes of the right kind, in the right places can have in supporting long-term sustainability. Supporting the delivery of more homes in rural and island areas is also one of the key objectives of the Housing Emergency Action Plan.

- Homes for Scotland research

In June 2024, Homes for Scotland (HfS) shared a report on existing housing need in North Ayrshire prepared by The Diffley Partnership and Rettie & Co., dated January 2024: [Existing Housing Need in North Ayrshire](#) (the 'Diffley Report') [CD093]. This independent survey commissioned by Homes for Scotland seeks to take a primary research-led approach to understand housing need across Scotland, providing estimates at the national level as well as at individual local authority areas.

The report presents the headline findings from a survey of 419 households (representing approximately 0.6 percent of all households) across North Ayrshire, aimed at estimating the proportion and type of existing housing need across the local authority area. It is acknowledged that the purpose of the report is not to provide definitive figures, but rather to provide an indication of need based on the primary research.

The research estimates that around 25 percent of households are in some form of need, equating to circa 16,200 households. Within this figure:

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

- 200 homeless or in temporary accommodation
- 2,000 in unfit properties
- 2,000 households living in properties that do not have specialised adaptations or support required
- 5,000 households financially struggling due to high housing costs
- 7,000 households within overcrowded properties and/or concealed

When accounting for those who can make in-situ repairs, the report reduces the overall need figure to circa 12,300 households. Based on secondary data analysis, it is estimated that around half of these households require affordable housing and half can afford a market housing solution. The report acknowledges that some of this housing need could be resolved by addressing under-occupancy of existing homes; promoting available housing in low demand areas; bringing empty homes back into use; and bringing second homes and short-term lets into longer term use but concludes that the survey demonstrates significantly higher levels of housing need in North Ayrshire than is currently being accounted for and that building new homes will have to be a significant part of meeting net current housing need.

Self-Build Register

Section 16E of the Act requires a planning authority area to prepare and maintain a list of persons who have registered interest with the authority with the intention of acquiring land in the authority's area for self-build housing. Understanding the demand for self-provided housing is important for both plan-making and decision-taking.

Details of the North Ayrshire list can be [found on our website](#), including a form for being added to the list. Our intention is to publish this list – as required by paragraph (2) of Section 16E – prior to finalising the Evidence Report. At the end of September 2025, 14 expressions of interest in self-build plots were received via the register. Irvine was the most preferred locality, followed by Kilwinning.

Housing delivery

[Housing statistics collated by the Scottish Government](#) provide long-term data on housing completions and new housing supply in North Ayrshire based on quarterly NB1 and NB2 returns for council and private house building completions, annual Stock 4 returns on conversions and information from the Affordable Housing Investment Programme (AHIP) on housing association new build and refurbishment. Over a 29-year period, an average of around 400 new homes have been completed in North Ayrshire per annum.

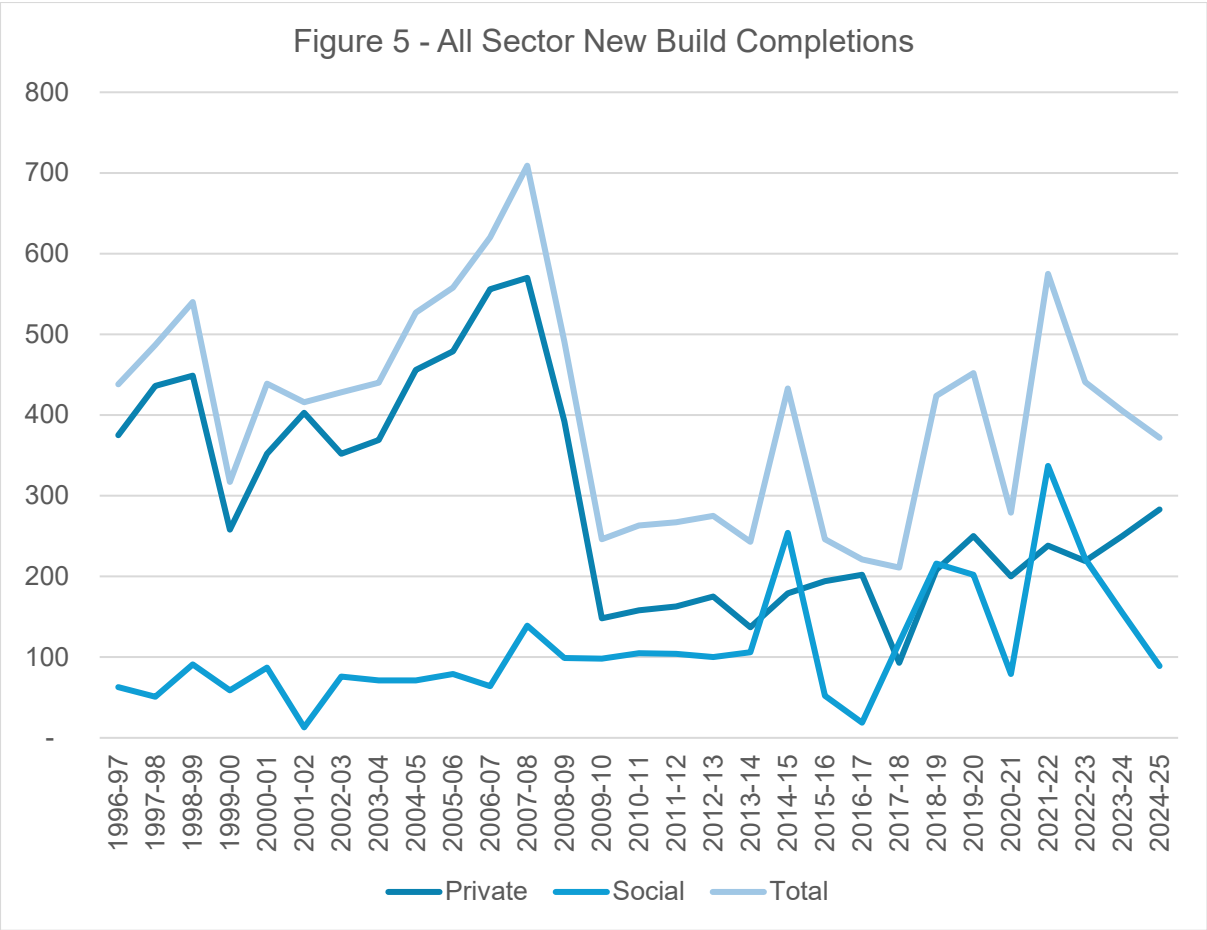
Table 8 – Housing completions in North Ayrshire by tenure (Source: Scottish Government Housing Statistics)

Financial Year	Private	Social	Total
1996 to 1997	375	63	438
1997 to 1998	436	51	487
1998 to 1999	449	91	540

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Financial Year	Private	Social	Total
1999 to 2000	258	59	317
2000 to 2001	352	87	439
2001 to 2002	403	13	416
2002 to 2003	352	76	428
2003 to 2004	369	71	440
2004 to 2005	456	71	527
2005 to 2006	479	79	558
2006 to 2007	556	64	620
2007 to 2008	570	139	709
2008 to 2009	392	99	491
2009 to 2010	148	98	246
2010 to 2011	158	105	263
2011 to 2012	163	104	267
2012 to 2013	175	100	275
2013 to 2014	137	106	243
2014 to 2015	179	254	433
2015 to 2016	194	52	246
2016 to 2017	202	19	221
2017 to 2018	93	118	211
2018 to 2019	208	216	424
2019 to 2020	250	202	452
2020 to 2021	200	79	279
2021 to 2022	238	337	575
2022 to 2023	219	222	441
2023 to 2024	250	155	405
2024 to 2025	283	89	372

North Ayrshire’s third Local Development Plan



It is noted that in setting the NPF4 MATHLR, account was taken of the 10-year trend in completions as a comparative benchmark. The [Explanatory Report](#) [CD094] further advises that past completions provide evidence of past trends in the delivery of new housing units but completions do not in themselves create demand for new units of housing. The information is a helpful factor to use as a comparative benchmark to sense check whether a requirement is reasonable but not a determinant of future housing requirements.

Using the Scottish Government housing statistics, comparative benchmarks are identified in Table 9. These figures indicate an increase in all-tenure completions in the last five years, with a greater proportion of these completions coming in the social rent sector.

Table 9 – Average number of annual housing completions by tenure

Period	Private	Social	All tenure
2020/21 to 2024/25 (Last 5 years)	238	176	414
2015/16 to 2019/20 (Previous 5 years)	189	121	311
2015/16 to 2024/25 (Last 10 years)	214	149	363
2005/06 to 2024/25 (20 years)	255	132	387

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Performance of LDP2

North Ayrshire's [adopted Local Development Plan \(LDP2\)](#) [CD001] was published in November 2019. Section 2 of this Evidence Report provides an evaluation of the delivery of LDP2.

Schedule 10a of LDP2 explains how the plan's Housing Supply Target (HST) of 4,071 for the period 2019 to 2029 was derived. The starting point was an HNDA which established a requirement for just 317 new homes in 10-years.

The Scottish Government's housing statistics indicate 2,524 units were delivered during the first six years of LDP2 (2019/20 to 2024/25). This represents an over-delivery of 81 units for the period versus the annualised HST [$4,071/10 \times 6 = 2,443$]. Current programming, as set out in the 2025 Housing Land Audit [CD096 & CD097] – which does not include completions on small sites – anticipates a further 1,769 completions in the final four years of the LDP2 plan period. If the programming proves accurate, by the end of the 10-year period (31 March 2029), 4,293 units will have been delivered in total, exceeding the HST by 222 homes.

A significant contribution to exceeding LDP2's Housing Supply Target is expected to be made by the five additional housing sites allocated by LDP2 and included within Schedule 2a of the plan. As demonstrated by Table 10, approximately a quarter of the LDP2 housing supply target will be delivered on these new sites.

Table 10 – Delivery of LDP2 Schedule 2a sites

Site	Consented	Completed March 2025	Programmed (2025 to 2035)
West of Newhouse Drive, Kilbirnie	112	0	112
Lochlibo Road, Irvine	93	42	51
Wood Farm, Kilwinning	198	166	32
Portencross Road, West Kilbride	220	0	220
Mayfield Farm, Saltcoats	388	50	322
Total	1,011	258	737

Strategic Housing Investment Plan

[The Strategic Housing Investment Plan \(SHIP\)](#) [CD089] sets out the priorities and locations for affordable housing investment by the Council and registered social landlords in North Ayrshire to support the outcomes in the Local Housing Strategy. It is updated annually and includes details of individual development projects to be taken forward over its five-year lifespan. Cabinet approved the North Ayrshire Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2026 to 2031 on 28 October 2025.

Through the SHIP, the Council has a long-term cumulative new build development target of 1,666 new Council homes. The current SHIP notes that good progress has been made towards achieving this target, with 975 new Council homes built at 30 June 2025. The Council and its partners combined progress totals 1,888 new homes since 2013. Included within this figure are the following types of accommodation:

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

- Amenity housing – 364 units
- Sheltered housing – 251 units
- Supported accommodation – 62 units
- Wheelchair user – 95 units

It should be noted that 51 of the amenity, sheltered and supported accommodation units detailed above are suitable for wheelchair users and a further 57 ground floor living units have been delivered, also suitable for wheelchair users.

In October 2025 the Scottish Government confirmed a £16.125 million Resource Planning Assumption (RPA) for North Ayrshire for 2025/26, £0.477 million of which requires to be focussed on acquisitions to address temporary accommodation pressures. Officers have assumed funding at 2025/26 baseline levels for the five-year duration of the Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2026 to 2031 (£15.648 million per annum). The SHIP is therefore based on projected Scottish Government grant funding of £94.365 million for the Council and its partners, for the six years from April 2025 to March 2031. The Council and its partners have contractually agreed funding commitments totalling £17.762 million. The Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2026 to 2031 aims to secure investment for the delivery of a total of 1,038 properties by the Council and its RSL partners. This figure includes 'buy backs' and refurbishments.

Table 11 – Proposed new supply housing (including buy backs and refurbs) by type and locality – SHIP 2026 to 2031

Locality	General Needs	Amenity	Supported	Wheelchair	Ground Floor Living	Gypsy/ Travellers	Total
Arran	40	0	0	0	0	0	40
Garnock Valley	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Irvine	257	154	0	48	45	16	520
Kilwinning	61	12	0	6	7	0	86
North Coast	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
Three Towns	17	2	0	0	0	0	19
TBA	73	0	0	0	0	0	73
Total	451	168	0	54	52	16	741

A further 297 affordable homes planned within the SHIP 2026 to 2031 are included within a shadow programme, which can only be progressed if slippage becomes available within the main SHIP programme, or if additional funding becomes available.

Table 12 – SHIP 2026 to 31 Shadow Programme

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Locality	General Needs	Amenity	Supported	Wheelchair	Ground Floor Living	Gypsy/ Travellers	Total
Arran	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Garnock Valley	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Irvine	16	0	0	0	0	0	16
Kilwinning	29	5	0	1	2	0	37
North Coast	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Three Towns	177	39	0	12	16	0	244
TBA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	222	44	0	13	18	0	297

Buy-back programmes form part of the SHIP, bringing primarily former social housing stock back into Council or RSL ownership. This can assist with housing management and maintenance issues, increases housing supply for social rent, supports the Council's Regeneration Delivery Plan, and brings long-term empty homes back into use. Buy backs do not deliver additional housing stock. 102 Buy Backs are included within the SHIP 2026 to 2031, plus 3 refurbishments. The redevelopment of the 16 Gypsy/Travellers pitches at Redburn Grove, Irvine is also included.

The Strategic Housing Investment Plan is not the only funding mechanism available for delivering new build or acquired affordable housing. The Council and its partners are exploring alternative delivery and funding models to maximise the funding available, and units delivered, and reduce demand for the Council's Resource Planning Assumptions.

Windfall and small site completions

Sites which become available for development during the life of a development plan but are not identified specifically in the plan, including 'small sites' of less than four units which are not allocated in the LDP, are referred to as 'windfall sites'.

Completions on windfall sites contribute to meeting targets for the delivery of housing. Since 2019, 393 housing units have been delivered on windfall sites in North Ayrshire at an average of 78.6 per year.

Table 13 – Windfall Development (2019/2020 to 2023/2024)

Year	Private Windfall Completions	Affordable Windfall Completions	Total
2019/2020	33	58	91
2020/2021	19	19	38
2021/2022	27	98	125
2022/2023	23	22	45
2023/2024	46	48	94
Total	148	245	393

Source: NAC analysis of Building Standards Completion Certificates

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

The majority of windfall completions have come through the SHIP on Council-owned sites including Towerlands, Irvine (50 units), Watt Court, Dalry (49 units) and Green Street, Saltcoats (24 units). Private windfall completions have tended to be on small sites (1 to 4 units). On Arran there have been 66 windfall completions between April 2019 and March 2024, of which 44 have been on small sites.

Developments smaller than four units are not programmed in the most recent Housing Land Audit (2024/25), but of the windfall sites of four units or more, a total of 150 homes are anticipated to be completed over the next 10 years. 39 of these completions are upon SHIP sites.

Taking account of past completions, a windfall assumption of 300 units (30 per year) is proposed as the expected contribution of windfall sites to meeting the indicative LHLR. This is a conservative estimate aligned to average private windfall completions over the last five years. A large proportion of windfall completions in the last five years have been affordable homes delivered by the Council on redeveloped sites, including former schools. We do not anticipate that opportunities to the same extent will present themselves during the LDP3 period.

Demolitions

Data available from the Scottish Government notes only a limited number of demolitions in North Ayrshire over the last five years for which information has been published. Ten demolitions undertaken by the Council are noted, which relate to the Estate Based Regeneration Programme.

Table 14 – Demolitions 2004/2005 to 2023/2024

Period	Non-local authority demolitions	Local authority demolitions	Total demolitions
2019/2020 to 2023/2024 (Last 5 years)	0	10	10
2014/2015 to 2018/2019 (Previous 5 years)	0	161	161
2014/2015 to 2023/2024 (10 years)	0	171	171
2004/2005 to 2023/2024 (20 years)	7	832	839

Source: [Scottish Government Housing Statistics](#)

Housing land and stock

Housing Land Audits monitor the established housing land supply and the delivery of new homes. The base date of North Ayrshire's Housing Land Audit (HLA) is 31 March, and the HLA has been updated annually since 2017. The most recent HLA covers the 12-month period to March 2025: Report [CD096] and Spreadsheet [CD097].

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

To reflect the [Scottish Government guidance on Housing Land Audits](#) [CD098], published in January 2025, we have reviewed sites within our housing land supply to ensure sites within the current HLA are either allocated within the LDP and/or have extant planning permission for new homes (including the remaining capacity of sites under construction, and including PPP): removing windfall sites where planning permission has expired prior to development commencing. This seeks to ensure the audit programmes what is considered most likely to be delivered not what theoretically could be delivered. A number of allocated sites have also been removed from the HLA as they have been assessed as unlikely to come forward, albeit all will require to be re-assessed in the preparation of LDP3.

Following engagement with the industry body, Homes for Scotland confirmed their agreement of our 2024/25 HLA on 5 November 2025 by email [CD099]. The agreed audit programmes completions over a 10-year period and anticipates 2,480 completions, with the majority (72 percent) delivered by the private sector. Programmed delivery within the LDP3 plan period (2027 to 2037) is 1,482.

Table 15 – Programmed Housing Completions (2025 to 2034). Source: North Ayrshire Housing Land Audit 2025

Year	Private	Social	Total
2025/2026	397	121	518
2026/2027	349	131	480
2027/2028	277	128	405
2028/2029	159	207	366
2029/2030	142	83	225
2030/2031	129	15	144
2031/2032	101	0	101
2032/2033	80	0	80
2033/2034	81	0	81
2034/2035	80	0	80
Total	1795	685	2480

It should be noted that the number of completions anticipated in the social sector is lower than the commitment in the current SHIP to deliver 741 new-build affordable homes by October 2031, as not all sites are included within the HLA at this stage.

In addition to the 2,480 units programmed over the next 10 years, the HLA contains a further 2,436 units which are unprogrammed. This gives a total established housing land supply of 4,916 new homes. Based on current programming, it is anticipated that the remaining established housing land supply will total 3,918 at the expected adoption date of LDP3 (March 2027), taking account of programmed completions in 2025/26 (518) and 2026/27 (480).

The audit covering the period April 2025 to March 2026 will be prepared in the months following 31 March 2026. This will be a key audit in informing the preparation of the Proposed Plan, particularly in relation to our understanding of the current deliverable housing land supply in North Ayrshire.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Ineffective stock

Empty homes: At December 2024, around 1,350 homes in North Ayrshire were registered as empty, for council tax purposes. Only eleven of these were being actively marketed for sale or rent while over 700 (53 percent) were 'long-term' empty, either receiving only a 10 percent Council Tax discount or being penalised with a 100 percent Council Tax levy.

Table 16 – Empty Homes by Locality (December 2024)

Locality	Empty Homes (Number)	Empty Homes (percentage of overall stock)
Arran	102	3.2 percent
Garnock Valley	185	1.8 percent
Irvine	282	1.5 percent
Kilwinning	96	1.2 percent
North Coast	319	2.5 percent
Three Towns	373	2.2 percent
Total	1357	1.9 percent

Source: NAC Council Tax Register

Since April 2022, a post within the Council's Private Sector Advice Team has been funded from income generated from the reduction in discount for empty and second homes Council Tax in North Ayrshire, with a focus on bringing empty homes back into use. An 'Empty Homes Framework' is being prepared in collaboration with the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership; this framework will set out the future actions the Council will take in targeting empty homes. Over the past four financial years the Council has acquired four empty homes and brought them back into use as Council stock, utilising funding from the Affordable Housing Supply Programme. Table 17 below details the number of empty homes brought back into use in North Ayrshire between April 2020 and March 2025. All of these homes were subject to the Council Tax levy (this is where the Council currently focuses empty homes resources).

Table 17 - Empty homes brought into use per annum between April 2020 to March 2025

Duration Empty	Under 6 months	6 to 12 months	1 to 2 years	1 to 5 years	5 to 10 years	10+ years	Total
2020 to 2021	35	61	15	10	0	0	121
2021 to 2022	18	71	136	109	0	0	334
2022 to 2023	23	3	31	64	2	0	123
2023 to 2024	259	66	5	39	9	0	378
2024 to 2025	172	78	88	19	18	0	375
Total	507	279	275	241	29	0	1331

Second Homes: Also in December 2024, there were nearly 1,500 second homes classified as such for council tax purposes in North Ayrshire. Second homes account for less than one percent of total housing stock in the Garnock Valley, Irvine,

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Kilwinning and Three Towns. Within the North Coast locality, three percent of properties are second homes.

On our islands, the situation is very different. On Arran, second homes account for approximately 18 percent of all dwellings and on Cumbrae, the proportion is even higher, with a third of dwellings classified as second homes. There are over 1,000 second homes across both islands, representing almost 70 percent of all the second homes in North Ayrshire. The number of second homes on Arran has reduced from 617 in May 2020 to 575 in December 2024, a 6.8 percent decrease; the fall has been less significant on Cumbrae (3.4 percent).

In February 2025, North Ayrshire Council agreed to implement a policy to charge a Council Tax premium on second homes and from 1 April 2025, a 100 percent premium was added to the Council Tax bills of properties classed as second homes. It is possible that the decrease in second homes is partly due to second-home owners self-assessing their properties as businesses and therefore not liable for council tax.

Table 18 – Second Homes by Locality (December 2024)

Locality	Second Homes (Number)	Second Homes (percentage of overall stock)
Arran	575	17.8 percent
Garnock Valley	30	0.3 percent
Irvine	27	0.1 percent
Kilwinning	9	0.1 percent
North Coast (exc. Cumbrae)	337	3.0 percent
Cumbrae	451	33.0 percent
Three Towns	58	0.3 percent
Total	1487	2.1 percent

Source: NAC Council Tax Register

Short Term Lets: [Short term Lets licensing statistics](#) were published by the Scottish Government in October 2025. This statistical publication reports on the operation of the short term lets licensing scheme under the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 (Licensing of Short-term Lets) Order 2022. Local authority short term lets licensing schemes opened to receive applications from 1 October 2022, with existing hosts and operators having until 1 October 2023 to apply for a licence and able to continue operating whilst their applications are being determined. The data indicates there are 886 licenced short term let properties in North Ayrshire. Datazones with 10 or more short-term licences in operation are noted below:

Table 19 – Short term let licences in operation as at 30 June 2025

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Data Zone	Total licences in operation	Licences as percentage of dwellings
Arran – 01	107	16.6 percent
Arran – 06	88	19.8 percent
Arran – 02	81	17.5 percent
Largs Central and Cumbrae - 06	73	9.0 percent
Arran – 07	70	12.2 percent
Arran – 04	58	17.5 percent
Arran – 03	52	13.0 percent
Largs Central and Cumbrae – 04	49	8.6 percent
Largs Central and Cumbrae – 05	41	5.8 percent
Arran – 05	23	6.3 percent
Largs Central and Cumbrae - 07	20	3.6 percent
Largs South – 02	17	2.8 percent
Beith East and Rural - 05	11	2.2 percent
Largs North - 01	11	2.0 percent
Largs North - 05	11	2.4 percent

Source: [Scottish Government](#)

The majority of North Ayrshire's licenced short-term lets are in Arran (479), accounting for 54 percent of all licences in the local authority area. There are approximately 149 licences per 1000 dwellings on the island. On Cumbrae (datazones Largs Central and Cumbrae 06 and 07), there are 93 licences in operation – representing 6.8 percent of dwellings.

Under-occupied homes: The [Scottish Housing Condition Survey](#) reports that of 68,000 households in North Ayrshire, a quarter (17,000 households) under-occupy their home, that is, exceed the minimum bedroom standard requirements by two or more bedrooms. There is significant variation in this measure between social housing (6 percent) and owner-occupied (39 percent).

Meeting the housing needs of older people and disabled people

Section 16B, part (3)(b) of the Act requires the Evidence Report to set out a summary of the action taken by the planning authority to support and promote the construction and adaptation of housing to meet the housing needs of older people and disabled people in the authority's area and an analysis of the extent to which the action has helped to meet those needs.

The [North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership Strategic Commission Plan \(2022 to 2030\)](#), 'Caring Together' [CD100] states successful integration of health and social care services should provide for more people to be cared for and supported at home, or in a homely setting. To achieve this, the homes of local people must be suitable environments for them to receive care and maintain their health. Working alongside the Council's Housing Service and aligned with the Local Housing Strategy, the HSCP has produced a 'Housing Contribution Statement' (HCS) [CD101]. This demonstrates how housing services have a role in the Partnership's strategic planning processes and identifies some of the key local housing challenges

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

that impact on the delivery of effective health and social care service. Some examples include:

- Ensuring housing is suitable for adaptation for people as they age and develop support needs
- Development of supported housing accommodation for those with learning disabilities or other complex needs
- Ensuring support is available to those with drug or alcohol addiction, to help maintain their homes

The HSCP and Housing Services work closely to ensure local homes can facilitate community-based health and care services, helping people to remain in good health, at home, for as long as possible. On an operational level, collaborative working supports households with more complex needs, whether that be prioritising repairs for vulnerable households, identifying support solutions, including adaptations, or identifying bespoke housing.

In addition to 'general needs' or family homes, North Ayrshire Council and RSL partners have built 829 amenity, sheltered, wheelchair accessible and supported accommodation homes since 2013. Amenity housing is designed to meet the needs of people with an accessible housing need and has some or all of the following:

- no stairs inside
- raised electric sockets and lowered switches
- handrails in the bathroom
- lever handled taps
- slip resistant flooring in the kitchen and bathroom

Sheltered housing is designed for older people (60 years of age or over) and has all the features of amenity housing plus a built-in community alarm service and tenant's lounge

Households on the North Ayrshire Housing Register can apply for amenity or sheltered housing through an accessible housing assessment, carried out by an Occupational Therapist, when somebody within the household is having difficulty accessing the facilities within their current home. In the first instance, adaptations to the household's existing property will be considered. Across North Ayrshire, there are c.2,500 social rented homes which have been adapted to meet 'particular' housing needs. This includes housing for wheelchair users, those with limited mobility, sheltered and very sheltered housing, homes with community alarm systems and adapted homes.

The [Local Housing Strategy](#) [CD080] confirms the Council's commitment to ensuring the new social housing being delivered offers enough flexibility to tenants, so that they will be able to remain living at home, independently, for as long as they wish, regardless of their stage in life. All amenity and sheltered housing in North Ayrshire is now expected to be built to an ambulant housing standard as a minimum.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

To ensure need is met now and in the future, the [Local Housing Strategy](#) [CD080] increases the target to ensure at least 10 percent of all tenure new build stock is suitable for wheelchair users (increased from seven percent in the previous strategy). In recognition of the benefits of providing adaptable housing, and to address demand from the North Ayrshire Housing Register, the Council and registered social landlord partners developed 205 (11 percent of new supply) new build homes suitable for wheelchair users since April 2013. The SHIP 2026 to 2031 anticipates the delivery of a further 137 (13 percent of new supply) homes suitable for wheelchair users.

Working together, the North Ayrshire HSCP and Council's Housing Service, aided by the Planning Service, have overseen the adaptation and construction of housing to meet the housing needs of older people and disabled people in North Ayrshire. However, it recognised that while this has helped meet specialist housing needs, North Ayrshire has an aging population and a high proportion of the population have at least one physical long-term condition. It is expected that demand for amenity, sheltered, wheelchair accessible and supported accommodation will increase over the LDP3 plan period.

More detailed analysis of the Housing Register in July 2025, undertaken for the [Strategic Housing Investment Programme \(SHIP\) 2026 to 2031](#) [CD089], highlights specific housing needs. Please note that the numbers are not mutually exclusive, for example, applicants can request both amenity and sheltered homes:

- Requests for amenity housing – 1,226
- Requests for sheltered housing – 448
- Requests for wheelchair accessible homes – 248
- Require Occupational Therapy assessed adapted homes – 62

Meeting the needs of housing needs of Gypsy/Travellers

Section 16B, part (3)(c) of the Act requires the Evidence Report to set out a summary of the action taken by the planning authority to meet the accommodation needs of Gypsies/Travellers in the authority's area and an analysis of the extent to which the action has helped to meet those needs.

North Ayrshire Council manages the only site in the area for Gypsy/Travellers, 'Redburn Grove.' Redburn Grove has sixteen pitches, each with its own amenity building where hot water, bathing and kitchen facilities are provided. On-site services include a site manager, regular GP surgery, visits from community link workers, and an educational tutor for secondary age pupils

In October 2022, the Redburn Grove Tenants Group was formed and is a registered tenant organisation which is tenant-led with a fully elected committee. Around twenty meetings have been held since 2022, with around 45 percent of tenants taking part. Through this engagement with the Gypsy/Traveller population, we understand that Redburn Grove is their preferred housing solution and that there is sufficient accommodation for Gypsy/Travellers in North Ayrshire.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

In 2015, the Scottish Government published minimum standards for Gypsy/Traveller sites. These Standards are now part of the Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC). Compliance with the standards is monitored and reported on by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR). The standards, which were developed, as far as was possible, in line with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) for existing social housing, cover two broad areas: physical facilities and fabric, including the quality of fixtures and fittings, lighting, heating, and a hot and cold-water supply; and services provided by the site provider and how it treats site residents.

While Redburn Grove meets these minimum standards, the Council has continued to improve and upgrade the site. In response to requests from site tenants, a £75,000 budget was identified which allowed the installation of new kitchens and doors in amenity units and the improvement of safety and security on each pitch by installing gates, fencing, and resurfacing. Free Wi-Fi is available at the on-site community room, and through the Connected Scotland programme 15 families have been provided with free Wi-Fi devices – each with two years unlimited access to the internet.

The [Local Housing Strategy](#) [CD080] reaffirms the Council's commitment to engage with Gypsy/Travellers to ensure that housing solutions meet their needs; listen to Gypsy/Travellers from unauthorised encampments so that their needs can be better understood and responded to; and to carry out an options appraisal on potential Gypsy/Traveller site improvements. The Council has reviewed the condition of the permanent site at Redburn Grove, Irvine in consultation with residents, and has created a draft redevelopment proposal, reflecting feedback gathered in relation to the community's preferences for future housing. The redeveloped site would create 16 new larger pitches which provide tenants with:

- Space for two caravans
- Parking provision for two vehicles
- An external clothes drying area
- Individual fenced garden / amenity space
- An amenity block comprising:
 - Open plan kitchen / dining / living room
 - Double bedroom / second lounge with integrated storage space
 - Wet floor shower room
 - Utility room with space for a washing machine and tumble dryer

The project has been included within the [Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2026 to 2031](#) [CD089] for Scottish Government funding prioritisation.

The Council's proactive approach to working with the travelling community extends to engaging with families within unauthorised encampments. This has minimised the level of roadside encampments within North Ayrshire, supporting the view there is no identified need currently to increase provision. On average, we have around 50 unauthorised encampments annually, with this number including multiple counts of the same family or families. The Council has a dedicated encampment officer who engages with these families at the earliest opportunity, undertaking a 'Needs and

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Welfare' Assessment. This helps us to understand the needs and aspirations of individuals enabling us to provide any necessary support. Housing advice is provided including in relation to making an application for a pitch at Redburn Grove and, on occasion, homeless applications.

Summary of Stakeholder Engagement

On 19 December 2024, a draft of the [Housing Evidence Paper](#) [CD076] was shared with Homes for Scotland; Registered Social Landlords operating in North Ayrshire; developers and agents included on the LDP mailing list; and parties who have approached the Strategic Planning team with an interest in having housing sites allocated in LDP3. On 14 March, the Housing Evidence Paper was reissued (without substantive changes) more widely for comment via the LDP online hub and emails to community councils and the remainder of the LDP mailing list. Comments were invited no later than 4 April 2025.

Wider place-based engagement with local communities has been focused on the 'Your Place Survey' and engagement on the 'Place Profiles'. Based on the Place Standard, the Your Place Survey asked respondents to consider how well the homes in their area met the needs of the community; what in relation to housing was good and what could be improved. The [Place Profiles](#) present an overview of housing evidence relating to stock, delivery and sales in each locality. The engagement on the profiles, including public 'drop-in' meetings, focused on the needs and wants of communities.

Direct engagement was held with the Redburn Grove Tenants Group in May 2023, where we used the Place Standard as the basis of engagement with gypsy/travellers resident at the site.

Views expressed on the Housing Evidence Paper, and comments relating to housing arising from wider community engagement are noted in the Record of Engagement [CD009], which includes the Council's response to the issues raised. This engagement is summarised below:

Comments relating to Housing Need

Homes for Scotland noted in response to the Housing Evidence Paper [HFS2_04042025] a fuller assessment of existing unmet need and demand should consider factors such as overcrowded and concealed households; those living in homes which are unfit, unaffordable or unsuitable; homeless households and those in waiting lists for affordable housing. In this context, Homes for Scotland, The Mac Mic Group and Bellway Homes all refer to survey work prepared by The Diffley Partnership and Rettie & Co., '[Existing Housing Need in North Ayrshire](#)' [CD093], stating the report and its findings require to be robustly considered in establishing the housing need in North Ayrshire and setting the indicative Local Housing Land Requirement (LHLR), with reference made to the national housing emergency. Bellway Homes go further in stating, based on the Diffley Report, that housing need in North Ayrshire is significantly higher than has been identified.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

We consider that the HNDA and analysis of the North Ayrshire Housing Register provides a robust basis for determining housing need in North Ayrshire. Our housing register has a specific 'overcrowding' group (Group 5), people who are considered to be living in overcrowded circumstances as defined by the North Ayrshire Housing Allocations Policy, and therefore this included in the social demand calculation.

Comments relating to the indicative Local Housing Land Requirement

Notwithstanding comments above relating to housing need and the Diffley Report, Homes for Scotland and the Mac Mic Group are generally supportive of the Council's approach to setting the iLHLR. Bellway Homes acknowledge and welcome the fact that the figure is more ambitious than the iLHLR of other local authorities and is notably in excess of the MATHLR and HNDA, however, underline it doesn't nearly meet the Diffley report figure.

HFS support for the uplift of 1,550 from the Minimum All-Tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR) to arrive at the proposed Local Housing Land Requirement (LHLR) of 4,500.

Our view on the comments received in relation to housing need and the iLHLR and how these have been taken into account are covered in the Summary of Implications for the Proposed Plan.

Comments relating to housing land

Bellway Homes expressed concern that the existing housing land supply is not sufficient to ensure the proposed iLHLR is delivered while Homes for Scotland note that the effective housing land supply is lower than the iLHLR.

NPF4 is clear that LDPs are expected to allocate deliverable land to meet the 10-year LHLR, with the LDP delivery programme expected to establish a deliverable housing land pipeline for the LHLR.

Comments relating to accessible homes

Bellway Homes and the Arran Development Trust agreed that it is reasonable to have a target for the delivery of accessible homes, albeit that this should not apply to self-build homes. Beith & District Community Council state the future need and demand for appropriate housing for an ageing population should be reflected in LDP3.

Comments relating to developer contributions

The Housing Evidence Paper sought the views of stakeholders – and evidence to support these views – on the requirement for developer contributions in North Ayrshire to deliver affordable housing. Housebuilders agreed that the absence of an affordable housing contribution requirement makes North Ayrshire an attractive place to invest for builders. North Ayrshire is viewed as a 'marginal' area still, where an affordable housing contribution would affect viability. Citing an island build cost uplift of 3040 percent above the mainland, the Arran Development Trust warned the

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

additional cost of an affordable housing contribution may lead to no houses being built on Arran.

To continue attracting developers to the area, Homes for Scotland suggest finding an alternative to an affordable housing policy. They have suggested that the Evidence Report is amended to signpost the work that will be undertaken to understand the potential method for the future delivery of affordable homes in North Ayrshire and to provide general wording stating that the Council will consult on a potential affordable housing policy.

Bellway Homes responded that it was reasonable to request developer contributions towards affordable housing to help address housing need in North Ayrshire, with reference to the Diffley Report which estimates 5,000 households within North Ayrshire are struggling due to high financial costs.

Beith & District Community Council strongly encourage the reintroduction of an affordable housing policy and there has been general support across communities for more affordable housing, including within the [West Kilbride Local Place Plan](#).

Our view on the comments received in relation to delivering accessible homes and developer contributions towards affordable housing are covered in the Summary of Implications for the Proposed Plan.

Comments relating to windfall development

Homes for Scotland suggested in response to the Housing Evidence Paper [HFS3_04042025] that past windfall completions should be recalibrated to exclude completions on sites constituting major development (50 units or more) as they consider NPF4 restricts the potential for windfall development and is likely to significantly reduce future supply of windfall. This is expected to reduce the previously observed windfall contribution.

Only 50 windfall completions out of the total of 393 over the five-year period (2019/20 and 2023/24) were recorded on sites of 50 units or more – an affordable housing development built by North Ayrshire Council at Towerlands, Irvine. We have based our windfall assumption on private windfall completions in recognition of the fact that larger windfall developments have been Council-led. Most private windfall completions (116 out of 148) have come on small sites, namely sites under four units.

Bellway Homes and the Arran Development Trust agreed the windfall assumption of 300 units (30 per year) is reasonable.

Comments relating to infrastructure capacity

The capacity of local services and infrastructure was a key concern expressed by local communities in our engagement and was raised expressly by Beith & District Community Council in their response to the Housing Evidence Paper. The capacity of GP practices is a specific concern.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

We acknowledge that infrastructure considerations are integral to development planning and decision-making within the planning system, particularly in the context of delivery. National planning policy seeks to encourage, promote and facilitate an infrastructure first approach to land use planning which puts infrastructure considerations at the heart of placemaking. As part of an evidence-based approach, potential impacts on infrastructure and infrastructure needs should be understood early in the development planning process and the Infrastructure schedule considers health care, education, energy, digital, waste, and water infrastructure within North Ayrshire. Transport infrastructure and blue green infrastructure are addressed in the Transport and Sustainable Places schedules respectively.

The capacity and, where required, the delivery of infrastructure will be a key consideration in the allocation of deliverable land to meet the 10-year LHLR within the Proposed Plan.

Comments relating to housing on Arran

A response from The Arran Development Trust (ADT) states there is a pressing need for affordable accommodation to grow the economy of Arran, reverse depopulation and maintain public services, including supporting an ageing population. It is suggested a minimum of 20 affordable homes per annum are required between now and 2030. ADT advocate the use of additional methods for determining housing need given its remote rural classification, referring to Argyll & Bute Council's Community Housing Assessment Toolkit. This toolkit was used for the 2025 Arran survey.

Arran Development Trust also believed that the number of second homes on Arran is under-reported, as some properties pay non-domestic rates as self-assessed businesses. This has been acknowledged within the Evidence Report.

While no areas where it would be desirable to allocate land for the purposes of resettlement have been identified, it is acknowledged that some communities – particularly in the north of Arran – are concerned that the age-profile of the resident population and the number of second homes and short-term lets threatens the long-term sustainability of these places as communities.

Our view on the evidence and comments received in relation to rural housing are covered in the Summary of Implications for the Proposed Plan.

Summary of Implications for the Proposed Plan

Our view on what this evidence and stakeholder engagement means for LDP3 is summarised below in relation to the number of homes the new plan should plan for (the LHLR); the type of homes LDP3 should seek to deliver; developer contributions and our approach to delivering homes on Arran and Cumbrae.

Indicative Local Housing Land Requirement

LDP3 is expected to identify a Local Housing Land Requirement for North Ayrshire to meet the duty for a housing target and to represent how much land is required for housebuilding. To promote an ambitious and plan-led approach, the Local Housing

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Land Requirement is expected to exceed the 10-year Minimum All-Tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR) set out in Annex E of NPF4, which is 2,950 for North Ayrshire. The MATHLR is therefore the starting point for establishing the LHRL.

An indicative Local Housing Land Requirement (iLHLR) figure for North Ayrshire of 4,500 is proposed.

The explanation of the indicative Local Housing Land Requirement figure is as follows:

a) It meets our understanding of housing need

The indicative Local Housing Land Requirement figure of 4,500 exceeds the estimate of housing need established by HNDA20 of 2,330 homes during the period 2022 to 2042.

Existing (backlog) housing need is the main component of the HDNA20 housing estimate, with only a very small amount driven by newly forming households, reflecting the long-term trend of population decline in North Ayrshire set out under Topic 1. At the proposed start date of the LDP3 plan period, April 2027, it is anticipated that 95 percent of both existing and future overall need identified by HNDA20 (Scenario 3) will have been met:

Table 20 – HNDA20 housing estimate versus completions

Year	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	2026/2027	Total
HNDA housing estimate	465	465	465	465	465	2325
Housing completions	441 ¹	405 ¹	372 ¹	518 ²	480 ²	2216
Difference	-24	-60	-93	+53	+15	-109

¹ Scottish Government Housing Statistics

² NAC Housing Land Audit 2025 Programming

A more recent assessment of backlog need, derived from the North Ayrshire Housing Register carried out in July 2025, indicates that planning for a residual backlog need in the magnitude of around 2,400 would be appropriate over the LDP3 plan period (2027-2038). The iLHLR figure addresses this housing need.

A much higher estimate of housing need has been suggested by Homes for Scotland and other developers based on the Diffley Report [CD093]. We have considered this evidence and note the view of the Reporter set out in the [Notification of Sufficiency](#) [CD102] following the Gate Check of the Moray Local Development Plan Evidence Report, who acknowledged that the research provides 'some indication of the urgency and scale of potential need based on primary data' but was not persuaded that, in that case, it represented a 'robust alternative or additional evidence that the Council need have relied on' [page 9].

We consider that concerns regarding any underreporting of housing need have been adequately addressed by using the housing register rather than the HoTOC figure

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

within HNDA20 and establishing an iLHR significantly higher than the HNDA housing estimate. It is acknowledged that not everyone with a housing need in North Ayrshire is captured within the North Ayrshire Housing Register; there are number of reasons why a person or household would not apply for a Council or RSL property, including where they do not want or would not be eligible for social housing. However, we consider the HNDA, informed by the register, forms the most robust evidence of housing need in North Ayrshire available.

Overall, Homes for Scotland are supportive of the Council's approach to setting the Local Housing Land Requirement and indicative figure of 4,500.

b) It accords with policy aspirations to increase housebuilding

Beyond satisfying what we understand to be the need for new housing in North Ayrshire, we want to set a Local Housing Land Requirement that promotes the development of more homes in North Ayrshire to support aspirations to grow the population and economy of the area. This continues the approach taken by LDP2. The [North Ayrshire Council Plan](#) [CD043], [Local Housing Strategy](#) (2023 to 2028) [CD0080] and [National Planning Framework 4](#) [CD002] all set out an aspiration to increase housebuilding and a national housing emergency has been declared.

The housing supply target set out in the LHS is 2,925 homes, over the five-year period of the strategy. National Planning Framework 4, through the Minimum All-Tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR) figure for North Ayrshire, establishes a more modest target of 2,950 homes over 10 years.

NPF4 expects LDP3's Local Housing Land Requirement for North Ayrshire to exceed the MATHLR figure. While there is no further guidance on to what magnitude this minimum requirement should be exceeded, the approach should be ambitious and plan-led. The indicative Local Housing Land Requirement figure proposed accords with the expectation to be ambitious, exceeding the MATHLR by 52.5 percent. The figure also represents an increase of 429 – 10.5 percent or around 43 homes per year – versus the target set by LDP2.

c) It is considered achievable based on recent completions, programmed delivery and the established housing land supply

In seeking to set a housing target that is greater than established housing need, the question arises what an appropriate target is. Historical housing completion data for North Ayrshire demonstrates an average completion rate of around 390 new homes per year over the last 20 years. Even accounting for recent challenges to housing delivery relating to material costs, increasing standards and specifications, the cost of living interest rates and so on, completion rates over the past five years have been above this rate, at 415 per annum. While not a determinate of future demand, these figures support the conclusion that the proposed indicative Local Housing Land Requirement figure of 450 homes per year over the period of LDP3 is credible, noting infrastructure capacity will be a key factor.

While still described by the house building industry as a 'marginal' area in terms of viability, we consider the take-up of the LDP2 Schedule 2a sites allocated by LDP2

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

and other sites including the Montgomerie Park SPZ, West Byrehill in Kilwinning and Beith Road in Longbar, indicate a strengthening of the housing market in North Ayrshire that supports an ambitious housing target.

A Call for Ideas exercise undertaken between April and June 2025 saw 53 submissions seeking the allocation of land for housing within LDP3, with these sites having a combined capacity of over 8,500 new homes, further indicating developer and landowner interest in building houses in North Ayrshire.

Meeting the Local Housing Land Requirement

LDP3 must allocate enough deliverable land to meet the 10-year Local Housing Land Requirement, in locations that create quality places for people to live and are consistent with local living principles and an infrastructure first approach.

It is anticipated that the remaining established housing land supply will total 3,918 at the expected adoption date of LDP3 (March 2027), taking account of programmed completions between April 2025 and March 2027. Completions during the LDP3 plan period (2027 to 2037) are estimated in the current HLA to be 1,482, reducing the housing land supply to 2,436.

This portion of the established housing land supply, sites retained within the Housing Land Audit which are not under construction; LDP2 sites removed from the housing land supply; sites submitted via the Call for Ideas; and any further sites identified by the Council will all require to be assessed in line with the proposed site appraisal methodology, including in terms of their deliverability. This will inform the spatial strategy for LDP3 and where new housing development to meet the LHLR will be planned.

The 2025/2026 HLA – representing the position at 31 March 2026 – will be key in determining how much new housing land will require to be identified and allocated by the Proposed Plan to meet the LHLR. The contribution of windfall and small site completions will also be factored in.

A key consideration for both the volume, location and delivery of new housing development is the available infrastructure, in line with the Infrastructure First approach. Blue green infrastructure is covered in Topic 3; transport infrastructure is addressed within Topic 4 with other forms of infrastructure, including health care and education considered by Topic 6. Specific concerns are identified in relation to the capacity of the Pennyburn roundabout, a key node in North Ayrshire's transport network; school capacity at specific locations; and GP practices across the North Ayrshire mainland.

Homes to meet specific needs

Based on the evidence available and through stakeholder engagement, we do not think it is necessary for LDP3 to deliver housing for persons undertaking further or higher education; Gypsy/Travellers; or Travelling Showpeople.

Considering the demographic data, evidence from the HSCP and North Ayrshire Housing Register and the views of stakeholders, we consider there is a need to

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

examine how new housing delivered in North Ayrshire will meet the needs of a population which is growing older.

North Ayrshire Council is committed to ensuring the new social housing being delivered offers enough flexibility to tenants, so that they will be able to remain living at home, independently, for as long as they wish, regardless of their stage in life. All amenity and sheltered housing in North Ayrshire is now built to an ambulant housing standard as a minimum. The SHIP continues to deliver amenity and wheelchair housing. Within the private sector, however, the type of new homes built is largely left to developers to determine, as shaped by the market.

The [Local Housing Strategy](#) [CD080] states: 'in preparing North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan we will further consider the housing needs of older people and disabled people in North Ayrshire and the establishment of an appropriate target for the delivery of accessible or adaptable homes, including wheelchair housing and intergenerational homes within the private sector, to support independent living particularly, although not exclusively, among older or disabled people' [page 64].

It is also noted that all homes have to meet building warrant requirements that ensure that they are both accessible and adaptable for current and future users and that the Government has committed to a new 'Scottish Accessible Homes Standard', which is expected to be part of national building standards by 2026 (see [Chartered Institute of Housing Scotland Briefing](#) [CD103]). The accessible standard will see accessibility designed and built into all new homes, increasing the housing choices for people with disabilities and reducing the need for expensive retrofitting as people age or their needs change.

As a result of this standard, we are minded not to include a blanket minimum target for the provision of accessible housing with private developments across North Ayrshire within LDP3. Rather, we will ask developers to demonstrate how their proposals for new homes contribute to delivering accessible, adaptable and wheelchair accessible homes as part of the Statement of Community Benefit (as required by NPF4 policy 16 b)).

Developer contributions

Currently, the delivery of affordable housing in North Ayrshire is independent of the delivery of market housing. In the preparation of LDP2, the decision was taken not to seek developer contributions from private housing developments for the delivery of affordable housing. The rationale for doing so was set out in the [Housing Technical Paper](#) [CD104] prepared alongside LDP2 and relates to the significant levels of Council and Scottish Government funding in affordable housing, reflected in the SHIP at the time and the expectation that the need element of the housing supply target would be achieved without subsidy from market sector housing development. Since adoption of LDP2 in November 2018, North Ayrshire Council has therefore not sought developer contributions for affordable housing.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

This commitment and investment allowed us to take an all-tenure approach to the land supply, rather than the previous approach where up to 25 percent of units on sites had to be of an affordable tenure. It is recognised that the absence of the requirement for developer contributions also serves to make developing in North Ayrshire more attractive to the private sector, particularly where the viability of sites is a challenge.

Policy 16, part e), of NPF4 states proposals for market homes will only be supported where the contribution to the provision of affordable homes on a site is at least 25 percent of the total number of homes, unless the LDP sets out locations or circumstances where either a higher or lower contribution is justified. Higher contributions may be justified by evidence of need; while impact on viability; smaller scale development; or to incentivise specific types of homes as examples of situations that may justify contribution levels lower than 25 percent. The policy brings guidance previously contained in Scottish Planning Policy within the scope of the statutory development plan.

It is considered that the position now in 2025 is different to that in 2017/18 when LDP2 was being prepared and the decision was made to remove the affordable housing developer contribution policy:

- The level of housing need is higher. The HNDA prepared in advance of LDP2 ([HNDA17](#) [CD105]) defined the total additional future housing need for the period 2016 to 2020 as 1,585. HNDA20 sets the figure for the period 2022 to 2042 at 2,330 new units (Scenario 3). A more recent assessment of backlog need derived from the North Ayrshire Housing Register carried out in July 2025 indicates that planning for a residual backlog need in the magnitude of around 2,400 would be reasonable.
- There is uncertainty around the long-term availability of grant funding for affordable housing over the course of LDP3. While the SHIP sets out a five-year programme, this is based on assumptions of grant funding, with the grant given to the Council done so on a year-to-year basis.
- Based on completions and developer interest, we consider the housing market in North Ayrshire is now stronger than five years ago. Average per annum private sector completions have increased by 26 percent when comparing 2014/15 to 2018/19 to 2019/20 to 2023/24 [Table 9]. It is noted that Homes for Scotland consider North Ayrshire still to be a 'marginal' area where an affordable housing policy would affect viability, however, we have no evidence that the market could not absorb some level of contribution requirement.

The [2025 SHIP](#) [CD095] was not fully funded, with a shadow programme amounting to over 380 affordable homes. The Council and RSL partners also continue to experience significant affordability challenges due to changes in the rate of inflation, higher than budgeted interest rates for borrowing and increasing housing standards

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

and specifications, compared to the level of grant funding available to offset these pressures. It is acknowledged such challenges also apply to private housebuilders.

Furthermore, the Housing Service has identified the requirement to identify additional opportunities for affordable housing in North Ayrshire. Recent developments built by the Council have predominately taken place on Council-owned sites where land has become available as a result, for example, of school relocations. Such opportunities are expected to be less prevalent over the LDP3 period. Access to a proportion of private sector sites could address the need for land. This approach would also help deliver mixed-tenure developments, something the current approach has not done, with limited exception.

A [research report](#) [CD106] published in July 2021 found that around two-thirds of planning authorities in Scotland use developer contributions to secure affordable housing, meaning North Ayrshire is unusual in not requiring affordable housing contributions. Contributions are sought in East (Kilmarnock and Loudoun housing market areas) and South Ayrshire.

Taking this evidence into account, North Ayrshire Council is minded to introduce an affordable housing developer contribution policy, along the lines of the previous policy. North Ayrshire's first Local Development Plan (LDP1), adopted in May 2014, introduced an [affordable housing policy](#) [CD107] (a policy for Arran was previously agreed in April 2009 and [updated](#) [CD108]). It required contributions on sites of 16 units or more (four on Arran) of 25 percent (North Coast & Arran), 15 percent (Irvine & Kilwinning) or 10 percent (Three Towns). No contributions were required in the Garnock Valley.

Delivery options set out in the policy were, in order of preference:

- 1) On-site provision (that is, built by the developer and transferred to RSL)
- 2) Transfer of on-site land to RSL
- 3) Off-site provision
- 4) Payment of commuted sum

During the operation of the policy, a contribution requirement was established for 17 of 30 qualifying development proposals, however, only six progressed to the point where a contribution was required to be made. The policy did deliver 31 on-site units at Ardrossan Road, Seamill; commuted sums amounting to £66,250 (Arran), used for Brathwic Terrace and £349,828.80 (Irvine), used for Dickson Drive.

The need to address, within the Evidence Report, the evidence and engagement required to pursue the reintroduction of an affordable housing contribution policy is acknowledged, as is the ask from housebuilders for further information. Accordingly, we propose to develop a draft Affordable Housing Developer Contribution (AHDC) Policy promptly following submission of the Evidence Report, with the intention that it can inform and be incorporated into LDP3 and provide certainty to developers on expected contribution levels in advance of the adoption of LDP3 and the policy coming into effect.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

In developing an AHDC policy and the Proposed Plan, we will take an evidence-based approach to establishing the following, including through engagement with key stakeholders involved in the delivery of new homes in North Ayrshire:

- **The proportion of the LHLR/number of units that should be delivered as affordable housing.**
- **Affordability of private housing across different localities and settlements:** we will review up-to-date house price and rent levels data for North Ayrshire, and surrounding authorities, and compare this with income data to identify areas where entering the housing market is most difficult.
- **The demand for affordable housing across different localities and settlements:** we will review the North Ayrshire Housing Register to determine where demand for affordable housing is greatest in North Ayrshire, cross-referencing this this affordability data; existing stock and programmed affordable housing completions to identify the areas where additional units are most required. In addition to evidence on affordability, this will shape the level of contribution within each settlement/locality.
- **Preferred solutions for delivering affordable housing via developer contributions:** we will engage with housebuilders, the Council's Housing Service and RSLs to determine preferred options for the type of affordable housing and mechanism for delivery.
- **Potential thresholds and exemptions:** we will consider the circumstances in which a contribution will not be required, including the threshold in terms of the overall number of units within a proposed development.

Further evidence relating to viability is also required to inform the scope of an AHDC policy, noting Homes for Scotland's concerns. Engagement with the housebuilding industry, plus any evidence they might be able to provide, would be welcomed. It is considered that an AHDC policy should include a mechanism to enable expected contributions to be set aside where payment of a contribution towards affordable housing would render a development unviable, taking account, for example, abnormal site costs. Establishing site specific contribution levels, where possible agreed in advance with developers, and including these in within the Proposed Plan is an approach we will explore.

Island housing

In rural and island areas, NPF4 encourages authorities to set out tailored approaches to housing which reflect locally specific market circumstances and delivery approaches. Evidence gathered, including through the work of the Arran Housing Taskforce, identifies issues relating to the distinct housing markets on the islands of Arran and Cumbrae.

Within [LDP2](#) [CD001], the Countryside Objective of the Spatial Strategy (Strategic Policy 1) [page 13] supports several circumstances in which new housing will be permitted out with identified towns and villages, including criterion g) which supports

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

small-scale expansion of settlements on Arran and Cumbrae for community-led proposals for housing for people employed on the islands. The subsequent publication of NPF4 also provides support for new homes in remote rural areas, which applies to Arran and Cumbrae, where proposals support and sustain existing fragile communities; support identified local housing outcomes; and are suitable in terms of location, access, and environmental impact [Policy 17 c)].

LDP3 must set out a policy framework that continues to support opportunities for new housing in Arran and Cumbrae, including through the identification of specific sites and which supports long-term solutions to housing challenges, including those identified by the Arran Housing Task Force. Our approach should acknowledge the difficulties in developing new market and affordable housing on our islands, for example relating to the availability of labour and increased build costs. These factors will also be relevant in how any AHDC policy is applied in Arran and Cumbrae.

Statements of Agreement / Dispute

Homes for Scotland, in their response to the draft Evidence Report, have re-iterated their support for the uplift of 1,550 from the Minimum All-Tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR) to arrive at the proposed Local Housing Land Requirement (LHLR) of 4,500 [HFS_14112025].

A dispute has been raised by Homes for Scotland regarding the Council's position that it is minded to introduce an affordable housing developer contribution policy (AHDC). Homes for Scotland have requested more general wording, stating that the Council will consult on a potential affordable housing policy. As noted above, in developing an AHDC, we will take an evidence-based approach to establishing further evidence, including through engagement with key stakeholders involved in the delivery of new homes in North Ayrshire.

Links to Evidence

CD043	Our Council Plan 2023 to 2028 – June 2023
CD076	Housing Evidence Paper (February 2025)
CD077	Housing to 2040 (March 2021)
CD078	A Scotland for the future: opportunities and challenges of Scotland's changing population (March 2021)
CD079	North Ayrshire Minimum All-Tenure Housing Land Requirement Assessment Report (September 2021)
CD080	North Ayrshire Council Local Housing Strategy 2023 to 2028
CD081	'Setting a Housing Supply Target for North Ayrshire' (April 2023)
CD082	Planning and the housing emergency: delivery plan (November 2024)
CD083	Tackling Scotland's Housing Emergency – Housing Emergency Action Plan (September 2025)
CD084	North Ayrshire Housing Needs and Demand Assessment 2020 (HNDA20) (May 2021)

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

CD043	Our Council Plan 2023 to 2028 – June 2023
CD085	Letter from Head of the Centre for Housing Market Analysis, Scottish Government dated 7 February 2022
CD086	A summary of the North Ayrshire housing allocation policy
CD087	Development Plan Scheme – November 2024
CD088	North Ayrshire Council Unauthorised Encampment Policy
CD089	North Ayrshire Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) 2026 to 2031
CD090	Arran Housing Taskforce Terms of Reference
CD091	North Star, Arran Affordable Housing Demand Report (August 2024)
CD092	Rural and Islands Housing Action Plan – September 2023
CD093	The Diffley Partnership and Rettie & Co for Homes for Scotland 'Existing Housing Need in North Ayrshire' – January 2024
CD094	Housing Land Requirement Explanatory Report (November 2021)
CD095	North Ayrshire Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) 2025 to 2030
CD096	North Ayrshire Housing Land Audit 2024 to 2025 Report
CD097	North Ayrshire Housing Land Audit 2024 to 2025 Spreadsheet
CD098	Housing Land Audits: Guidance (January 2025)
CD099	Email from Homes for Scotland, November 2025
CD100	North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership, 'Caring Together' Strategic Commissioning Plan 2022 to 2030 (March 2024)
CD101	North Ayrshire Housing Contribution Statement 2022 to 2025
CD102	Planning and Environmental Appeals Division, Notification of Sufficiency - Moray Local Development Plan Evidence Report Gate Check (26 August 2024)
CD103	Consultation briefing: Enhancing the accessibility, adaptability and usability of Scotland's homes
CD104	North Ayrshire Council Housing Technical Paper – October 2018
CD105	North Ayrshire Housing Need and Demand Assessment – Final Report (September 2017)
CD106	'The Value, Incidence and Impact of Developer Contributions in Scotland' (July 2021)
CD107	North Ayrshire Council, Affordable Housing Policy: North Ayrshire Mainland Supplementary Guidance for Developers – March 2011
CD108	North Ayrshire Council, Affordable Housing Policy: Isle of Arran Supplementary Guidance for Developers – revised March 2011

Topic 3 – Sustainable Places

National planning policy emphasises the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to the future impacts of climate change and respond to a growing nature crisis. North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan (LDP3) will have a significant role in the protection, recovery, restoration and enhancement of our environment and the planning and delivery of sustainable places.

To support and inform the preparation of this Evidence Report and LDP3 in relation to environmental matters, [Place Profiles](#) [CD003 to CD008] for each of North Ayrshire's six Localities and an [Environment Evidence Paper](#) [CD109] have been prepared. This chapter of the Evidence Report summarises the evidence, relevant stakeholder engagement and considers the implications for the Proposed Plan relating to the delivery of sustainable places, including the following [National Planning Framework](#) (NPF4) policies:

1. Tackling the climate and nature crises
2. Climate mitigation and adaptation
3. Biodiversity
4. Natural places
5. Soils
6. Forestry, woodland and trees
7. Historic assets and places
8. Green belts
9. Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings
10. Coastal development
11. Energy
12. Zero waste
19. Heating and cooling
20. Blue and green infrastructure
22. Flood risk and water management

Evidence relating to these topics is presented together in recognition of the strong policy connections between them; the [local development planning guidance](#) advises development that addresses the global climate and nature crises will be facilitated by the interaction of all the spatial principles, regional spatial priorities and national planning policies of NPF4, taken as a whole.

Reducing the need to travel unsustainably is also an important response to the climate emergency; this is covered in a separate schedule (Transport - Topic 4). Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods, covered in the Liveable Places (Topic 1) schedule, are also relevant.

The [Environment Evidence Paper](#) [CD109] serves as the Scoping Report for the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of LDP3. The Evidence Paper presents environmental evidence organised by SEA topic. The relationship between the nine SEA topics and NPF4 National Policies is set out in Table 2 of the evidence paper.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

A draft site appraisal methodology has been developed, aligned to the SEA Assessment Framework set out in the [Environment Evidence Paper](#) [CD109]. Application of the site appraisal methodology in the assessment and selection of future development sites will be key in ensuring LDP3's proposals deliver on its environmental objectives.

Information required by the Act and Regulations

Section 15 of the Planning Act concerns the form and content of local development plans. Subsection 1(a) requires the local development plan to take account of matters mentioned in subsection (5), including: the principal physical, environmental and built heritage characteristics of the area.

Section 16B of the Planning Act relates to the evidence report. As per subsection (3), the evidence report is to set out the planning authority's view on the matters listed in section 15(5), referred to above.

The Town and Country Planning (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2023 (the 2023 Regulations) provide additional detail to the requirements set out in primary legislation. Regulation nine sets out further information and considerations to which the planning authority are to have regard to in preparing a local development plan. Included within this list are:

- the national marine plan
- any regional marine plan
- the national waste management plan
- any open space strategy
- any river basin management plan
- any flood risk management plan
- any local flood risk management plan

Summary of Evidence

Policy Context

Scotland's plan-led planning system requires plans to manage the development and use of land in the long-term public interest. This is defined as contributing to sustainable development and the achievement of the National Performance Framework's National Outcomes. A plan-led approach is also central to supporting the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Such is the cross-cutting nature of development planning, the process contributes to all outcomes. In an environmental context this means development plans, proposals and planning policies which balance development aspirations with environmental protection and enhancement, making the most of natural resources and responding to the climate emergency.

Several national policies and strategies link to NPF4, including the Climate Change Plan, Scotland's National Adaptation Plan 3, Scotland's Environment, Biodiversity, Energy and Forestry strategies and National Marine Plan. The [Environment Strategy](#)

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

[for Scotland](#) [CD110] sets out the Scottish Government's vision for tackling the twin global climate and nature crises. Recent global assessments by expert bodies on biodiversity and climate change have highlighted the scale and urgency of these challenges.

These crises underpin NPF4. The six spatial principles established by NPF4 will play a key role in delivering on the UNSDGs and the national outcomes. By applying these spatial principles, the national spatial strategy supports the planning and delivery of sustainable places where emissions are reduced, and biodiversity is restored and better connected.

To address the global climate emergency and nature crisis, NPF4 policy 1 requires LDPs to ensure their spatial strategy will reduce emissions and adapt to current and future risks of climate change by promoting nature recovery and restoration. Significant weight is to be given to the global climate and nature crises when considering all development proposals. Implementing this policy will be facilitated by the interaction of all the spatial principles, regional spatial priorities and national planning policies of NPF4, taken as a whole. This reflects the cross-cutting and interconnected nature of policies relating to the environment.

Locally, The [Council Plan 2023 to 2028](#) [CD043] sets out North Ayrshire Council's commitment to deliver on tackling climate change. Additionally, the Council published the '[Sustainable North Ayrshire Strategy](#)' in December 2023 [CD111]. The strategy is the fourth iteration of its 'Environmental Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy' and supports the continuing strategic aim of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2030 and to halt biodiversity loss and be nature positive by the same date. The strategy includes five simplified workstreams to link climate change to everyday behaviour and activities. The workstreams are energy; nature; waste; transport and adaptation.

Within the Sustainable North Ayrshire Strategy, the Council demonstrates a commitment to using the principles of community wealth building to ensure a fair and green transition to a sustainable society which operates within planetary limits and where no one in North Ayrshire is left behind.

The specific policy context relating to each environmental topic is noted below under each heading.

Climate mitigation and adaptation

The Scottish Government declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and updated its [Climate Change Plan](#) [CD112] in 2020. The update sets out the Scottish Government's pathway to new and ambitious targets set by the Climate Change Act 2019, to reduce emissions by 75 percent by 2030 (compared with 1990) and to net zero by 2045.

The Scottish [National Adaption Plan 2024 to 2029](#) [CD113] sets out the actions that the Scottish Government and partners will take to respond to the impacts of climate change.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions is one of NPF4's six cross-cutting outcomes. The national spatial strategy and policies support development that helps to meet greenhouse gas emissions targets. NPF4's policy on climate mitigation and adaptation (Policy 2) has the overarching intent of encouraging, promoting and facilitating development that minimises emissions and adapts to the current and future impacts of climate change.

The global climate emergency and the nature emergency are twin reinforcing crises. Decline in biodiversity will exacerbate the climate crisis – and a changing climate will accelerate the rate of biodiversity loss. The actions we take to address each are fundamental to our wellbeing and survival as a species.

North Ayrshire Council declared a Climate Emergency on 11 June 2019 and consequently committed to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2030. The [Sustainable North Ayrshire Strategy](#) [CD 111] details a set of actions exemplifying how the Council will fulfil its commitment to net zero. This builds on the work of previous strategies which have helped to achieve a 69 percent reduction in emissions from the Council's estate and 43 percent reduction across North Ayrshire overall.

Climate change is identified as a priority by a number of our communities, especially our younger people, through community, locality and other place-based plans. Projects in Stevenston and Cumbrae have led to local action to tackle and adapt to climate change.

Between 2020 and 2021, greenhouse gas emissions increased in 358 out of the 374 local authorities in the UK (96 percent). This is consistent with the increase in overall UK emissions in 2021, which increased by 5 percent largely due to COVID-19 restrictions easing and colder temperatures increasing the use of heating in buildings, though emissions were still lower in 330 local authorities (88 percent) than they were in 2019. Scotland has higher per capita emissions than the UK average in almost every sector, in particular from agriculture (1.5 tCO₂e per person) and land use, land use change and forestry (0.4 tCO₂e per person).

North Ayrshire has seen a trend in a decline in the total CO₂e between 2005 and 2020 with a slight increase between 2020 and 2021, mirroring the UK trend. The highest contributing sectors for North Ayrshire are waste management, agriculture, and transport. This is not in line with the national trend, which sees domestic and transport being the two highest contributing sectors.

However, when all sectors are taken per capita for comparison of the Scottish average to North Ayrshire, North Ayrshire is consistently lower. Excluding 2020 and pre-2017 emission estimates for waste management, North Ayrshire has been lower since 2005 than the Scottish average.

One of the actions from the Strategy is to complete a comprehensive study to understand the carbon sequestration capacity and future potential of North Ayrshire's natural assets. This study will be carried out by the Sustainability team in the Council. This study can influence the Plan and help it meet some aims of NPF4

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

The Council's [woodland planting strategy](#) [CD114] was approved in 2021 and is in the delivery phase with a view to increasing the area's ability to naturally capture carbon. The overarching aim of the strategy is to facilitate the planting of 108,000 trees by 2030. The trees and woodland section below shows where the current woodland cover is in North Ayrshire and the soils section below additionally shows where the carbon rich soils are located. Both of these are significant natural assets vital for reducing the area's contribution to climate change.

Adaptation – actions that reduce our vulnerability to the effects of climate change by managing the impacts – is also one of five workstreams included within the [Sustainable North Ayrshire](#) Strategy [CD111]. An action of the strategy is to implement Adaptation Scotland's Framework for a Climate Ready Public Sector, including through the creation of an adaptation capability framework. Nature Networks are one of the primary vehicles for delivering climate change adaptation.

One example of the impact of climate change arises due to changing weather patterns and more extreme weather events. Current drainage infrastructure can become overwhelmed in the more regular occurrences of severe rainfall. Climate change modelling predicts these occurrences will increase, both in terms of frequency and intensity. This, combined with population growth and increased paving over green spaces (urban creep), will put an even greater pressure on infrastructure in the future – with increased risk of surface water flooding. A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment has been prepared which highlights surface water flood events and areas at risk of surface water flooding (see [Flood risk and water management](#)).

Conversely, climate-driven increases in extreme drought are also projected. A [research report](#) [CD115] published in 2021 notes that the number of extreme drought events is projected to increase from an average of one event every 20 years in the baseline period, to one event every three years in the near future (2021 to 2040); and that extreme droughts are likely to be longer. Water scarcity and extreme drought events – including related consequences such as an increase in wildfires – can have wide-ranging impacts, including on human health; ecosystems, many of which are highly sensitive to changes in hydrology; and water-dependent sectors in industry.

Normal conditions in North Ayrshire are reported in the most recent SEPA [water scarcity report](#) (18 September 2025) [CD116] and the west coast of Scotland is generally at less risk of drought compared to the east coast, where there are areas of moderate and significant scarcity.

Evidence is presented below on North Ayrshire's blue green infrastructure. 'Regulating' is identified as one of the four categories of ecosystem services gained from blue and green infrastructure; by contributing to flood management and carbon storage, blue and green infrastructure has an important role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the adaptation of places to climate change.

Biodiversity

In November 2024, the Scottish Government published the [Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045](#) [CD117]. This strategy sets out a clear ambition for Scotland to be

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

'nature positive' by 2030, and to have restored and regenerated biodiversity across the country by 2045. The associated [Delivery Plan](#) [CD118] includes actions needed to ensure the vision and outcomes in the strategy achieved, focusing on the strategy's six objectives. As noted above, the global climate emergency and the nature emergency are twin reinforcing crises.

In this context, improving biodiversity is also one of NPF4's cross-cutting outcomes. The national spatial strategy and policies support development that helps to secure positive effects for biodiversity; to respond to the global biodiversity crisis nature recovery is expected to be at the heart of future places. NPF4 seeks also to create and strengthen nature networks and nature-based solutions to benefit natural capital and contribute to net zero.

In accordance with NPF4, LDP3 must protect, conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity in line with the mitigation hierarchy. It should also promote nature recovery and nature restoration across the development plan area, including by facilitating the creation of nature networks and strengthening connections between them to support improved ecological connectivity; restoring degraded habitats or creating new habitats; and incorporating measures to increase biodiversity, including populations of priority species.

The mitigation hierarchy indicates the order in which the impacts of development should be considered and addressed: to first avoid, then minimise, restore, and offset. Potential negative effects should be mitigated in line with the mitigation hierarchy prior to identifying enhancements.

To support these policies, The Scottish Government published Biodiversity: Draft Planning Guidance in 2023. This is expected to be a 'live' document that evolves as Councils continue to consider how to deliver on the aims and outcomes of policies 3 and 4 [Post Approval Note: this draft guidance was superseded by the [final biodiversity planning guidance](#) published on 17 December 2025 - CD119]. NatureScot's [Developing with Nature Guidance](#) [CD120] will be also useful when formulating LDP3's spatial strategy and proposals.

The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 states that all public bodies have a duty to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their responsibilities, otherwise known as the Biodiversity Duty. Every public body in Scotland is required to produce a report every three years on the actions which they have taken to meet this Biodiversity Duty. North Ayrshire Council's [fourth report](#) [CD121] was published in January 2024. It should be noted that the Biodiversity Duty is expected to be updated in 2026 which will also introduce statutory targets.

An important means of meeting this duty is a local biodiversity action plan. North Ayrshire's current [Local Biodiversity Action Plan](#) (LBAP) [CD122] covers the period of 2019 to 2031 and comprises of six workstreams. The North Ayrshire Biodiversity Partnership (NABP) plays a key role in the development and management of the LBAP. The NABP includes council officers, government bodies, conservation organisations, landowners, and private individuals. Work has begun to update the

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Council's LBAP to reflect the changes introduced by the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and the Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill and is expected to be published by the Council's sustainability team by the end of 2026.

The LBAP identifies 14 priority species across four habitats: freshwater and wetland, lowland, marine and coastal.

The starting point for understanding our biodiversity resource are sites which are designated for their importance. Table 21 provides a summary of designated sites within North Ayrshire which relate to enhancing and protecting biodiversity. The hyperlink below provides a map showing the location and extent of the biodiversity designations in North Ayrshire.

Table 21 – Biodiversity Designations

Designation	Protection Status	Number of Sites
Special Protection Areas (SPA)	International	2
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	International	3
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	National	29
Regional Park	Local	1
Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS)	Local	96 – wildlife 7 – geodiversity
Local Nature Reserves	Local	2

[Map of biodiversity designations](#)

NatureScot are currently undertaking an assessment in response to a request from local environmental groups to designate the Garnock Estuary as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. This includes parts of the Ardeer Peninsula.

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are sites of European importance. The term 'European site' is now used to refer to what were previously known as Natura sites. This recognises that Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation protect species and habitats shared across Europe and were originally designated under European legislation. There are five European sites within (fully or partially) North Ayrshire, listed in Table 22 with their qualifying interests.

Table 22 – European sites

Site Name	Designation	Qualifying Interest
Arran Moors	SPA	Hen harrier (<i>Circus cyaneus</i>)

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Site Name	Designation	Qualifying Interest
Renfrewshire Heights	SPA	Hen harrier (<i>Circus cyaneus</i>)
Bankhead Moss	SAC	Active raised bog
Cockinhead Moss	SAC	Active raised bogs Degraded raised bogs
Dykeneuk Moss	SAC	Active raised bogs Degraded raised bogs

A Habitats Regulations Appraisal will be prepared to assess the potential impact of the LDP3 on designated European Sites. Stage 2 of the Habitats Regulations Appraisal will consider the likely significant effects of the Proposed Plan on these sites – and any European sites out with the Council area which could be affected – to determine which sites should be assessed as part of the HRA. LDP3 may only be taken forward if the appropriate assessment concludes that the plan would not adversely affect the integrity of any European site.

North Ayrshire Council has undertaken a recent [review of Local Nature Conservation Sites](#) (LNCS) [CD123] on the mainland and Cumbraes. Arran will be subject to a future review of locally important sites. Sites have been selected for their biodiversity or geodiversity value. The review has identified 96 LNCS, with a further thirty-three also highlighted which did not meet the assessment requirements to be designated. A separate summary report and survey records for each site are available as part of the review. It is intended to align the designation of LNCS with the LDP process.

Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park is Scotland's largest Regional Park, extending to 280 square kilometres across North Ayrshire, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire. The designation was created to enable the coordinated management of recreation and other land uses such as farming and forestry.

Geodiversity is the variety of rocks, minerals, fossils, landforms, sediments and soils, together with the natural processes which form and alter them. It is an integral and vital part of nature, our economy, cultural heritage. The value of geodiversity and its role in helping to deliver for biodiversity and help mitigate the effects of climate change is recognised by [Scotland's Geodiversity Charter](#) [CD124].

Arran Geopark has been recently accredited UNESCO Global Geopark status covering the whole of the isle of Arran, recognising the island's outstanding geology and landscapes of international importance. There are 218 Global Geoparks around the globe, eight in the UK, and only two others in Scotland. UNESCO Global Geoparks enjoy the same level of recognition as UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Seven LNCS geodiversity sites on the mainland are identified by the [LNCS review](#) [CD123] as having local geological or geomorphological importance and within North Ayrshire representing good examples of local geodiversity features. The Council is also working with the Arran Geopark who have started the process of reviewing the

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Geodiversity Sites on Arran. The Geopark have reviewed the existing geodiversity sites and has proposed nine new sites.

North Ayrshire Nature Network

The Council is in the process of identifying a nature network. The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy outlines commitments to protect at least 30 percent of our land and sea for nature by 2030 (30x30 Target) and to deliver a Scotland-wide nature network. These two actions are key components in increasing ecological connectivity and restoration of nature more widely, helping to deliver the strategy. Each local authority is responsible for delivering a nature network in their own area. To coordinate this effort, a [North Ayrshire Nature Network Strategy](#) [CD125] was approved by the Council in March 2025. This outlines a methodology for developing the North Ayrshire Nature Network (NANN) and an action plan for its implementation and delivery which is expected will act as a key part of the delivery of NPF4 policy 3.

One of the early stages of the NANN Strategy is to undertake a biodiversity audit of North Ayrshire to create an itinerary of North Ayrshire's biodiversity resource and how it is faring. This will allow future biodiversity work to be prioritised based on the local context of ecosystems, habitats and species and to target the key pressures impacting upon these, including the identification of degraded habitats. The audit is currently at draft stage. The action plan of the approved strategy contains timed actions and commitments. The Councils Planning Service will work with the Sustainability team to spatially identify the nature network by 2027.

Water environment features such as rivers, lochs, wetlands and coastal areas – otherwise referred to as 'blue infrastructure' – can form an integral component of nature networks. The following water environment related evidence sources, [published by SEPA](#), are identified as relevant:

- [Recommended Riparian Corridor](#) – indicates the minimum space needed along rivers (riparian corridor width scaled to river width) to give rivers space to adapt to changes in flood frequency and magnitude and to provide a range of social, environmental and economic benefits
- [Geomorphic Risk Buffer](#) - identifies sections along the river network where channel adjustment is likely to be significant and where undeveloped riparian buffers would be beneficial
- [Riparian Vegetation Planting Opportunities](#) – identifies, at a catchment scale, areas where riverbanks could be protected from erosion by improved riparian vegetation
- [Scottish Wetland Inventory](#) – identifies known wetlands
- [Obstacles to fish migration](#) – identifies natural and artificial obstacles to migratory fish, therefore potential opportunities to remove artificial barriers and restore habitats.
- Water Environment Fund (WEF) projects – current, completed and potential physical condition and fish barrier easement project locations.
- Natural flood management maps – identifies areas where land use change to restore nature could reduce flood risk

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

In addition to informing the Proposed Plan, the outputs of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment will also be relevant to the emerging nature network and identification of existing and future potential opportunities for blue infrastructure.

Natural places

NPF4's policy for natural places (policy 4) provides more detailed direction on how development affecting European sites; National Parks, National Scenic Areas, a Site of Special Scientific Interest or a National Nature Reserve and sites designated as a local nature conservation site or landscape area should be considered. The overall policy intent is to protect, restore and enhance natural assets making best use of nature-based solutions. Clear linkages exist between NPF4 policy 4 Natural Places and NPF4 policy 3 Biodiversity, therefore much information and evidence required to update the Council's LDP is discussed in previous paragraphs under biodiversity.

Situated on the Firth of Clyde, North Ayrshire has a diversity of landscapes including rural countryside, beaches, and coastlines. In total, 16 Landscape Character Areas are identified within North Ayrshire. The island of Arran makes a major contribution to the wider landscape character of the Firth of Clyde. The outstanding scenic value of the northern part of the island is recognised in its designation as a National Scenic Area.

There are two NatureScot Wild Land Areas (WLAs) in North Ayrshire. Wild Land Areas are Scotland's more natural, remote and uninhabited landscapes whose strength and extent of wildness is considered to be of national importance. WLAs have not been identified on scenic grounds and are not a statutory designation. Nevertheless, LDPs should support development that protects and enhances the qualifying qualities of these areas wherever possible. The two Wild Land Areas in North Ayrshire are:

- North Arran
- Waterhead Muir (Muirshiel) (partly within North Ayrshire, partly within Renfrewshire)

A review of local landscape designations in North Ayrshire ([Main report](#) [CD126] and [Background Evaluation Report](#) [CD127]) was undertaken between April and August 2023. This review involved an initial evaluation of all landscapes in North Ayrshire, consultation with community groups and detailed field assessment. The review recommends five local landscape areas (LLAs):

- Portencross to Skelmorlie Coast and the Cumbraes
- The Clyde Muirshiel Hills
- Lamlash Bay and Holy Island
- South Arran Coast
- Machrie Moor and Coast

In 2024, a sensitivity study of landscapes at the edge of settlements in North Ayrshire was completed ([Report](#) [CD128] and [Maps](#) [CD129]). This provides a strategic-level landscape and visual sensitivity assessment of potential urban

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

expansion. The study additionally considers sensitivity to housing development within 45 identified settlement edge sites.

The recently awarded UNESCO Geopark on Arran is also a landscape designation. The status recognises the importance of both geology and landscape and promotes the enhancement and protection of these now internationally important qualities.

Map of Landscape Character Areas and Designations

Soils

The importance of soil to Scotland's environment is highlighted through its prominence in Scotland's Biodiversity Strategy. Soil is an important indicator and promotor of biodiversity and can be a valuable carbon store, a useful tool in climate adaptation and of vital importance in our areas obtaining a local and productive food resource. Soil assets can also contribute toward climate adaptation through the control of flooding and increased resilience to drought.

Policy 5 of NPF4 aims to protect carbon-rich soils, restore peatlands and minimise disturbance from development. LDPs should protect locally, regionally, nationally and internationally valued soils, including land of lesser quality that is culturally or locally important for primary use.

[Scotland's Soils](#) website is the primary source of information on peat and soil information in Scotland. Across North Ayrshire, rural areas are utilised for agricultural purposes. Land capability for agriculture varies across North Ayrshire, from land rating 3.1 (capable of producing consistently high yields of crops), to 7 (land of very limited agricultural value). The majority of soil is rated 4.1 or 4.2 which is capable of producing a narrow range of crops. There are nearly 15,000 hectares of 'prime' agricultural land across North Ayrshire. The largest concentrations are located around Hunterston in the North Coast, the area between Irvine and Stevenston along the River Garnock and Irvine southwards extending into the neighbouring South and East Ayrshire.

Soils and peatlands are the biggest terrestrial store of carbon in Scotland. North Ayrshire also contains carbon rich soils including peat, with a concentration of peat on Arran and in the higher regions south of the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park. In total, North Ayrshire has 12,000 hectares of Class 1 or 2 carbon rich soils, which are defined as nationally important; 55 percent of these areas are found in Arran. Areas have also been subject to peatland restoration under the Peatland Action project, which include areas in north and central Arran as well as the valley of the Gogo Water, east of Largs.

Map of agricultural land quality and carbon rich soils and peatland

Forestry, woodland and trees

National planning policy seeks to protect and expand forest, woodland and trees. LDP3 should identify and protect existing woodland and the potential for its enhancement or expansion to avoid habitat fragmentation and improve ecological connectivity, helping to support and expand nature networks.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Trees and woodland comprise around 23 percent of Ayrshire's land cover, providing a key resource for biodiversity and deliver a wide range of environmental benefits. North Ayrshire also has 62 tree preservation orders (TPOs), predominately around settlements and former historic estates, designated for their amenity value and/or cultural or historical value. The extent of native and ancient woodland and location of TPOs is shown in the map below:

[Map of North Ayrshire's woodlands](#)

Section 53 of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 inserts the requirement for a planning authority to prepare a forestry and woodland strategy into the Planning Act. A forestry and woodland strategy should identify woodlands of high nature conservation value and set out policies for the protection and enhancement of such woodlands, among other things. It is acknowledged that the 2014 [Ayrshire and Arran Forestry and Woodland Strategy](#) [CD130], while still a relatively sound framework for decision making relating to trees, forestry and woodland, would benefit from review given its age and the evolving policy and legislative context. Currently, there is no agreed programme for preparing a new forestry and woodland strategy – either for North Ayrshire or the wider Ayrshire region – however, we are working towards this through discussion with our neighbouring authorities. The development of a regional spatial strategy for Ayrshire is identified as an opportunity to align the preparation of a new Forestry and Woodland Strategy.

The Council recently adopted a new [woodland planting strategy](#) [CD114]. The Strategy aims to plant 108,000 trees by 2030, recognising the positive impact tree planting can have on tackling the Climate and Nature Crisis. The woodland planting strategy also helps deliver on some of the aims and actions of the [Sustainable North Ayrshire Strategy](#) [CD111].

Historic assets and places

The [Place Profiles](#) [CD003 to CD008] prepared for each of North Ayrshire's six Localities include a brief overview of the area's history. North Ayrshire has a rich and historic landscape, with known sites and excavated artefacts dating to as early as the Mesolithic Period. Many Neolithic and Iron Age sites are still visible, particularly on the higher ground such as Giants Grave Chambered Cairn on Arran, overlooking Whiting Bay, and the Bargrennan tombs on Cuff Hill near Beith.

NPF4 policy 7 and the [Historic Environment Policy for Scotland](#) [CD131] set the national policy context. LDP3 should support the sustainable management of North Ayrshire's historic environment and identify, protect and enhance valued historic assets and places. This extends to enabling positive change, for example bringing redundant or neglected historic buildings back into sustainable and productive uses; supporting the transition to net zero and ensuring assets are resilient to current and future impacts of climate change; and recognising the social, environmental and economic value of the historic environment, to our economy and cultural identity.

There are the following designated heritage assets within the council area:

- 90 Scheduled Monuments

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

- 13 Conservation Areas
- 813 Listed Buildings (34 category A, 387 category B and 392 category C)
- 5 Garden and Designed Landscapes

Map of cultural heritage designations

To aid the preservation and enhancement of North Ayrshire's Conservation Areas, Conservation Area Assessments were undertaken in 2020 for 10 of the 13 designated areas. These Assessments contain an appraisal of the special historic character of the areas and a management plan. The three Conservation Areas that were not part of the 2020 review were subject to appraisals previously. These Conservation Areas include Kilbirnie (reviewed in 2014), Irvine Town Centre (reviewed in 2012) and Millport (reviewed in 2013) [CD132 to CD144].

There are no active Conservation Area Regeneration Schemes (CARs) in place. Since LDP2 was adopted, one CARs scheme has been delivered in Millport. The scheme was completed in March 2022 and was jointly funded by Historic Environment Scotland and North Ayrshire Council. In total, the scheme helped works on numerous Historic buildings with a total spend of approximately £2 million.

There are currently 43 buildings on the Buildings at Risk Register (BARR) in North Ayrshire. It is noted the register is not currently being updated by Historic Environment Scotland while the BARR process is under review.

It is widely known that the Church of Scotland is currently undertaking an exercise to consolidate their estate due to declining worship numbers. Buildings are marked as being to be 'disposed of', 'deferred decision', or 'to be retained' within Presbytery Plans. It should be noted that not all Presbytery Plans are up to date or publicly available. Development Trust Association Scotland (DTAS) has undertaken work to research the Presbytery Plans and the real estate market across Scotland and has provided North Ayrshire Council with the data compiled in September 2025. Within North Ayrshire, there are 17 buildings included within Presbytery Plans and seven currently with no data. In total 10 buildings are marked to be disposed of, two are category A listed, six category B listed, one category C listed and one with no statutory listing. Two buildings are on the market, three currently under offer and one has been sold. 30 percent of the buildings to be disposed of are located within one locality, Arran

In addition to the five Inventory Garden and Designed Landscapes, work is underway to review over 20 locally important sites.

Heritage assets valued by community groups in North Ayrshire have been highlighted in the [Local Place Plans](#) registered to date and in wider place-based engagement.

Green belts

To encourage, promote and facilitate compact urban growth and use the land around our towns and cities sustainably, NPF4 states LDPs should consider using green belts to support the spatial strategy as a settlement management tool. In doing so,

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

and through the application of policy 8 which applies to development proposals within a green belt designated within the LDP, development will be directed to the right locations. Green belts can also protect and enhance the character, landscape, natural setting and identity of settlements; support nature networks and enable land to be managed to help tackle climate change.

No areas of green belt are designated within North Ayrshire. The existing spatial strategy for North Ayrshire established by [LDP2](#) [CD001] is based on the principle that development is directed to the most sustainable locations. This in principle means directing most development to our towns, villages and developed coastline where there is infrastructure capacity to support new development, where there is access to existing services and where opportunities exist to re-use and redevelop brownfield land. Strategic Policy 1 of LDP2 also includes the countryside objective which applies to all areas out with the settlement boundary and supports proposals for development, in principle, in specified circumstances within areas designated as countryside. The evaluation of LDP2 concludes that it has been successful in preventing inappropriate urban expansion across North Ayrshire.

As noted above, a settlement edge sensitivity study [CD128 and CD129] has been undertaken to provide a strategic-level landscape and visual sensitivity assessment relating to the potential urban expansion of North Ayrshire's main settlements. The study additionally considers sensitivity to housing development within 45 identified settlement edge sites. Outline recommendations are also made within the study [Chapter 8] on where a green belt designation might be appropriate in terms of protecting and enhancing the character and identity of settlements and their landscape and natural setting, recognising this is only one of three policy outcomes for green belts set out in NPF4.

Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings

Green belt policy and the policy intent of NPF4 to encourage, promote and facilitate the reuse of brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings are inextricably linked. In prioritising brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings for development, the need for greenfield development is reduced. LDP3 is required to set out opportunities for the sustainable reuse of brownfield land including vacant and derelict land and empty buildings.

It is recognised that vacant and derelict sites, whatever size, have the potential to have a negative impact on communities. It can blight an area very quickly, create issues by attracting antisocial behaviour, attracting vermin, fly tipping, contamination, and invasive species all of which have an impact on the health and wellbeing of the people who live within our communities. The 2024 [Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land Statistics](#), published by the Scottish Government in September 2025, show that North Ayrshire contains 10 percent of Scotland's total vacant and derelict land, which is the second highest proportion of any Scottish local authority after North Lanarkshire (14 percent). North Ayrshire has a total of 171 vacant and derelict sites, which covers an area of 922 hectares. It is noted that this may not reflect all relevant land and sites.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Map of Vacant & Derelict Land Sites

The overall percentage of people living within 500 metres of a derelict site in North Ayrshire is 39.1 percent. This figure rises to 65.6 percent in the Kilwinning locality (2023 data). The majority of sites are located within Irvine, which comprise 27 percent of the overall total, followed by the Three Towns locality at 21 percent and the Garnock Valley locality at 20 percent.

However, brownfield sites can also contribute to nature recovery and support surface water management. Naturalised brownfield, vacant and derelict land can have significant biodiversity value and become well-used as areas for recreation.

North Ayrshire's [Vacant and Derelict Land Strategy](#) covers the period 2023 to 2027 [CD145] provides an action plan to reduce the level of vacant and derelict land in North Ayrshire. The strategy recognises that some sites may not ever be suitable for development, but could contribute to green networks, places for nature or open space, helping to meet carbon net-zero or biodiversity targets.

Coastal development

Encompassing the mainland and our islands, North Ayrshire has a coastline of around 225 kilometres. Shorelines are dynamic with their social, environmental and economic pressures and priorities constantly changing over time and coastal communities are often most at risk from the impacts of climate change. NPF4 (policy 10) seeks to protect coastal communities and assets and support resilience to the impacts of climate change, to enable coastal areas to develop sustainably and adapt.

Rising sea levels and more extreme weather events resulting from climate change will potentially have a significant impact on coastal and islands areas, which should be recognised by LDP3's spatial strategy. A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment has been prepared which identifies areas of current and future coastal flooding.

The [Adopted Local Development Plan](#) [CD001] (policy 24) classifies the North Ayrshire coast as either undeveloped, developed or isolated. It is considered these classifications remain valid.

Map of North Ayrshire Coast and Marine Designations

The EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the EU Marine Spatial Planning Directive were transposed into UK law and implemented across the devolved administrations through the UK Marine Policy Statement and the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. This Act established the legal basis for marine planning in the UK, setting the foundation for the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 and a statutory marine planning system to sustainably manage the increasing, and often conflicting, demands on our seas.

LDP3 will be applicable down to Mean Low Water Springs and for marine fish farming (finfish and shellfish); marine plans extend up Mean High Water Springs with

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

the two planning regimes overlapping in the intertidal zone, between low and high-water springs.

Scotland's [National Marine Plan](#) [CD146] provides an overarching framework for all marine activity in our seas and is the primary guide to decision-making on the use of marine space and resources in Scotland. The National Marine Plan interactive (NMPI) tool has been developed to help the development of national and regional marine planning. The Clyde Marine Planning Partnership are in the process of preparing a Regional Marine Plan for the Clyde. Development onshore should align with national, sectoral and regional marine plans.

The [Ayrshire Shoreline Management Plan](#) (ASMP) [CD147] is a broad-scale assessment of the risks associated with coastal processes along the Ayrshire coast, including the islands of Great Cumbrae and Arran. It considers objectives, policies and shoreline management actions for a range of timescales: short-term (0 to 20 years), medium-term (20 to 50 years) and long-term (50 to 100 years). The ASMP prompted two coastal studies in Irvine and in Stevenston. The two studies took place in 2024 and were completed in 2025.

The studies consider how the areas have changed and predict how they are likely to change in the future. The studies have been developed into two Local Coastal Change Adaptation Plans. These documents aim to create a vision for well-adapted and resilient management, properly integrated into other policies by taking a more land use planning approach, avoiding locking-in future generations to unsustainable actions, considering that sea levels are expected to continue to rise well beyond the end of this century. The [Local Coastal Change Adaptation Plans](#) [CD148] for 'Sandylands Promenade & Stevenston Beach' and for 'Irvine Harbour & Irvine Beach' were approved on 30 September 2025 as the Council's preferred policy for coastal change adaptation as the two study areas.

Work to replace the adopted SMP is under way, moving towards an Ayrshire-wide Coastal Change Adaptation Planning approach. The emerging plan will take account of predicted effects of climate change and recommendations contained in the [Scottish Government Coastal Change Adaption Plan guidance](#).

The [Dynamic Coast webmaps](#) provide an indication of predicted coastal erosion for a high emissions scenario over different timescales. A number of properties in North Ayrshire are indicated to be at risk from future coastal erosion. Dynamic Coast's Erosion Disadvantage data furthermore couples anticipated erosion risk with consideration of the social vulnerability of Scotland's coastal communities to produce an overall Coastal Erosion Disadvantage map. Areas around the Three Towns locality are classed as Highly Vulnerable, which is the highest level of social vulnerability classification.

Coastal waters or inland water bodies are designated as 'bathing waters' if it is expected that a large number of people bathe there, having regard to past trends and infrastructure or facilities provided, or other measures taken, to promote bathing at any particular site. Across North Ayrshire, there are five designated bathing beaches – Largs (Pencil Beach), Millport Bay, Seamill, Saltcoats/Ardrossan and

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Irvine. SEPA sample the bathing water quality at all designated bathing beaches and for the last two years, all beaches have received a classification of 'Good' with Millport receiving an 'Excellent' in 2023.

Energy

The Scottish Government published the [Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan](#) [CD149] in January 2023. The strategy seeks to transform the way Scotland generates, transports and uses energy. Previously, the [onshore wind policy statement 2022](#) [CD150] was published in December 2022, introducing a new ambition for a minimum installed capacity of 20GW of onshore wind in Scotland by 2030.

NPF4 encourages the expansion of renewable, low-carbon and zero emissions technologies as a key component of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in response to the global climate emergency. The intent of the policy (policy 11) is to encourage, promote and facilitate all forms of renewable energy development, onshore and offshore. This extends to not only energy generation but also storage, transmission and distribution infrastructure and emerging low-carbon and zero emissions technologies, including hydrogen.

LDP3 must seek to realise North Ayrshire's full potential for electricity and heat from renewable, low carbon and zero emission sources by identifying a range of opportunities for energy development. LDPs are no longer required to identify a spatial framework for wind energy development, however, part b) of the policy is clear that development proposals for wind farms will not be supported in the North Arran National Scenic Area.

Within the 'energy' workstream, the [Sustainable North Ayrshire Strategy](#) [CD111] includes an action to development further municipal renewable energy projects, following the development of solar farms at Shewalton, Irvine, and Nethermain, Kilwinning. Aspirations to support community energy generation are supported by the Community Renewable Energy Generation Fund (CREGF) scheme, which is open to community organisations to support renewable energy projects in North Ayrshire. The aim of the scheme is to increase the level of community owned renewable energy generation opportunities; accelerate community benefit from local renewable energy generation; and support North Ayrshire's target of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2030.

The strategy also includes investigating the feasibility of a green hydrogen generation project using landfill gas, through the Energy Technology Partnership. This will also help meet the aims of the [Hydrogen Action Plan](#) [CD151]. The Hydrogen Action Plan sets out an ambition of 5GW of renewable and low carbon hydrogen production by 2030 and 25GW by 2045.

Additionally, East, North, and South Ayrshire councils are working to develop an investment strategy and policies to help the private and public sector meet energy and carbon reduction targets. The project is linked to the existing regional economic partnership through the Ayrshire Growth Deal. The [Ayrshire Energy Masterplan](#) Final

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Report (March 2025) [CD152] is a key component of this work and presents a pathway to net zero energy use that maximises socioeconomic benefits for Ayrshire. The report seeks to be a catalyst for investment in energy infrastructure relating to heat, transport and power and influence intervention strategies and pathways to ensure a just transition to net zero. The recommendations made in the Ayrshire Energy Masterplan focus on carbon emissions associated with energy use and are to be progressed alongside council [Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy \(LHEES\)](#) [CD154].

In 2018, Carol Anderson Associates conducted a wind energy landscape capacity study of Ayrshire [CD153]. The study provides a landscape and visual sensitivity assessment for wind farms and wind turbine developments within different landscape character types in North Ayrshire. The study also provides an appraisal of the scope for repowering wind farms and provides design and siting guidance to promote good practice.

The [Local Landscape Designation](#) [CD126] review provides guidance for each of the candidate Local Landscape Areas for managing change.

Since 2009 there has been in total 55 renewable energy projects in North Ayrshire installed, not including domestic scale developments. The total expected capacity of these projects is approximately 82 MW. A significant portion of these renewable energy developments have been developed by the Council across its own estate. 20 education buildings across North Ayrshire have benefited from installation of solar panels. The Council has also invested in two large solar farms, one at Nethermains Kilwinning (operational in 2025) and one at Shewalton in Irvine (due to be operational by the end of 2025). At Nethermains, the development is expected to generate about 7,600MWh. Once Shewalton becomes operational that figure will rise to more than 13,000 MWh over the two sites and will result in annual reduction in CO2 emissions of approximately 2,700 tonnes. The Nethermains solar farm, being installed and managed by the Council, is considered to be the first of kind in Scotland.

Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) is an emerging technology that stores electrical energy in batteries for later use. These systems play a crucial role in managing the variability and intermittency of renewable energy sources like solar and wind. During periods of excess energy production, such as when the sun is shining and the wind is blowing strongly, a BESS system stores the surplus energy.

Across North Ayrshire, eight proposals of commercial scale have been granted consent since 2023. Two of these proposals were part of wider renewable energy developments, with six stand-alone developments. Half of these proposals were determined by the Energy Consents Unit (ECU) of the Scottish Government due to the scale of the development.

The energy distribution network in North Ayrshire is covered within the infrastructure schedule.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Zero waste

The Scottish Government aims to make Scotland a zero-waste society with a circular economy. In December 2024, Scotland's [circular economy and waste route map to 2030](#) [CD155] was published, setting out actions to accelerate more sustainable use of resources across the waste hierarchy; reduce emissions associated with resources and waste; and strengthen the delivery of a circular economy. The route map acknowledges the progress made against [existing 2025 waste reduction and recycling targets](#), the areas not met and the lessons to be learnt.

This policy context is reflected in NPF4 through the spatial principle of 'conserving and recycling assets' – making productive use of existing buildings, places, infrastructure and services, locking in carbon, minimising waste, and building a circular economy – and policy 12 which seeks to encourage, promote and facilitate development that is consistent with the waste hierarchy; prioritising the reduction and reuse of materials in construction and deliver the infrastructure required for zero waste and a circular economy in appropriate locations.

A revised zero waste strategy for North Ayrshire will be developed during 2025 and 2026 which considers the actions from the new national policy, while exploring further opportunities for improving performance in this area. Scottish Government also plan to introduce statutory reuse and recycling local performance targets for household waste services from 2030.

North Ayrshire's [Council Plan](#) [CD043] includes the key activity of promoting a circular economy in North Ayrshire to reduce consumption of raw materials and promote reuse, repair and recycling, and generating energy from residual waste; this is picked up within Workstream 4 of the [Sustainable North Ayrshire Strategy](#) [CD111].

SEPA's [Waste Sites and Capacity Tool](#) lists licenced facilities in North Ayrshire. It states that across the 50 sites listed, 27 were operational with a capacity of 3,198,682 tonnes with a total of 1,736,291 tonnes of waste accepted in 2023. In addition to domestic kerbside waste collection, North Ayrshire Council operates four household waste recycling centres (Kilbirnie, Largs, Irvine and Brodick on Arran) and waste transfer stations in Irvine and Brodick. There are three closed landfill sites that are monitored, at Shewalton and Nethermains in Irvine and Brodick, Arran. An energy recovery facility (ERF) is in development at Oldhall Industrial Estate in Irvine. This will recover energy by processing around 180,000 tonnes per year of post-recycled residual commercial waste, generating enough electricity for the equivalent of over 30,000 homes.

North Ayrshire Council is third highest performing Council in Scotland for household waste recycling in 2023, achieving a rate of 56.1 percent ([Household waste generated and managed 2023](#)). This was an increase in performance from 55.3 percent in 2022 (4th best). The average recycling rate in Scotland for 2023 was 43.5 percent.

All the Council's waste is processed via contractual agreements with private contractors. We have a contract in place until 2045 for the processing of our non-recyclable waste as part of the Clyde Valley Residual Waste Partnership, which is in

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

partnership with four other councils (North Lanarkshire, East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire and East Dunbartonshire). Viridor, who is the waste processing contractor, removes recyclable materials at their pre-treatment facility in Bargeddie, North Lanarkshire, prior to recovering energy and heat through an energy from waste facility in Dunbar, East Lothian. The council's recyclable waste processing contracts are retendered every few years, so the suppliers that manage the separation and processing of our recycling waste streams can change on a regular basis.

The Council's Waste Service have advised it does not currently have a local requirement to build any further waste infrastructure for the Council's own waste processing needs at present, only making improvements to existing waste sites.

Heating and cooling

The Scottish Government published its [Heat in Buildings Strategy](#) [CD156] in November 2021. This strategy aims to transform Scotland's buildings and the systems that supply their heat, as part of the route map to net zero and addressing fuel poverty. The strategy sets a number of ambitious targets on, among others, energy efficiency, emissions and low carbon heating system installations.

NPF4 seeks to encourage, promote and facilitate development that supports decarbonised solutions to heat and cooling demand and ensure adaptation to more extreme temperatures. LDPs should take into account the area's Local Heat & Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) and areas of heat network potential and any designated Heat Network Zones (HNZ).

The Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (Scotland) Order 2022 places a duty on local authorities to prepare and update a Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) and Delivery Plan to identify and address heat demand and areas of poor energy efficiency. North Ayrshire Council published its [Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy \(LHEES\)](#) [CD154] and [Delivery Plan](#) in January 2024 [CD157].

The LHEES is a long-term strategic framework to improve the energy efficiency of buildings in North Ayrshire and reduce the greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the heating of these buildings. LHEES support national statutory targets to achieve net zero emissions by 2045 and reduce fuel poverty.

The energy ratings for domestic properties were analysed and compared with Scottish Government energy efficiency targets. This provided a baseline showing that 40 percent of North Ayrshire properties will require a heating or energy efficiency intervention to increase their Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) to C or better (aligning with the objective proposed in the Heat in Buildings Strategy for owner occupied buildings). Further investigation of the entire domestic housing stock identified that approximately 45,000 individual energy efficiency interventions (improvements to glazing, wall insulation and loft insulation) could be made to contribute towards meeting these targets.

Heat network analysis has identified potential zones where district heating networks could be the most economically viable and deliver low-carbon heat to homes and

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

businesses in North Ayrshire. The Council has already established mini-district heating zones in several locations including Irvine, Stevenston, Dalry and Largs. Selected on the basis of having reliable anchor buildings, a high density of potential customers and a suitable total heat demand, there are three zones for further consideration, which are:

- Ardrossan – potential to include 704 domestic properties
- Saltcoats – potential to include 197 domestic properties
- Irvine Town Centre – potential to include 563 domestic properties

Within the [Delivery Plan](#) [CD157], there are 23 actions with lead organisations/council services. Action 12 of the Delivery Plan states that the Sustainability Team will work with communities, local businesses and other public sector partners to complete feasibility studies on proposed heat network zones. This work is already underway with a feasibility study in Irvine being undertaken with communities, local businesses and other stakeholders. A report on this is due in March 2026. The Council's Sustainability Team are also enrolled on to a District Heating Mentorship Scheme that provide information from experts in Denmark with experience of delivering heat network schemes to provide advice and experience.

Changes to the Building Regulations, post 1 April 2024, mean that new homes have a reduced heat demand meaning an increased number of homes may be required to make the heat network commercially viable where new properties are included. Completing feasibility studies on proposed heat network zones and commencing the development of business cases on any heat networks deemed feasible are identified as actions within the Delivery Programme.

Blue and green infrastructure

[Ecosystem services](#) are the direct and indirect contributions ecosystems, also known as natural capital, provide for human wellbeing and quality of life. Features or spaces within the natural and built environment (green infrastructure), including water environment features such as rivers, lochs, wetlands and coastal areas (blue infrastructure) can provide a wide range of these services, simultaneously

The '[Benefits from Nature Wheel](#)' shows the many ecosystem services gained from blue and green infrastructure, divided into four categories: provisioning (for example food and drink, water supply and energy), regulating (for example flood management, clean air and carbon storage), cultural (for example recreation, sense of place, physical health and mental wellbeing) and supporting (for example healthy soils and space for wildlife).

Scottish Government's guidance [Green Infrastructure: Design & Placemaking](#) [CD158] sets out the benefits of green infrastructure in relation to placemaking, economy, climate change, environment, community and social life, and health and wellbeing. To ensure blue and green infrastructure is integral to new development, designed to deliver multiple functions and that communities benefit from accessible, high-quality blue, green and civic spaces, NPF4 policy 20 seeks to protect and enhance blue and green infrastructure and their networks.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

The Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN) covers 19 local authority areas across central Scotland, including North Ayrshire (excluding Arran), and is identified within NPF4 as a National Development. CSGN seeks to play a key role in tackling the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss including by providing multi-functional green and blue infrastructure that provides greatest environmental, lifelong physical and mental health, social wellbeing and economic benefits. It is partnership between the Scottish Government, public bodies, local authorities, NGOs, private sector businesses and communities within central Scotland, overseen by the Green Action Trust and delivered through multiple local projects across the area.

LDPs should be informed by relevant, up-to-date audits and/or strategies, covering the multiple functions and benefits of blue and green infrastructure. A specific blue and green infrastructure audit reflecting and bringing together relevant assessments, audits, strategies and action plans and covering the multiple functions and benefits of blue and green infrastructure has not been undertaken for North Ayrshire. This is identified as a potential evidence gap. However, a number of existing audits, assessments and strategies do exist to support the preparation of LDP3:

Open space is a key component of green infrastructure. North Ayrshire Council adopted its ten-year [Open Space Strategy](#) in 2016 [CD061]. The strategy aims to provide clear direction in the co-ordinated management of North Ayrshire's open space to ensure it meets the needs of residents and visitors alike.

Since adoption of the current Open Space Strategy, the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 has introduced a new duty on planning authorities to prepare and publish an Open Space Strategy. Section 3G (2) of the Act states 'an open space strategy is to set out a strategic framework of the planning authority's policies and proposals as to the development, maintenance and use of green infrastructure in their district, including open spaces and green networks'. The strategy must contain and audit of existing open space provision and an assessment of current and future requirements.

We will seek to progress the preparation of a new Open Space Strategy, setting out policies and proposals for the development, maintenance and use of green infrastructure in North Ayrshire, alongside the Proposal Plan.

An [open space audit](#) – focusing on [PAN 65 open space typologies](#) – has, however, been undertaken and was updated in 2022 [CD062]. The audit considers the quantity and type of open space in North Ayrshire, its quality and accessibility against locally established standards. Opportunities for open space enhancements are also identified for each main settlement.

The total amount of open space included in the Open Space Audit is 3,198.68 hectares, of which 42 percent is found in Irvine, reflecting the town's growth as a New Town. Using established quantity and quality standards, the audit finds that, overall, North Ayrshire has good provision of open space, with only three settlements falling below the standard of 6.55 ha per 1,000 people: Beith, Dalry and Whiting Bay. Approximately 86 percent of the sites assessed as fit for purpose following an

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

assessment of their quality. The Three Towns, Dalry and Beith had the highest percentage of sites assessed as 'fair' or 'poor'.

The audit has informed our [20-minute neighbourhood assessment](#) [CD055] and [play sufficiency assessment](#) [CD063], referred to in further detail within the Liveable Places schedule.

The [North Ayrshire Core Paths Plan](#) [CD159] supports statutory rights to most land and inland water for walking, cycling, horse-riding and non-motorised water-based activities by identifying a framework of routes sufficient for the purpose of giving the public reasonable access throughout the area. These core paths are a key part of outdoor access provision that aim to promote access and reduce the potential for conflict between the needs of land managers and those of access users. Core paths provide links between blue and green infrastructure, contributing to the creation of a network.

The vacant and derelict land register identifies sites that do or could perform a blue green infrastructure function, either on a temporary or permanent basis. Brownfield sites can contribute to nature recovery, support surface water management and become well-used as areas for recreation.

As noted above, work is underway to identify a North Ayrshire Nature Network and audit North Ayrshire's biodiversity, including its ecosystems and habitats. We have also undertaken a review of Local Nature Conservation Sites; mapping of North Ayrshire's woodland resources, including relating to the Ayrshire and Arran Forestry and Woodland Strategy; and the [Habitat Map of Scotland](#), the national repository for habitat and land use data, contribute to the evidence base to inform the North Ayrshire Nature Network and LDP3 in respect to our blue green infrastructure resource.

The [Nature Networks Framework](#) aims to catalyse the urgent and transformative action needed across Scotland to implement Nature Networks that help halt and reverse biodiversity loss. It promotes the basic principles which associated action and delivery, at all levels, should be founded upon.

The outputs of the [Strategic Flood Risk Assessment](#) [CD163]; available data on areas critical for floodwater storage and conveyance (undeveloped floodplains, SuDS basins and watercourses); and water environment related evidence sources noted above will further strengthen our understanding of blue and green infrastructure, its connectedness and the identification of existing and future potential opportunities for blue infrastructure enhancements.

In summary, while a specific blue and green infrastructure audit has not been undertaken for North Ayrshire, a range relevant assessments, audits, strategies and action plans referred to above and covering the multiple functions and benefits of blue and green infrastructure forms the evidence base for LDP3.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Flood risk and water management

[National planning policy](#) (NPF4 policy 22) seeks to strengthen resilience to flood risk by promoting avoidance as a first principle and reducing the vulnerability of development to flooding. LDP3 should strengthen North Ayrshire's resilience to the current and future impacts of climate change by taking a precautionary approach to flood risk. For planning purposes, 'at risk of flooding' or 'in a flood risk area' means land or built form with an annual probability of being flooded of greater than 0.5 percent, which must include an appropriate allowance for future climate change.

Flooding in Scotland is managed through 14 local plan districts which are areas of land based on river catchments. Public authorities work in partnership to manage flood risk within these districts. SEPA published the Ayrshire Flood Risk Management Plan in 2021 [CD160] and North Ayrshire Council, as lead local authority for the Ayrshire Local Plan District, published the [Ayrshire Local Flood Risk Management Plan](#) in 2022 [CD161].

In 2021, the Scottish Government published '[Water Resilient Places](#)' [CD162] which identifies actions to improve how surface water is managed in Scotland. This has a focus on placemaking and can aid LDPs to protect and enhance blue infrastructure for communities. Specific plans for managing surface water have been developed for Irvine (2020) and Saltcoats, Ardrossan, Stevenston and Kilwinning (2021). These plans set out objectives and actions for sustainable flood risk management within these areas.

A [Strategic Flood Risk Assessment](#) (SFRA) [CD163] has been prepared to inform the development planning process. The SFRA provides a summary of existing and future flood risk from all sources in target areas identified by the Ayrshire Flood Risk Management Plan; a description of the completed or proposed actions in each target area since the publication of the previous North Ayrshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment in 2018; details of the most up to date sources of flood risk information for each target area, together with any implications for future planning strategies, policies or actions; and an overview of flood risk within the wider locality.

A web map to support this Strategic Flood Risk Assessment has been prepared. This incorporates the following spatial data currently available to the Council to support the preparation of LDP3 and the assessment of potential development sites:

- SEPA Flood Maps – River Flooding (high, medium and low likelihood)
- SEPA Flood Maps – Surface Water and Small Watercourses Flooding (high, medium and low likelihood)
- SEPA Flood Maps – Coastal Flooding (high, medium and low likelihood)
- SEPA Flood Maps – Future River (medium likelihood)
- SEPA Flood Maps – Future Surface Water and Small Watercourses (medium likelihood)
- SEPA Flood Maps – Future Coastal (medium likelihood)
- River Garnock & Tributaries Flood Risk Model (with 49 percent climate change allowance)
- Observed Flood Event Data for North Ayrshire by SEPA

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

- Historic Flood Events by NAC
- Potentially Vulnerable Areas
- Flood Risk Management Target Areas
- Water Works – Capacity
- Waste Water Works – Capacity

The web map will be updated as and when new data and relevant information becomes available over the course of the plan preparation.

Planning for adaptation measures and identifying opportunities to implement improvements to the water environment through natural flood risk management and blue green infrastructure are also roles for the LDP, enabling water resources to be used efficiently and sustainably.

River basin management planning seeks to protect and improve the water environment for the benefit of people, wildlife and the economy. It encompasses rivers, lochs, transitional waters (estuaries), coastal waters groundwater and groundwater dependant wetlands. River basin management plans set out a range of actions to address problems affecting water quality, the physical condition of water bodies. Scotland is predominately covered by a single [River Basin Management Plan](#) [CD164].

As part of the river basin management planning regime, information on each waterbody, pressures, measures and the objectives (targets) that SEPA have set is available on the [Water Environment Hub](#), with annual updates on the condition of the water environment found at SEPA's [Water Classification Hub](#). There are 45 monitored surface waterbodies in North Ayrshire. In 2023, 4 achieved the overall status of 'high', 16 were 'good' and 3 were 'poor' and 2 'bad'. The area has 114 monitored groundwaters of which 10 were 'good' and 2 were 'poor' in 2023.

Detail of the key pressures on North Ayrshire's waterbodies are included within the [Water Environment Hub](#). Almost all waterbodies are subject to pressures with the impacts of these including the physical and/or ecological condition of the water body, their flows and levels, the overall quality of the water and the access for fish migration. There are 26 surface water bodies in North Ayrshire, with the rural diffuse pollution being the most common pressure.

Table 23 – Key pressures on water bodies in North Ayrshire

Pressure	Number of surface water bodies affected by pressure
Rural diffuse pollution	6
Modifications to physical condition (rural)	5
Acid rain	4
Man-made barriers to fish migration	4
Other – water use by hydropower	4
Modifications to physical condition (urban)	3

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Pressure	Number of surface water bodies affected by pressure
Other – Unknown causes (ecology)	3
Other – Unknown causes (chemistry)	2
Public water supply	2

Summary of Stakeholder Engagement

On 20 February 2025, the Draft Environment Evidence Paper incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Scoping Report was sent to the consultation authorities – NatureScot, Historic Environment Scotland and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and the Scottish Government SEA Gateway. It was also issued more widely for comment via the North Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Partnership, LDP Online Hub and emails to community councils and the LDP mailing list. A draft of this schedule was shared with NatureScot, Historic Environment Scotland and SEPA on 16 July 2025, and a full draft of the Evidence Report was sent to all key agencies on 7 October 2025.

The [Strategic Flood Risk Assessment](#) (SFRA) [CD163] has been prepared in consultation with SEPA. Comments provided by SEPA on a draft have been incorporated into the final SFRA, as set out in Appendix B of that document. SEPA provided a 'statement of agreement' on the assessment in March 2025 [SEPA_11032025].

Wider place-based engagement with local communities has been focused on the 'Your Place Survey' and engagement on the 'Place Profiles'. Based on the Place Standard, the Your Place Survey asked respondents – among other prompts – to consider how easy it was to regularly enjoy natural space. The [Place Profiles](#) present an overview of evidence relating to the environment. The engagement on the profiles, including public 'drop-in' meetings, focused on the needs and wants of communities.

Stevenston is one of nine towns across Scotland included in Architecture & Design Scotland's three-year 'Climate Action Towns' project. The project worked with communities and other stakeholders to identify the best ways to embed climate actions in each town. By using the Place Standard with a Climate Lens, and mapping Stevenston as a 'carbon conscious place', four key topics for climate action were identified: greenspace, biodiversity and nature networks, and adaptation to the changing climate. The [Sustainable North Ayrshire Strategy](#) [CD111] proposes the development of Community Climate Action Plans for each locality, building on the Climate Action Town Stevenston project.

Views expressed on the Environment Evidence Paper and draft schedule are noted in the Record of Engagement [CD009], which includes the Council's response to the issues raised and how the Evidence Report has been amended. Comments relating to the environment from wider community engagement are also summarised within the Record of Engagement. Key points arising are summarised below.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Comments relating to climate change and adaptation

NatureScot suggested that the connections between the climate and nature crises should be noted; consideration of drought events be included and cross-reference to blue and green infrastructure included within this section [NS3_21082025]. The Evidence Report has been updated accordingly.

Comments relating to biodiversity

SEPA and NatureScot welcomed the approach being taken and intention to develop a North Ayrshire Nature Network (NANN). NatureScot highlighted the approach to be taken to coastal and cross-boundary nature networks will be important to consider.

On review of the draft schedule for this topic, SEPA requested that the Evidence Report (and development of the NANN) be informed by water environment evidence sources highlighted within their [Planning Advice Note](#) [CD165] on achieving sufficiency of evidence at the Evidence Report stage. This evidence is equally relevant to blue green infrastructure, flood risk and the water environment and has been added to the Evidence Report under the section on [North Ayrshire's Nature Network](#).

NatureScot have suggested an evidence gap moving forward relating to 'townscape' - urban nature habitats and networks which are considered important elements in achieving the aims of NPF4 [NS4_24102025]. It is noted by NatureScot that due to the increased level of complexity at urban place scales, sites being appraised for development will require to be considered, proportionately, in more detail, during the ongoing preparation of LDP3 and site assessment.

Comments relating to natural places

Iceni Projects Ltd on behalf of The Mac Mic Group disputes the evidence presented in the North Ayrshire Settlement Edge Landscape Sensitivity Study in relation to a specific site.

The Council considers the study is robust, having been undertaken by a qualified and experienced landscape architect, and that this is a site-specific issue to be considered at the site assessment stage of preparing LDP3.

Comments relating to soils

NatureScot recommended setting out further detail on the condition, land uses, land use changes and pressures related to soils, their management and enhancement.

Homes for Scotland highlighted an approach to mitigating impact on soils from development through use of a 'Construction Environment Management Plan' (CEMP)

Comments relating to forestry, woodland and trees

Scottish Forestry agree that converting relevant policy into practice would benefit from the inclusion of an up-to-date Forestry and Woodland Strategy that clearly

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

illustrates the mechanisms by which the region's forests and woodland will be protected and expanded to meet Scottish Government objectives.

Comments relating to vacant and derelict land

The environmental and social importance of vacant and derelict land and its positive effects on local communities was highlighted in one response from a member of the North Ayrshire Biodiversity Partnership, with areas of vacant and derelict land in North Ayrshire identified as 'well used and well-loved areas of wild open space' and as important sites for biodiversity. NatureScot also noted the role and contribution of vacant and derelict land to nature could be considered, with the potential that relevant opportunities and priorities could then inform the preparation of development frameworks or briefs as appropriate.

Uses that support the management of increasing flood risk from climate change are highlighted by Scottish Water.

The potential for brownfield sites to contribute to nature recovery is accordingly recognised in the Evidence Report.

Comments on coastal development

NatureScot highlighted the move towards an Ayrshire-wide Coastal Change Adaptation Planning approach, supplanting the current Shoreline Management Plan. The [relevant section](#) has been updated to refer to this.

Comments relating to historical assets

Historic Environment Scotland welcomed the approach of aligning the SEA scoping report with the publication of the Environment Topic Paper, utilising the same baseline data and that the information, data and advice issued by HES has been utilised in the preparation of the evidence and Scoping Report.

Encouragement was provided to consider how the historic environment may be relevant to other topics and the inclusion of a summary of implications for the proposed plan for the historic environment, drawing on the evidence provided in the report. Accordingly, reference to the historic environment is made in relation to placemaking within the Liveable Places schedule and tourism in the Productive Places schedule. Implications relating the historic environment evidence have been added below.

Submitted local place plans and the response from Beith Community Council identify locally important historical assets.

Comments relating to green belt

West Kilbride Community Council have proposed the creation of a green belt around the village within their Local Place Plan. Early engagement with Beith District Community Council has also raised a suggestion of a green belt around some parts of Beith. This is also reflected in the Garnock Valley Local Place Plan.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Comments on heating and cooling

Homes for Scotland advise that Building Regulations post 1 April 2024 mean that new homes have a reduced heat demand and, therefore, a higher number of homes are required to make heat networks commercially viable. This is acknowledged within the summary of evidence.

Comments on blue green infrastructure

NatureScot and SEPA highlighted limited reference to blue green infrastructure in the Environment Topic Paper, stating further clarification around this part of the evidence base was required. A specific section on blue green infrastructure is included in the Evidence Report above, with implications for the Proposed Plan discussed below.

Scottish Water support and actively encourage the inclusion of blue and green infrastructure approaches when making place-based assessments on the local catchment area. They further note that greater consideration should be taken on what blue infrastructure can be integrated within new development to help to reduce the risk of flooding, create water sensitive urban design and accelerate delivery of water resilient places.

SEPA also encouraged the final Evidence Report to include reference to the policy connections across NPF4 policies, including the wider policy connections of blue green infrastructure. This is highlighted at the beginning of [the blue green infrastructure section](#). A more comprehensive list of assessments, audits and strategies relevant to Blue Green Infrastructure has been provided, as suggested by NatureScot.

Comments on flood risk and water management

Beith Community Council have highlighted significant surface water drainage problems in the town arising from culverts.

SEPA required that key pressures on waterbodies were presented in the Evidence Report to outline the key issues are currently facing waterbodies in North Ayrshire. This has been included at Table 23. The need to consider opportunities to support any direct or indirect action to improve the condition of the water environment, including the alleviation or mitigation of pressures is identified within the implications of this evidence.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

Historic Environment Scotland, NatureScot and SEPA as Consultation Authorities also provided comments on the scope and level of detail proposed for the environmental report and proposed consultation period. The views of the Consultation Authorities on the evidence, scope and methodology of the SEA have been considered in the final Environment Evidence Paper and Evidence Report, including revising SEA objectives, sub-objectives and assessment questions set out in the SEA Assessment Framework and consequently the site appraisal methodology

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Summary of Implications for the Proposed Plan

Our view on what this evidence and stakeholder engagement means for LDP3 is summarised below:

Global climate emergency and nature crisis

LDP3 must address the global climate emergency and nature crisis by ensuring the spatial strategy will reduce emissions, adapt to current and future risks of climate change and promoting nature recovery and restoration in the area. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving biodiversity are cross-cutting outcomes of NPF4, with linkages across all the national planning policies which will deliver sustainable places. This should underpin decisions made in the preparation of the Proposed Plan.

Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Appraisal

The Council will prepare an Environmental Report as part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of LDP3.

The Environment Report is statutory obligation that aims to ensure the environment is a primary consideration in the preparation of qualifying public plans, programmes and strategies, including local development plans. It has a key role in the preparation of LDP3 through the identification and addressing of environmental implications arising from the policies and proposals of the Proposed Plan. This includes through the review of reasonable alternatives and identification of mitigation measures. The SEA and Environmental Report will inform the Proposed Plan in a way that seeks to avoid adverse environmental effects and enhance positive ones.

We have aligned the preparation of the Evidence Report with the scoping of SEA in recognition of the fact that the requirement to set out a view on the environmental characteristics of the area (Evidence Report) and to identify and consider existing environmental problems relevant to the plan and to manage environmental sensitivities (SEA) are informed by the same evidence. The Environmental Evidence Paper – setting out the environmental baseline – also serves as the Scoping Report for the SEA.

Table 22 identifies five European sites within North Ayrshire and their qualifying interest. A Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) will be prepared to assess the likely significant effects of the Proposed Plan on these sites and any out with the Council area which could be impacted. LDP3 may only be taken forward if the appropriate assessment concludes that the plan would not adversely affect the integrity of any European site.

Site assessment

A site appraisal methodology has been prepared as the basis for assessing development proposals for inclusion in LDP3 as allocated sites. The methodology comprises an environmental assessment at stage 1, which is aligned with the

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

proposed SEA Assessment Framework set out in the Environment Evidence Paper/Scoping Report.

The environmental evidence gathered will inform the assessment of development sites and the decisions made to ensure new development achieves the environmental objectives of NPF4.

As noted by NatureScot in relation to urban nature habitats and networks, due to the increased level of complexity at urban place scales, sites being appraised for development will require to be considered, proportionately, in more detail, during the ongoing preparation of LDP3 and site assessment. Part of this appraisal process is required to help achieve compact settlements, reduced land take and access to nature for all citizens.

A Site Assessment Report will be prepared, setting out the relevant evidence and assessment for all proposed sites (including LDP2 sites which are not complete or under development which the Council may consider rolling forward) and will inform the Council's allocation of sites in the Proposed Plan as well as masterplans, development briefs, site specific technical/infrastructure requirements and the statutory Delivery Programme

Blue and green infrastructure and Nature Networks

Blue and green infrastructure has a key role to play in achieving a range of environmental objectives, including in relation to climate change and biodiversity, for example reducing CO² emissions by providing non-vehicular travel routes encouraging walking, wheeling and cycling; providing carbon storage and sequestration; managing flood risk; and allowing diverse habitats to be created which are rich in flora and fauna. Nature networks are inherent within green and blue infrastructure and central to increasing ecological connectivity and restoration of nature. The Proposed Plan must identify and protect blue and green infrastructure assets and networks, including the North Ayrshire Nature Network, and set out opportunities for these to be enhanced and expanded, including by new development that must be 'nature positive'. The existing Open Space Audit, Play Sufficiency Assessment, Local Nature Conservation Site review, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and datasets on woodland cover; areas critical for floodwater storage and conveyance; and highlighted water environment related evidence sources noted in the Evidence Report provide an evidence base to support the delivery of strengthened blue green infrastructure. A biodiversity audit being prepared in support of the North Ayrshire Nature Network Strategy will further support this work stream. We are committed to including the above evidence (where relevant) in the mapping of nature networks and blue and green infrastructure.

Closer partnership working will support delivery of blue green infrastructure to tackle both climate and biodiversity emergencies, including through the inclusion of sustainable surface water management principles, and inform and influence the design and planning process for new development. This extends to identifying cross-boundary needs and opportunities.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

The role and benefits of blue and green infrastructure extend beyond environmental objectives. The 'cultural' ecosystem services gained from blue and green infrastructure, for example recreation, sense of place, physical health and mental wellbeing, are important to creating liveable places (Topic 1).

Historic assets and places

The LDP3 must support the sustainable management of the historic environment. It should also identify, protect and enhance valued historic assets and places as per NPF4 and the established [Local development planning guidance](#).

The proposed plan must take into consideration the current pause of the BARR. Implications are that LDP3 may explore the option of new policy or guidance, showing a pro-active approach to buildings at risk as well as potential masterplans to support their appropriate reuse.

Local Place Plans have highlighted assets which the immediate community deem to be culturally significant. LDP3 should explore where possible, whether it can protect and enhance these assets. The current review of local designations will also further aid in identifying valued historic assets. This may result in existing Conservation Area Management Plans being revised or updated where necessary or identifying future opportunities for management plans.

Considering the current sale of ecclesiastical buildings, this may have implications for LDP3 needing to explore the option of new policy or guidance, showing a pro-active approach to the re-use of these buildings. Furthermore, an open dialogue will be kept with our colleagues in Connected Communities and Regeneration, who support communities to deliver positive change, including the redevelopment of assets. Internal guidance which can be shared with communities has already been shared with colleagues, having been informed by information by the Places of Worship Forum and Built Environment Forum Scotland.

LDP3 will also need to be cognisant of LHEES work and how this will be applicable to historic assets, ensuring they are protected and managed sustainably.

Green belts

The preparation of LDP3 must consider the need for green belt to support the spatial strategy and where there is a significant danger of unsustainable growth in car-based commuting or suburbanisation of the countryside.

The Settlement Edge Landscape Sensitivity Study provides a strategic-level landscape and visual sensitivity assessment relating to the potential urban expansion of North Ayrshire's main settlements. The study additionally considers sensitivity to housing development within 45 identified settlement edge sites; further assessment of potential development sites not covered by the study may be necessary.

The study makes recommendations on where a green belt designation might be appropriate in terms of protecting and enhancing the character and identity of

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

settlements and their landscape and natural setting and in relation to clearly identifiable visual boundary markers based on landscape features.

However, any potential green belt designations will also be informed by the spatial strategy of the Proposed Plan itself, the North Ayrshire Nature Network, blue green infrastructure and any areas managed for the purpose of tackling climate change. Two communities have indicated support for green belt designation, and this will also be a consideration.

Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings

Conserving and recycling assets and compact urban growth are two of six spatial principles that shape the National Spatial Strategy set out in NPF4 and will guide LDP3's spatial strategy. This means making productive use of existing buildings, places and infrastructure and optimising the use of land to provide services and resources by limiting urban expansion. Accordingly, LDP3 should encourage, promote and facilitate the reuse of brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings. This will help reduce the need for greenfield development.

North Ayrshire has over 920 hectares of vacant and derelict land which provides the starting point for this focus. Forty-three historic buildings at risk are also identified and it is acknowledged that the vacant and derelict land audit and Buildings at Risk Register (BARR) do not reflect all relevant sites and buildings. Registered local place plans which have identified locally significant land and buildings and the Housing Land Audit will identify other priority sites.

Opportunities for the positive and sustainable reuse of brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings should be identified by LDP3, acknowledging that redevelopment will not always be the most appropriate use. The use of unused or under-used land as green infrastructure – either permanently or temporary – should be encouraged where appropriate. In this regard, the importance of vacant and derelict land is not just its value as a redevelopment site but also its potential inclusion in a Nature Network; there may be sites that have a potential for redevelopment but also could play an important part in the North Ayrshire Nature Network, which itself has potential for helping to tackle problematic vacant & derelict sites.

The amount of developable brownfield and vacant and derelict land identified in the spatial strategy will have direct implications for the requirement for urban expansion and green belt designation, especially in the context of the indicative Local Housing Land Requirement. The site appraisal process will inform this.

Energy

LDP3 should encourage, promote and facilitate all forms of renewable energy generation, storage, transmission and distribution infrastructure and emerging low-carbon and zero emissions technologies, including hydrogen. Supporting community energy generation in particular can bring wider community benefits.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Hunterston will be a key location for development that supports the transition to net zero. NPF4 identifies Hunterston as a National Development. The existing infrastructure offers potential for electricity generation from renewables and associated infrastructure.

A wind energy landscape capacity study of Ayrshire provides a landscape and visual sensitivity assessment for wind farms and wind turbine developments within different landscape character types in North Ayrshire. Wind farms will not be supported in the Arran National Scenic Area.

Flood risk and water management including coastal development

National planning policy is clear that development proposals at risk of flooding or in a flood risk area – defined as land or built form with an annual probability of being flooded of greater than 0.5 percent including an appropriate allowance for future climate change – will only be supported in specific circumstances. A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) has been prepared to support the assessment of development proposals via the site appraisal methodology.

LDP3 may identify previously used sites in built up areas within a flood risk area which need to be brought into a positive use, but only where it can be evidenced long-term safety and resilience can be secured. SEPA advice will be key in any such considerations.

The implication of adopting a precautionary approach to flood risk will mean areas within North Ayrshire are not suitable for most forms of development. These decisions will be guided by the latest available flood risk evidence and flood risk assessments may be required.

Further consideration on coastal change adaptation to inform how LDP3 plans for future resilience will be an important area of focus in relation to coastal development.

The condition and pressures facing surface and ground water bodies in North Ayrshire will be relevant in the formation of the spatial strategy, including in the context of nature networks and blue green infrastructure. Site allocations should consider opportunities to support any direct or indirect action to improve the condition of the water environment, including the alleviation or mitigation of pressures.

Statements of Agreement / Dispute

Historic Environment Scotland confirmed on 15 August 2025 that they are content with the evidence provided in the report and raise no disputes [HES3_15082025]. No further comments were made in response to the full Draft Evidence Report [HES4_03112025].

SEPA provided a statement of agreement to the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment on 11 March 2025 and for evidence relating to nature networks, blue green infrastructure and the water environment on 20 October 2025 [SEPA3_11032025].

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

After addressing issues relating to disputed evidence for the natural environment to what it considers an appropriate and proportionate level for this stage of the LDP3 preparation process, NatureScot confirmed its agreement with the draft evidence report on 24 October 2025 [NS4_24102025].

Iceni Projects Ltd on behalf of The Mac Mic Group disputes the evidence presented in the North Ayrshire Settlement Edge Landscape Sensitivity Study in relation to a specific site [MMG2_31032025].

Links to Evidence

CD061	North Ayrshire Open Space Strategy 2016 to 2026
CD062	North Ayrshire Council Open Space Audit 2022
CD109	Environment Evidence Paper (April 2025)
CD110	The Environment Strategy for Scotland: vision and outcomes (February 2020)
CD111	Sustainable North Ayrshire 2024 to 2027 (December 2023)
CD112	Securing a green recovery on a path to net zero: climate change plan 2018 to 2032 – update (December 2020)
CD113	National Adaptation Plan 2024 to 2029 (September 2024)
CD114	North Ayrshire's 2030 Woodland: A Tree Planting Strategy (December 2021)
CD115	Anticipating and mitigating projected climate-driven increases in extreme drought in Scotland, 2021 to 2040. NatureScot Research Report No. 1228
CD116	Water scarcity report – 18 September 2025
CD117	Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045 (November 2024)
CD118	Scottish Biodiversity Delivery Plan 2024 to 2030 (November 2024)
CD119	Scottish Government Planning Guidance: Biodiversity – December 2025
CD120	Developing with Nature guidance
CD121	North Ayrshire Reporting on the Scottish Biodiversity Duty 2020 to 2023 (January 2024)
CD122	North Ayrshire Approved Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2019 to 2031 (April 2019)
CD123	Review of Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS)
CD124	Scotland's Geodiversity Charter 2018 to 2023 (2017)
CD125	North Ayrshire Nature Network Strategy - March 2025
CD126	North Ayrshire Local Landscape Designation Review – Main Report – September 2023
CD127	North Ayrshire Local Landscape Designation Review – Background Evaluation Report – September 2023
CD128	North Ayrshire Settlement Edge Landscape Sensitivity Assessment – December 2024
CD129	North Ayrshire Settlement Edge Landscape Sensitivity Study Maps
CD130	Ayrshire Forestry and Woodland Strategy 2014
CD131	Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (May 2019)
CD132	Beith Conservation Area Assessment – 2020

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

CD061	<u>North Ayrshire Open Space Strategy 2016 to 2026</u>
CD133	<u>Corrie Conservation Area Assessment – 2020</u>
CD134	<u>Dalry Conservation Area Assessment – 2020</u>
CD135	<u>Dreghorn Conservation Area Assessment - 2020</u>
CD136	<u>High Corrie Conservation Area Assessment – 2020</u>
CD137	<u>Irvine Harbour Conservation Area Assessment – 2020</u>
CD138	<u>Lamlash Conservation Area Assessment – 2020</u>
CD139	<u>Perceton Conservation Area Assessment – 2020</u>
CD140	<u>Skelmorlie Conservation Area Assessment – 2020</u>
CD141	<u>West Kilbride Conservation Area Assessment – 2020</u>
CD142	<u>Kilbirnie Conservation Area Assessment – 2014</u>
CD143	<u>Irvine Town Centre Conservation Area Assessment – 2012</u>
CD144	<u>Millport Conservation Area Assessment – 2013</u>
CD145	<u>North Ayrshire Council, Vacant & Derelict Land Strategy 2023 to 2027</u>
CD146	<u>Scotland's National Marine Plan (March 2015)</u>
CD147	<u>Ayrshire Shoreline Management Plan (September 2018)</u>
CD148	<u>Coastal Change Adaptation Plan incorporating The Sandylands Promenade and Stevenston Beach and Irvine Harbour to Gailes Burn Local Coastal Change Adaptation Plans – October 2025</u>
CD149	<u>Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (January 2023)</u>
CD150	<u>Onshore wind policy statement 2022 (December 2022)</u>
CD151	<u>Hydrogen Action Plan (December 2022)</u>
CD152	<u>Ayrshire Energy Masterplan – March 2025</u>
CD153	<u>North Ayrshire Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study – Final Report (October 2018)</u>
CD154	<u>North Ayrshire Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (January 2024)</u>
CD155	<u>Scotland's circular economy and waste route map to 2030 (December 2024)</u>
CD156	<u>Heat in Buildings Strategy (October 2021)</u>
CD157	<u>North Ayrshire Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy – Delivery Plan 2024 to 2029</u>
CD158	<u>Green Infrastructure: Design and Placemaking (November 2011)</u>
CD159	<u>North Ayrshire Council, Core Paths Plan – January 2009</u>
CD160	<u>Flood Risk Management Plan: Ayrshire (December 2021)</u>
CD161	<u>Local Flood Risk Management Plan: Ayrshire Local Plan District (2022 to 2028) (December 2022)</u>
CD162	<u>Water-resilient places - surface water management and blue-green infrastructure: policy framework (February 2021)</u>
CD163	<u>Strategic Flood Risk Assessment – February 2025</u>
CD164	<u>The River Basin Management Plan for Scotland 2021 to 2027 (December 2021)</u>
CD165	<u>SEPA Planning Advice Note for Planning Authorities. LDP Evidence Gathering: Achieving sufficiency of evidence relating to flood risk and the water environment (December 2024)</u>

Topic 4 – Transport

Mobility is an essential part of a place. The relationship between land use and transport is critical, with the location of new development fundamental to its connectivity and the travel choices people are able and choose to make. Transport is relevant not only in the context of greenhouse gas emissions but also to health and wellbeing, the fairness of our society and the inclusiveness of our economy.

To support and inform the preparation of this Evidence Report and the Local Development Plan (LDP3) in relation to transportation matters, a [Transport Evidence Paper](#) [CD166] has been prepared. This sets out baseline information and data about the transport infrastructure and capacity of North Ayrshire. This chapter of the Evidence Report summarises this evidence and its implications for the Proposed Plan. References to specific figures and tables in the Transport Evidence Paper are provided in square brackets. The corresponding [NPF4](#) policy is 13. Sustainable transport.

Information required by the Act and Regulations

Section 15 of the Planning Act concerns the form and content of local development plans. Subsection 1(a) requires the local development plan to take account of matters mentioned in subsection (5), including:

- the infrastructure of the district (including transport) and how that infrastructure is used

Section 16B of the Act relates to the Evidence Report. As per subsection (3), the evidence report is to set out the planning authority's view on the matters listed in section 15(5), referred to above.

The Town and Country Planning (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2023 (the 2023 Regulations) provide additional detail to the requirements set out in primary legislation. Regulation 9 sets out further information and considerations to which the planning authority are to have regard to in preparing a local development plan. Included within this list is any regional or local transport strategy.

Summary of Evidence

Policy Context

[National Planning Framework 4](#) [CD002] sets out a National Spatial Strategy to support the planning and delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places. Six overarching spatial principles guide implantation of the spatial strategy, including 'just transition' – a fair and inclusive transition to net zero; 'conserving and recycling assets' – making productive use of existing infrastructure; and 'local living', which concerns access to services, greenspace, learning, work and leisure.

NPF4's sustainable transport policy (policy 13) seeks to encourage, promote and facilitate developments that prioritise walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

for everyday travel and reduce the need to travel unsustainably. Expected outcomes are developments in locations which support sustainable travel; more, better, safer and more inclusive active and sustainable travel opportunities and investment in transport infrastructure which supports connectivity and reflects place-based approaches and local living.

Local living, including '20-minute neighbourhoods', is further embedded within NPF4 through Policy 14 and Policy 15. These policies intend to encourage, promote and facilitate the application of the Place Principle and design-led approaches to deliver development that is well connected, easy to move around and where people can meet most of their daily needs within a reasonable distance of their home, preferably by walking, wheeling or cycling or using sustainable transport options thereby reducing car dependency.

Strengthening and extending a Scotland-wide walking, cycling and wheeling network is designated by NPF4 as a national development to support the delivery of liveable places and reduce emissions from transport, with a focus on areas where improvements to accessibility are most needed.

The National Transport Strategy, Strategic Transport Projects Review and Scotland's Climate Change Plan are all identified by NPF4 as cross-cutting policies.

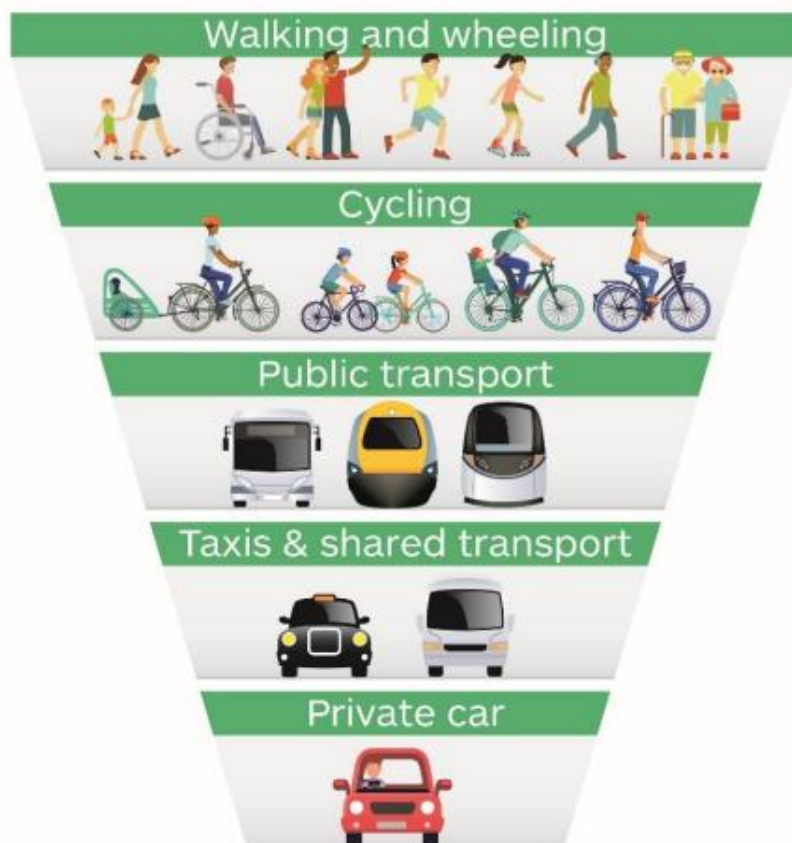
The [National Transport Strategy 2](#) (NTS2) [CD167] presents a vision for Scotland's transport system to 2040: 'we will have a sustainable, inclusive, safe and accessible transport system, helping deliver a healthier, fairer and more prosperous Scotland for communities, businesses and visitors'. The strategy identifies four priorities:

- To reduce inequalities
- To take climate action
- To help deliver inclusive economic growth
- To improve our health and wellbeing

Under each priority, NTS2 sets out three related outcomes and outlines current and emerging challenges. It recognises that spatial planning can play a key role in addressing a number of these challenges for our places but needs to be properly aligned with transport planning to realise its full potential. A range of policies has been developed that will act as the drivers of change and help address the challenges, achieve the priorities and outcomes and deliver the vision. Overarching these policies is the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy, which promotes walking, wheeling, cycling, public transport and shared transport options in preference to single occupancy private car use for the movement of people.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Figure 6 – Sustainable Travel Hierarchy

Prioritising Sustainable Transport

In accordance with the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy, NTS2 describes that when making planning decisions, for example identifying sites for development, impacts on transport – and transport accessibility – must be considered as a priority to enable a positive impact on the choices about the types of journeys we make, when we make them and how we make them. A planning system that puts in place options that will discourage people from owning or using cars and transport infrastructure that helps ensure that places are convenient to get to without having to use a car will, in the long-term, benefit air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve health.

The NTS2 also includes a Sustainable Investment Hierarchy with 'reducing the need to travel unsustainably' placed at the top, followed by 'maintaining and safely operating existing assets'. NTS2 and the National Infrastructure Investment Plan are clear that we must work with our existing infrastructure assets first, before investing in additional assets.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Figure 7 – The Sustainable Investment Hierarchy



The [Strategic Transport Projects Review](#) (STPR2) [CD168] provides an overview of transport investment, mainly infrastructure and other behaviour change recommendations, that are required to deliver the National Transport Strategy priorities and objectives of the review.

STPR2 considers the transport needs of Scotland's people and communities, and examines current active travel, public transport, and road provision to develop a strategy that will achieve the vision of the National Transport Strategy. The current needs and provisions are reviewed from national and regional perspectives to reflect their different geographies, travel patterns and demands.

Recommendations are made by the STPP2 for sustainable travel improvements; influencing travel choices and behaviour; decarbonising transport and increasing safety and resilience on the strategic transport network. Recommendations 18, 24 and 42 have specific relevance to North Ayrshire, supporting integrated journeys at ferry terminals (18); ferry vessel renewal and replacement, and progressive decarbonisation (24) and investment in port infrastructure to enable this (42).

Transport Scotland's Island Connectivity Plan (ICP) comprises an overarching [Strategic Approach](#) [CD169] paper and delivery plans and workstreams, including the [Vessels and Ports Plan](#) [CD170], Community Needs Assessments, and Monitoring & Evaluation Plan. Following public consultation undertaken in early 2024, the final versions of each of these documents were published in 2025. These documents outline a long-term vision for island transport connectivity, addressing strategic challenges across ferry services, aviation, fixed links, and onward and connecting travel. Recommendation 18 of STPR2 links to the Onward and

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Connecting Travel workstream that forms part of the Islands Connectivity Plan (ICP), which is at an early stage

Aligned with the NTS2 priority to take climate action, [Scotland's Climate Change Plan update](#) [CD112], published in December 2020, includes a section on transport and sets out a commitment to reducing car kilometres by 20 per cent by 2030, to enable Scotland to meet its net zero emissions target by 2045. This specific policy commitment is supported by a [Route Map](#) [CD171].

In April 2025, the Cabinet Secretary for Transport announced the abandonment of the 20 percent target at a [session of the Public Audit Committee](#) concerning the report 'Sustainable transport: Reducing car use', which was produced jointly by the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission. Recent advice from the UK Climate Change Committee that moving 7 percent of car trips to walking, cycling, and public transport by 2035 would be sufficient to meet climate change goals was referenced. Transport Scotland have advised that the Government 'remains steadfastly committed to reducing car use across Scotland in a way which is fair and supports a just transition to net zero emissions by 2045' [TS5_12062025] and will publish a renewed policy statement on car use reduction which further sets out their policy position and, potentially, a new longer-term target.

North Ayrshire's [Local Transport and Active Travel Strategy 2023 to 2028](#) (LTATS) [CD172] sets out how the Council intends to contribute to national transportation objectives and specifies actions which will achieve objectives that are distinctive to North Ayrshire.

The strategy upholds the vision that 'North Ayrshire will have a sustainable and well-connected transport network that meets the needs of all, supports an inclusive economy, healthier communities and creates an attractive place in which to live, work, visit and do business'. Following this vision, the strategy presents three strategic priorities: accessibility for all, inclusive economic growth, healthier communities. This then informs the objectives of the strategy which relate to:

- Access to employment and services
- Reducing emissions
- Active Travel and communities
- Confidence in public transport
- Transport network condition

Additional objectives are set for active travel which seek to provide a convenient, attractive, high quality and safer network to increase the proportion of all journeys made by walking, wheeling and cycling within local communities and to key attractions. Key issues and related actions are outlined within the Delivery Plan, along with specific proposals in each locality.

Table 6 of the [Transport Evidence Paper](#) [CD166] summarises other national, regional and local policies relevant to transport and LDP3, including the [regional transport strategy](#) (RTS) [CD173]. Prepared by the Strathclyde Partnership for Transport and covering the period 2023 to 2038, the RTS draws upon the

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Sustainable Travel Hierarchy principles outlined in the National Transport Strategy and recognises that the delivery of the RTS must be in collaboration with communities, local authorities, and local development plans.

North Ayrshire's Adopted Local Development Plan (LDP2) [CD001] was published in November 2019, so pre-dates the latest National Planning Framework, National Transport Strategy and Strategic Transport Projects Review, plus local and regional strategies. Policy 28 states interventions identified in the [Irvine Bay Transport Model Protocol](#) [CD174] will be implemented at the appropriate time.

In January 2025, a new [Supplementary Street Development Guide](#) [CD175] was approved. The guidance supports the National Roads Development Guide in promoting well designed streets that prioritise place and people over the movement of motor vehicles.

Irvine Bay Transport Model Protocol

This [protocol](#) [CD174] was adopted in February 2015 following the adoption of the North Ayrshire Local Development Plan (LDP1) in May 2014. The purpose of the Protocol is to achieve a consistent approach to determining planning applications for new development and/or change of use within Irvine Bay likely to result in a significant material increase in the volume of traffic on the strategic road network and secure the timely delivery of transport improvements, as and when needed. The Protocol is accompanied by a Minute of Agreement.

At this time it was noted that some £3.5 million (May 2013 prices) strategic road improvements might be needed within Irvine Bay to support the development, provided for by the LDP, and to achieve no significant detriment in overall network performance either individually or cumulatively by that development and it was the Council's intention to fund and deliver all the improvements, subject to demonstrable need.

Table 2 of the [Protocol](#) identifies the location and nature of the strategic road improvements, as agreed with Transport Scotland. These include an enlarged, signalised Pennyburn roundabout with slip from the A78(T) to the A738 Kilwinning Road towards Stevenston.

The point at which particular improvements would be required to address the cumulative transport impacts of the development, provided for by the LDP, and to mitigate these impacts to a level acceptable to Transport Scotland and North Ayrshire Council, is identified as the critical point. In order to establish the critical point, the Protocol and Minute of Agreement provide for updates to the transport model on a five yearly basis, or when jointly deemed necessary by North Ayrshire Council and Transport Scotland.

The most recent transport modelling exercise was carried out in 2022/23 and focused on Pennyburn Roundabout. Further details are noted below under 'Road Network'.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Transport poverty

Transport poverty is defined as the lack of transport options that are available, reliable, affordable, accessible or safe, that allow people to meet their daily needs and achieve a reasonable quality of life. People at higher risk of experiencing different aspects of transport poverty include those on low incomes; those living in rural and island communities; disabled people; and women. Transport poverty is shaped by the transport system, spatial planning, service provision, and sociodemographic and household circumstances, and has multiple knock-on impacts on people's economic activity and education, financial security, social engagement, access to amenities and services, and health and wellbeing. Evidence from Public Health Scotland ([Transport poverty: a public health issue](#) [CD176]) indicates a key role for spatial planning in tackling transport poverty by influencing the availability and relative location of housing, transport infrastructure, key services, amenities, and employment opportunities.

Existing Transport Network

Active travel

Data from the Scottish Household Survey 2022 continues to show that North Ayrshire residents walk as a means of transport less frequently than the Scottish average. According to the travel diary data:

- 43 percent of North Ayrshire residents reported that they do not usually walk as a means of transport, compared to the Scottish average of 36 percent.
- 22 percent of North Ayrshire residents walk for transport one to two days per week, while only 30 percent walk frequently (defined as three to seven days per week), which is lower than the national average of 45 percent.

These figures suggest a continued disparity in walking habits between North Ayrshire and the rest of Scotland.

In terms of broader active travel trends, data from counters across North Ayrshire indicate a general upward trend in active travel between 2018 and 2022. Notably, 2020 saw a significant spike in walking and cycling, attributed to the COVID-19 lockdowns, which temporarily altered travel behaviours and increased local use of active travel infrastructure.

North Ayrshire has nationally recognised long-distance walking routes, including the Arran Coastal Way and Ayrshire Coastal Path, and an extensive wider network of core paths developed as part of the Council's responsibilities under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. The expansion of Irvine and Kilwinning as New Towns in the 1960s and 1970s has contributed to a good path network in these towns.

The Annual Cycling Monitoring Report 2023 indicates that 35 percent of North Ayrshire residents have access to one or more bikes for private use, which is below the national average of 45 percent. A large majority of areas in the region fall below the Scottish Government target set out in the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland for 10 percent of everyday journeys to be made by bike.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

There are three National Cycle Network (NCN) routes within North Ayrshire:

- NCN7 runs from the border with South Ayrshire through Irvine, Kilwinning and the Garnock Valley, before continuing north towards Paisley and Glasgow.
- NCN73 connects Kilmarnock to Ardrossan and continues on the Isle of Arran between the ferry terminals in Brodick and Lochranza.
- NCN753 is still under development. It runs from Ardrossan northwards along the coast. Work is ongoing to improve this route and create additional off-road sections.

Figure 23 of the [Transport Evidence Paper](#) [CD166] maps the cycle network in North Ayrshire. Just over half of the total route lengths of National Cycle Network is traffic free (52 percent). Sustrans Network Development Plan (NDP) maps are shown at Appendix B of the Transport Evidence Paper. The maps show the condition of current routes alongside NDP stage 2 and 3 aspirational routes.

STPR2 reported that the stakeholders felt that the network generally catered for leisure and recreational cycling rather than day-to-day commuter cycle trips. There are missing links in the NCN and Scottish Government Cycle route networks in the region including along the north coast, north of Ardrossan to Skelmorlie via West Kilbride and Largs. The standard of carriageway was also identified as a problem, as well as the absence of (and where they do exist, the standard of) footways.

Data from the Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey (SRMCS) reported in 2025 shows that North Ayrshire Council (NAC) achieved an overall Roads Condition Indicator (RCI) score of 30.6, ranking ninth equal out of Scotland's 32 local authorities. This marks a significant improvement from previous years, including 2017 when NAC had the highest proportion of Rural A roads classified as red at 11.0 percent, compared to 7.3 percent in South Ayrshire and 2.1 percent in East Ayrshire. This may be a factor in wider safety concerns cited by cyclists.

In addition to forming part of North Ayrshire's transport infrastructure, formal and informal active travel networks form an important component of the area's blue green infrastructure, delivering cultural ecosystem service functions relating to recreation and health and wellbeing. Connecting people and places is central to many policy areas, including local living, open space, green networks and active travel. It is also a key aim of Nature Networks, creating scope to integrate and align implementation mechanisms to achieve multiple policy outcomes benefiting people and place.

Bus

The main bus operating companies in North Ayrshire include McGill's, Stagecoach, ShuttleBus and SPT's MyBus. Commercial services are mapped at Figure 24 of the Transport Evidence Paper. Notable key bus services include:

- Stagecoach service 11 connecting Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenston to Kilwinning, Irvine and Kilmarnock.
- Stagecoach Service 585 serving the Ayrshire coast from Largs, through West Kilbride, the Three Towns and Irvine, and towards Prestwick and Ayr.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

- McGill's Buses' Clyde Flyer services (901 and 906) between Largs and Glasgow, via Inverclyde, and their 904 service connecting Largs with the Garnock Valley and Paisley.

Additional services are provided by Shuttle Buses, which operate smaller vehicle services between Kilwinning, Irvine and surrounding areas, and also the Largs circular service. Ardrossan, Kilwinning and Irvine is a key bus corridor which experiences delays at peak times, including the high frequency Service 11.

Data from the Scottish Household Survey in 2019 shows that the proportion of adult residents in North Ayrshire who did not use a bus in the month before the survey was 58 percent, slightly lower than that for Strathclyde (62 percent). Almost 20 percent of respondents travel by bus at least twice a week [Figure 25]. The LTATS, and the accompanying public consultation, summarises the decline in bus services in North Ayrshire in recent years. In general, the bus network in North Ayrshire has contracted and issues with availability of bus service routes, reliability, frequency and operating times were identified through the public consultation for the new LTATS. The key findings from LTATS are as follows:

- A lack of bus services impacts people's ability to access key services without using a car, particularly in rural areas.
- There is a significant reliance on subsidised bus services to meet residents' travel needs.
- Service frequencies were reduced during the Covid-19 pandemic, and many have not been restored to previous levels.

The Scottish Access to Bus Indicator (SABI) for North Ayrshire shows that there are areas where there is low access to bus services (out with larger settlements such as in Dalry, Largs and West Kilbride) [Figure 26].

Bus stop locations and frequencies in vehicle per hour (vph) in the AM peak are shown in Figure 27 and Figure 28. The data shows that bus frequencies are the greatest along the route via Irvine to Kilwinning to The Three Towns. Kilbirnie to Beith route and Largs have some bus stops with two to five buses an hour.

Further accessibility analysis has been undertaken to determine the population within 800m catchment of bus stops. The results show that around 93 percent of North Ayrshire population are within the catchment of a bus stop. The Case for Change for SPT Regional Bus Strategy presents bus stops analysis based on urban/rural classification. This analysis shows that 18 percent of households in North Ayrshire do not have access to a bus stop (under defined walk catchments).

Of all local authorities in SPT region, North Ayrshire has the highest percentage of households with convenient access to a bus stop but no direct connection to Glasgow city centre by bus in the interpeak period (12 noon to 4pm) at 73 percent. This proportion reaches 100 percent during the evening period (7pm to 11pm). The Council also has 20 percent of households with no access to a bus on a Sunday, which is the highest of all local authorities.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Rail

North Ayrshire has 12 rail stations, situated on the Glasgow to Ardrossan/Largs and/or Glasgow to Ayr lines. These offer regular connections within North Ayrshire and onwards to Glasgow and Ayr. The rail network for most of the area is considered to be good, with high frequency services to/from Irvine and Kilwinning to Glasgow, and less frequent services on the Ardrossan and Largs lines.

Scotrail ticket sales data report approximately 2.7 million passengers in North Ayrshire for the year 2023 to 2024. This is around 85 percent of the pre-pandemic usage (2019 to 2020). Kilwinning and Irvine stations are the busiest of all stations in North Ayrshire, receiving more than half a million passengers per year. Glengarnock and Saltcoats also attract more than 250,000 passengers annually. As per Office of Rail and Road, Glasgow Central is the origin or destination for the majority of trips (around 50 percent) from all stations.

The Scottish Household Survey indicates the proportion of the adult residents who did not use a train in the month before the survey in 2019 was slightly lower than that for Strathclyde. More than one third of the residents used a train once or twice a month compared to a quarter doing the same in Strathclyde. STPR2 shows that there are a number of deprived data zones where residents are unable to access a rail station, based on a walk time of up to 30 minutes. This includes people residing in Dreghorn, Kilbirnie and Beith. It is also to be noted that in parts of the region where people can access rail stations within a 30-minute walk, frequency of services are often low.

Ferry

Ferry services are an essential part of North Ayrshire Council's transport network. Arran and Cumbrae are reliant upon its ferry services to transport residents and visitors to and from the islands and to access medical and social services, to visit family and friends and for leisure purposes. Each day, the ferries are assessed to contribute just under £170,000 to Arran's economy.

Transport Scotland is responsible for the provision of ferry services in North Ayrshire. The ferry services in North Ayrshire are part of the Clyde and Hebrides network and are operated by CalMac Ferries Ltd, with Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd (CMAL) managing the port infrastructure.

There are five ferry terminals within North Ayrshire:

- Ardrossan and Largs on the mainland
- Brodick and Lochranza on Arran
- Cumbrae Slip on Great Cumbrae

The main ferry routes in North Ayrshire are:

- Ardrossan to Brodick
- Ardrossan to Campbeltown (summer only)
- Largs to Cumbrae
- Lochranza to Tarbert (summer only)
- Lochranza to Claonaig

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

The Campbeltown to Ardrossan crossing did not operate during the summer 2025 timetable period due to the lack of an available vessel to deliver the service, while Troon continues to be used for some crossings to Brodick while improvements to the port at Ardrossan are required to serve new ferries.

In 2023, CalMac Ferry carried over 1.5 million passengers and around 0.43 million vehicles including cars, coaches and commercial vehicles on North Ayrshire routes [[Transport Evidence Paper](#) [CD166] - Table 13], with similar numbers on both the Ardrossan to Brodick and Largs to Cumbrae Slip services, with the exception of commercial vehicles; over 8,600 commercial vehicles used the Ardrossan to Brodick route, double the number that travelled between Largs and Cumbrae.

Ferry connectivity, reliability and capacity are identified as key issues, particularly for our island communities. STPR2 reports capacity issues on the Arran ferry, given the increased car traffic experienced on the route since the introduction of the Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) which has reduced deck capacity for other users including residents, making it more difficult to access the island, particularly during peak periods. An evaluation of the impact of RET on Arran highlighted that the Ardrossan to Brodick route was beginning to experience vehicle deck capacity issues on peak sailings, with 26 percent of all sailings in 2015 to 2016 having a car deck utilisation of greater than 80 percent. In addition, the number of cars carried on the Ardrossan to Brodick route increased by 34 percent between 2008 to 2018 and by 18 percent on the Largs to Cumbrae route over the same period.

The vehicle deck capacity utilisation on the Ardrossan to Brodick route was forecasted at 67 percent for 2022. Where routes experience vehicle deck capacity utilisation of between 50 percent and 70 percent full sailings are even more frequent and some customers may find that their choice of available sailings is limited. Some customers may choose not to travel as a result; however, volumes are not considered significant. On routes experiencing vehicle deck capacity utilisation above 70 percent, of which there are several, full sailings are a regular occurrence, and an increasingly significant number of customers choose not to travel as alternative sailing times are not suitable. In some cases, customers may displace to another route if an alternative is available.

Transport Scotland's [Islands Connectivity Plan – Strategic Approach](#) [CD169] presents the following challenges:

- Annual operating costs on Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Service (CHFS) increasing at the greater rate than revenue, resulting in the deficit between the operational costs and income from ferry fares almost doubling over the last 10 years. This deficit has been met by increasing Government grant payments;
- Demand for vehicle ferries has increased significantly, with 40 percent increase in car carryings between 2013 and 2019;
- Shortage of vehicle space on key routes, including Ardrossan to Brodick, meaning people cannot travel by ferry with their car at short notice;

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

- An increase in cancellations and delays on the CHFS network. This has been linked to worsening weather and an overstretched fleet;
- A lack of spare vessels to cover for breakdowns.

The [Local Transport and Active Travel Strategy](#) [CD172], and the accompanying public consultation, also notes concerns with the reliability and resilience of ferry services. Figure 35 in the Transport Evidence Paper shows that over the last decade reliability of services has been decreasing, and the actual reliability has also been lower than the contractual reliability expectations.

Many Scottish ferries are ageing, and some are overdue for replacement, which has contributed to the breakdowns and longer repair times. Many ferry ports are also in need of major renewal or replacement works. In January 2025, the MV Glen Sannox came into service, but runs from Troon to Brodick rather than Ardrossan as refurbishment of the Ardrossan port is required. The intention is to reduce the average age of the fleet to around 15 years by the end of the decade and also retain a major CHFS vessel to provide resilience.

Public transport integration

At October 2019, of the 10 ferry services operating between Ardrossan and Brodick each day, analysis showed that there is a wait time greater than 20 minutes between train arrival and ferry departure for eight out of ten services. Similarly, eight out of ten services involve a wait time of greater than 20 minutes when departing via train from Ardrossan Harbour.

Integration of ferries with other modes of public transport is particularly challenging when one mode is disrupted by weather or breakdown. This makes travel by ferry more difficult for people who do not have access to a private vehicle, or who would prefer to travel without one. Table 14 of the Transport Evidence Paper shows public transport connections at ferry terminals. The available bus services can be accessed from the nearest bus stops to each ferry terminal in North Ayrshire, except for Ardrossan ferry terminal where there is a seven-minute walk to the nearest bus stop.

Road network

North Ayrshire has [three major trunk roads](#) [CD177] managed by Transport Scotland. The A78 follows the west coast between Inverclyde and South Ayrshire, while the A737/A738 runs north to south through the Garnock Valley, connecting to Renfrewshire to the north, joining the A78 at Kilwinning. North Ayrshire Council is responsible for the management and maintenance of all other public roads. Other key routes in North Ayrshire include:

- A738 connecting Ardrossan, Saltcoats, Stevenston
- B714 connecting Dalry to Saltcoats
- A760 connecting Largs and Lochwinnoch, via Kilbirnie. This is a major tourist route for travellers driving from Glasgow to Largs, and the ferry service to Millport.
- A841 connecting the ferry terminals at Brodick and Lochranza, and serving Lamlash and Whiting Bay, making it a key route for tourism on Arran.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

- A71 connecting Irvine to Kilmarnock and onwards to the M77/Glasgow

Table 15 of the [Transport Evidence Paper](#) [CD166] provides a breakdown of the type of roads and respective lengths (kilometres) in North Ayrshire. There is no trunk motorway in the Council area and six percent of its total road-kilometres are trunk A roads. More than half of the roads are unclassified which is slightly higher than national average (48 percent)

Figure 36 of the [Transport Evidence Paper](#) [CD166] shows that vehicle traffic has been on an upward trend between 2013 and 2019. Following the significant drop in traffic during the Covid 19 pandemic, it is back to nearly pre-pandemic level. Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) based on Transport Scotland's Drakewell counter sites data for 2024 and DfT sites data for 2023 are presented in Figure 37 to Figure 39.

Capacity constraints on the strategic road network, leading to congestion, is highlighted as an issue in some locations, including the A737 at Kilwinning. This has been identified as a pinch point on the road network. With regards to the A737, congestion and delay was identified at two key locations in a 2016 study: in Kilwinning at the junction of the A737/A738 and on the A738 approach to the A78 Pennyburn Roundabout. Queues of over 200m were recorded in the morning period and queues of over 600m were recorded in the evening period on the A738 southbound approach to Pennyburn Roundabout. Stakeholders also noted that the A737/B714 is a key link between North Ayrshire and Glasgow, but these are single carriageway roads; thus, making the A71/A77/M77 route more attractive.

Data from the Transport Model for Scotland (TMfS14) further shows road network constraints and potential areas of congestion based on the volume of traffic and road capacity. Locations with the highest volume capacity ratios were generally recorded in urban areas such as Ardrossan, Saltcoats, Stevenston, Kilwinning, and Irvine. Data also shows that traffic levels are forecast to increase in the future; should these increases become reality then capacity constraints and congestion identified by stakeholders are likely to be exacerbated.

Capacity issues have been identified at some locations based on traffic data from online mapping sources. The Strathclyde Regional Transport Model was inspected for delays at these locations. Appendix C of the [Transport Evidence Paper](#) [CD166] presents the AM and PM peak delays for forecast year 2025. The following locations were identified to have some capacity issues:

- Pennyburn Roundabout: Typical PM peak traffic shows capacity issues with long queues on the A738 arm from Ardeer Roundabout and the A78 West arm.
- A78 south of Seamill: Parking on the verge combined with speed reduction signs result in slow moving traffic.
- Warrix Interchange: Slow moving traffic on the A78 SB off-slip during AM peak hour.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

- Stanecastle Roundabout: Slow traffic at the Long Rd and Middleton Rd approaches during peak hours due to higher volume of traffic within the large circulatory.
- A738 Stevenston Rd/Whitehurst Park Junction: Delays at peak period due to capacity.
- A738 Kilwinning: This is a busy road with congestion and slow-moving traffic during morning and evening peak periods.
- A738 south of Dalgarnen: Slow moving traffic and occasional queues due to bendy road and speed reduction sign in Dalgarnen.

Microsimulation testing around the A78 Pennyburn Roundabout was undertaken in 2022 in relation to local issues egressing from the Hawkhill retail park on the A738, adjacent to the A78 Pennyburn Roundabout. The study also sought to understand the impact of future development on the trunk road. The study adopted a Paramics Discovery microsimulation model of the junction, developed as part of a feasibility study for a proposed bus lane on the Stevenston Road approach to Pennyburn Roundabout in 2021, and being the latest and most up to date model available.

The Pennyburn Roundabout Impact Testing Report [CD178] was finalised in February 2023 and identifies that both LDP2 allocations and the West Byrehill development in isolation are expected to result in a material impact on the operation of the A78 Pennyburn Roundabout that would indicate a requirement for mitigation.

North Ayrshire Council is responsible for 874 kilometres of roads and 1,015 kilometres of footways and footpaths. The condition of the network is managed through NAC's Roads Assessment Management Plan (RAMP). The RAMP sets out the Council's approach to the management and maintenance of its road assets. Local authority road network condition is assessed via the Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey. The percentage of North Ayrshire roads that are in 'red' condition is in line with those in Scotland. However, a greater percentage of C roads in North Ayrshire are in 'amber' condition compared with Scotland [[Transport Evidence Paper](#) - CD166 - Table 16].

The overall condition of the network is measured by the Road Condition Index (RCI), produced from the annual Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey. North Ayrshire has an improved overall RCI but is above the Scottish average over the period 2017 to 2019 to 2021 to 2023 [[Transport Evidence Paper](#) - CD166 - Table 17]. The RCI is derived by adding the lengths of road categorised as 'red' and 'amber' together and expressed as a percentage of the overall network. The higher the RCI, the worse the road condition. A year-on-year increase in the RCI would indicate deterioration, whilst a decrease indicates improvement.

The [Transport Evidence Paper](#) [CD166] shows the location of Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs), which impose traffic restrictions such as road closures, introduction or varying of speed limits, prohibition of turns (such as right turns and u-turns) and introduction of waiting or loading restrictions [Figure 40] and Traffic Sensitive Roads

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

– road with restrictions for road works which are applied according to various categories [Figure 41].

Parking

The Council operates a number of short stay and long stay parks, with parking charges only applying at the Seafront and Bellman's Close car parks in Largs. North Ayrshire Council introduced the Decriminalised Parking Enforcement (DPE) scheme on 3 November 2023. DPE is the process the council uses, under the Road Traffic Act 1991, to enforce on-street parking restrictions and off-street parking in Council owned car parks. Parking Penalty Charge Notices have been issued for illegal parking from April 2024.

Strathclyde Partnership for Transport provides 'Park and Ride' at rail stations across North Ayrshire. Table 12 of the Transport Evidence Paper below shows the number of parking places at each station. Kilwinning, Irvine, Saltcoats and Glengarnock, being the busy stations provide over 100 spaces for cars. Kilwinning offers the most with 332 spaces, followed by Saltcoats at 155 spaces.

There is no recent data available on car park occupancy level at these stations. 2014 data from a park and ride survey undertaken by SPT shows that the majority of the stations had an average car park space occupancy between 80 to 100 percent, except Largs and Saltcoats with 55 to 65 percent average occupancy level. It is to be noted that rail patronage level and the number of parking spaces have increased since that survey.

Electric vehicle infrastructure

Electric Vehicle (EV) charging locations across North Ayrshire are predominately located in Irvine, the Three Towns and Largs, but there are also charging points located in other towns within the mainland as well as in Brodick, Lamlash and Millport [[Transport Evidence Paper](#) – CD166 – Figure 44]. The Council's Electric Vehicle (EV) Strategy sets a priority to 'develop a network of strategically located EV charge points'

Supported by Scottish Future's Trust and Transport Scotland, East, North and South Ayrshire Council are working in partnership to deliver the EV infrastructure needed to support future uptake of EVs across Ayrshire. The project was awarded £2.8 million through Transport Scotland's Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund for the installation of approximately 307 EV charge points across 270 locations via a Concession Contract. An [indicative scope and timetable](#) for the project anticipates awarding of the contract in February 2026 with a three-year installation period.

In terms of the number of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs) in North Ayrshire, levels are relatively low at 9.74 ULEVs per 1,000 people compared to the Scotland average of 16.65 ULEVs per 1,000 people.

Road safety

High volumes of traffic make roads unsafe for active mode users. Rural areas are more prone to fatal accidents than urban areas. There were 17 fatal accidents in North Ayrshire during the five-year period June 2017 to 2024, including one fatal accident in the Isle of Arran. Almost all of the fatal accidents were reported on single

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

carriageway roads (three of which are on trunk roads) and seven accidents were reported on B-roads [Transport Evidence Paper](#) – CD166 – Figure 45 and 46].

Freight

The SPT Freight Strategy identifies the A71, A78 and A737 as key routes for road freight in North Ayrshire and DfT data analysis of LGV and HGV counts [Table 21] shows that the A738 to Ardrossan (24.5 percent), A737 between Dalry and Beith (12.5 percent) and A760 Largs Road carry the highest proportion of HGVs.

Timber is a strategically important export for Scotland, with a bulk of timber production coming from heavily forested regions including Ayrshire and Arran. The overall timber availability figures for Ayrshire and Arran are forecast to be about 136,000 tonnes per annum between 2025 and 2034. Key timber extraction roads in North Ayrshire include the A841 and B880 'String Road', both on Arran.

North Ayrshire does not have any airports; however, Glasgow Airport and Glasgow Prestwick Airport are the two freight hubs in the region. Hunterston provides a deep-water seaport, with the capability of acting as a major freight hub, accommodating shipments of a range of commodities.

Travel behaviour

Car ownership in North Ayrshire is generally in line with national averages [[Transport Evidence Paper](#) – CD166 – Figure 10]. 27 percent of households in North Ayrshire do not have a car, compared to 31 percent of households across the Strathclyde region and 28 percent of households in Scotland. Households with no access to cars are concentrated in the towns, especially Irvine, Kilwinning and The Three Towns. Some data zones have over 60 percent of households with no cars in Irvine and Ardrossan [CD166 – Figure 11].

The Scottish Household Travel diary 2019 shows that over half of all trips in North Ayrshire are made for commuting and shopping. These are followed by 'visiting friends' and 'going for a walk' which account for 11 percent and 9 percent respectively. 68 percent of people use cars as their mode of travel, which is slightly higher than that for Scotland (65 percent). Use of public transport as the main mode of travel in North Ayrshire is comparable to the national average. A slightly lower percentage of people walk in the area (19 percent) than the national average (22 percent) [[Transport Evidence Paper](#) – CD166 – Figures 14 and 15].

Travel to work (TTW) data from the same sources indicates active travel is used by 10 percent of people as their usual method of travel, which is lower than the national average of 15 percent. Public transport and shared mode use for TTW are comparable for North Ayrshire and the whole of Scotland. Car trips dominate TTW with a greater percentage for the council area (73 percent) than the national average (68 percent) [[Transport Evidence Paper](#) – CD166 - Figure 16].

More than half of residents work within the council area. The Glasgow City Council area is the top destination for work outside the council area with 12 percent, followed by East Ayrshire at 9 percent and South Ayrshire and Renfrewshire at 8 percent. North Ayrshire Council received commuters mainly from East and South Ayrshire,

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Renfrewshire, and Glasgow City Council area [[Transport Evidence Paper](#) – CD166 – Table 9 and Figure 17].

A greater proportion of commuters living in North Ayrshire travel longer distances compared to Scotland. 36 percent of commuter travel is more than 10 kilometres, which is much greater than the national average, 25 percent. The biggest difference was observed for trips between 30 to 40 kilometres, with North Ayrshire at 15 percent compared to the national average of 7 percent. In terms of mode of travel to work at a data zone level, a greater level of public transport use was observed in and around the town centres. Few data zones in The Three Towns, Irvine and Kilwinning show a lower proportion of car trips at around 40 to 45 percent [[Transport Evidence Paper](#) – CD166 – Figure 18, 19 and 20].

Connectivity and accessibility analysis

Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) has undertaken connectivity analysis to assess transport connectivity within the region, considering connectivity to and of the transport network to create strategic and local connectivity scores [see Section 4.6 of the Transport Evidence Paper]. The connectivity index map in Figure 42 shows that a vast majority of the Council falls under the 'low' strategic connectivity index category. Kilwinning, some parts of Irvine, Dalry and the Three Towns scored 'medium' on the index. In terms of local connectivity, all the mainland localities have 'high' connectivity index, at least in some areas. Rural areas including Isle of Arran are scored as having low connectivity.

North Ayrshire Council has also developed a 20-minute neighbourhood assessment methodology which calculates accessibility to food and drink outlets, open space, health care facilities and schools [see Liveable Places schedule].

Environmental considerations

The [Transport Evidence Paper](#) [CD166] includes information on transport emissions, road noise and air quality. North Ayrshire per capita transport emissions are lower than that of East and South Ayrshire as well as for Scotland. The air quality is good, maintaining a 'low' AQ index. The PM10 and NOx concentration levels are higher in the towns along the A78 corridor, namely Irvine, and the Three Towns. However, the 24-hour max PM10 concentration at the Irvine monitoring site did not exceed the threshold limit (40µg/m³) for one day in 2023. CO2 emissions from transport in North Ayrshire have declined over the years but still represent 22 percent of all Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Network resilience

The resilience of the A78 is highlighted as an issue in the STPR2. The number of incidents recorded on the route totalled 788 between 2015 and 2018, equating to almost 30 percent of incidents recorded on Ayrshire & Arran's trunk road network, with around seven percent of the incidents associated with flooding. Closure of the A78 has an adverse impact on local residents given it is the only direct coastal route connecting settlements such as Largs and Skelmorlie, with diversionary routes increasing journey times by around 55 minutes.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Flooding and inadequate sea defences were also noted as impacting network resilience, particularly on the railway between Saltcoats and Stevenston.

The resilience of the ferry service is also a key issue for island life in North Ayrshire. During the period September 2019 to August 2020, 12.8 percent of scheduled sailings were cancelled between Ardrossan and Brodick; with the highest percentage (38.1 percent) recorded in February 2020.

Future Transport and Development Schemes

Committed and planned future transport schemes and development in North Ayrshire require to be taken account of in the development of LDP3.

Committed Development

The upgrading of the B714 has been approved as part of a successful North Ayrshire Council joint funding bid to the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund. The B714 links the trunk road network from the A78 Sharphill roundabout (Three Towns bypass) to the A737, south of Dalry. It is a vital link for road users travelling to the west coast and ferry links to Arran and Cumbrae. [The scheme will be delivered in two phases](#). Construction of Phase 1 is anticipated to commence in January 2026, with an 18-month build. Phase 2 is a longer-term aspiration with funding still to be secured.

The [Transport Evidence Paper](#) [CD166] records future structural maintenance works and strategic road safety schemes.

Planned strategic transport schemes

Following the Dalry Bypass and Den realignment, further improvements to the A737 are in preparation. The [A737 Improvements at Beith](#) scheme involves the construction of a new single carriageway incorporating two new roundabouts and a dedicated northbound overtaking opportunity to the east of Beith. The proposals will improve safety for all road users by improving the geometry of the existing A737. To promote active travel the scheme also includes a non-motorised user facility and incorporates a dedicated footbridge to provide safe crossing of the trunk road for pedestrians and cyclists. It is understood there is currently no funding identified to progress the scheme.

Significant infrastructure improvements at the Ardrossan Harbour terminal are required to accommodate a new vessel, which will operate on the Ardrossan to Brodick route and provide improved service reliability and resilience. The [Ardrossan Harbour Task Force](#) is a longstanding group coordinated by Transport Scotland and co-chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and Leader of North Ayrshire Council.

The remit of the group is to improve the operational effectiveness of Ardrossan Harbour in supporting the lifeline ferry services and the new vessel on the Arran route.

The Local Transport and Active Travel Strategy sets out aspirational infrastructures to promote active travel across North Ayrshire. These routes should be considered

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

for the development and appraisal of sites. The infrastructure aspirations are presented at Section 5.6 of the Transport Evidence Paper.

The preparation of LDP3 and its transport appraisal will also take account of all committed development. The delivery of the Adopted Local Development Plan (LDP2) is monitored through the annual Housing Land and Employment Land Audits and the Delivery Programme, providing an overview of committed development within the plan area. The 2025 Draft Delivery Programme reports on the development of the Strategic Development Areas set out by LDP2 and the status of allocated sites included within Schedules 2 to 5 of the plan. The land audits also record 'windfall' (non-allocated) sites.

Summary of Stakeholder Engagement

North Ayrshire Council has appointed SYSTRA Ltd. to support the preparation of LDP3, including at the Evidence Report stage, by compiling the transport evidence baseline ([Transport Evidence Paper](#) [CD166]). Engagement with Transport Scotland has taken place throughout this process and has informed the scope and content of the Transport Evidence Paper and the preparation of the Evidence Report.

On 12 November 2025, Transport Scotland confirmed that it is satisfied with the sufficiency of the transport evidence [TS7_12112025]. Correspondence with Transport Scotland and how this has been taken into account is detailed in the Record of Engagement [CD009].

Through the process of engagement with Transport Scotland, their Development Management team have indicated that they have significant concerns with regards to the issues around development impacts on A78 Pennyburn Roundabout and are not comfortable that the suggested way forward – to review the Irvine Bay Transport Model Protocol as part of the LDP3 transport appraisal (set out in the summary of implications for the Proposed Plan) – will satisfactorily address these. Further clarity and explanation have been sought on the implications of updating the Protocol and the need to mitigate development impacts at Pennyburn required sooner rather than later.

The Council views this as a related – but separate – matter to the sufficiency of the evidence and, in respect to Section 16B(8) of the Act, whether the Evidence Report contains sufficient information to enable the planning authority to prepare a local development plan. Transport Scotland's concerns are interpreted to centre on the Council's intentions regarding its obligations under the Protocol and the timing of any transport interventions at Pennyburn.

Stakeholder engagement was undertaken with a range of transport providers and stakeholders – in addition to Transport Scotland – by SYSTRA of behalf of the Council in the preparation of and to inform the Transport Evidence Paper. Section 6 of the [Transport Evidence Paper](#) [CD166] summarises this stakeholder engagement. Included in this engagement were: Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT); neighbouring road authorities – particularly on cross boundary transport issues

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

relating to the strategic and local network including on active travel, public transport and roads; and public transport service providers and infrastructure operators.

The Transport Evidence Paper also takes account of the engagement carried out during the preparation of the Local Transport and Active Travel Strategy.

Wider place-based engagement with local communities has been focused on the 'Your Place Survey' and engagement on the 'Place Profiles'. Based on the Place Standard, the Your Place Survey asked respondents to consider how easy it is to move around and get to where they want to go; what public transport was like; and how traffic and parking affect how they move around. The [Place Profiles](#) present an overview of active travel and public transport in each locality, in addition to car ownership and road safety. Engagement following the publication of the profiles, including public 'drop-in' meetings, focused on the needs and wants of communities.

Furthermore, in early 2024, North Ayrshire Council (NAC) commissioned a study of the opportunities to develop community transport across the local authority area. The study assessed existing public transport coverage and established community transport services, currently operating on Arran and in the Garnock Valley, and carried out public and stakeholder engagement to determine the impacts of poor transport on the community and identify how further community transport services could better support travel needs.

In the Garnock Valley, a Travel Needs Analysis has been undertaken. This takes into account the views of over 550 people who responded to a survey in autumn 2024 about how they travel around and beyond the Garnock Valley and highlights how travel affects everyone's lives across the Garnock Valley. The analysis will inform the Garnock Valley Place Plan. The importance of accessibility for our island communities is reflected in the priorities set out in Local Islands Plans for Arran and Cumbrae.

Key points – including cross-boundary issues – emerging from the wide range of primary and secondary engagement undertaken include:

- Capacity issues are identified in specific locations, both within and out with North Ayrshire.
- Many rural communities and residents of smaller towns feel isolated in transport terms, with residents experiencing difficulties in accessing employment and key services such as education, healthcare and retail by public transport. This is keenly felt in the Garnock Valley.
- The reliability of the Arran ferry service, upon which Arran is highly dependent, is a major issue for islanders. The Isle of Arran Local Island Plan provides an insight into the scale and variety of the impact an unreliable ferry service has on the island. Island accessibility is also an issue for Cumbrae. Fleet replacement and renewal is underway but must be matched by pier and harbour infrastructure renewal.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

- The active travel network in North Ayrshire is identified as fragmented, especially within the North Coast and Garnock Valley localities where there are gaps and an absence of off-road routes. Existing routes are viewed in many places as more appropriate for leisure, rather than commuting.
- The Council's geography is considered a constraint resulting in the lack of transport choices for cross boundary movements and is also a factor in the resilience of the transport network.
- There is a perceived lack of integration between different modes of transport, including active travel routes, and with public transport services, including ferry services.
- Parking is regularly raised by residents and traders as an issue within town centres. Local Place Plans for West Kilbride and Largs, for example, propose the provision of additional parking. Improvements have been noted following the implementation of decriminalised parking enforcement (DPE).

Summary of Implications for the Proposed Plan

Our view on what this evidence and stakeholder engagement means for LDP3 is summarised below.

Spatial strategy

The overall policy context for transport can be summarised as reducing the need to travel unsustainably. LDP3's spatial strategy must reflect the sustainable travel hierarchy and sustainable investment hierarchy, promoting and facilitating sustainable travel modes, starting with walking, wheeling and cycling, and making better use of existing infrastructure and services.

A place-based approach should be adopted aimed at reducing car-dominance and enabling a positive impact on the choices made by people about the types of journeys they make and when and how they make them. The type, mix and use of development; local living and 20-minute neighbourhood analysis; car ownership levels; the accessibility of proposals and allocations by sustainable modes; network resilience and the accessibility for users of all abilities should all be considered in defining the locations for future development.

In doing so, this will contribute to limiting LDP3's environmental impact, particularly in relation to air quality, noise and greenhouse gas emissions.

Early and effective engagement with public transport operators will be important as the spatial strategy is progressed and development sites identified to consider how development can be better served by buses and, potentially, the rail timetable.

Transport appraisal

LDP3 must be informed by evidence of North Ayrshire's transport infrastructure capacity and an appropriate and effective transport appraisal of the proposed spatial

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

strategy, undertaken in line with the relevant transport appraisal guidance. We are committed to producing a transport appraisal of the Proposed Plan and have retained SYSTRA Ltd. to continue engagement with Transport Scotland on North Ayrshire Council's behalf on the appraisal as the plan progresses.

As set out in the [Transport Evidence Paper](#) [CD166], the appraisal and its outcomes are required to adopt the Infrastructure First principles focusing on the existing infrastructure and prioritise sustainable travel consistent with the sustainable travel and investment hierarchies. An approach for a proportionate, multi-modal transport appraisal is proposed within the Evidence Paper, however, the view of Transport Scotland is acknowledged that any methodology is speculative at this stage and may change depending on any potential spatial strategy options.

It is also noted that the Development Planning and Management Transport Appraisal Guidance (DPMTAG) has been replaced by the Development Planning Transport Appraisal Guidance (DPTAG), published on 2 October 2025. This guidance will inform our approach to transport appraisal.

Following submission of the Evidence Report to Scottish Ministers – and only after report has been assessed as sufficient – we will instruct SYSTRA to engage with Transport Scotland to reach an agreement on transport appraisal tools and methodology, scope, reporting and requirements, in line with 'Appraisal Levels' set out in DPTAG.

Subject to submission date, the Gate Check period and approval, this is expected to commence in April 2026. A detailed programme for the preparation of LDP3 and the associated workstreams, including the Transport Appraisal, will be confirmed following approval of the Evidence Report.

A call for sites has already been undertaken by the Council, during summer 2025. We are currently sifting these sites and will engage with Transport Scotland in relation to potential cumulative and site-specific impacts and to discuss spatial strategy options.

Capacity constraints

Capacity constraints on the strategic road network are highlighted as an issue in some locations, including the Pennyburn Roundabout at Kilwinning, which has been identified as a pinch point on the road network subject to congestion and delays and was subject to transport modelling most recently in 2022/23. The impact of the spatial strategy and allocated development sites on the strategic (trunk) road network, in consultation with Transport Scotland, must be assessed as part of the transport appraisal.

Where targeted infrastructure improvements are agreed as necessary to facilitate development, LDP3 and the associated Delivery Programme must set out how and when new infrastructure is delivered, in accordance with the infrastructure first approach.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Irvine Bay Transport Model Protocol

The Irvine Bay Transport Model Protocol was developed by the Council in 2015 to mitigate potential congestion impacts arising from developments identified in the first Local Development Plan (LDP1), should these be found to occur. This approach was informed by transportation studies in 2012/13. The protocol is referenced within LDP2.

The preparation of LDP3 and the associated appraisal presents an opportunity to review the protocol – in consultation with Transport Scotland – in the context of existing and proposed development and transport schemes, including the upgrade to the B714 (which is expected to affect traffic flows at Pennyburn Roundabout), current transport policy and aspirations to reduce demands for unsustainable travel including the commitment to reduce car use. Accordingly, we anticipate the detail and requirements of the protocol to fall within the scope of the LDP3 transport appraisal.

Transport Scotland's concerns regarding the Pennyburn Roundabout and the Council's intentions are noted. It is expected the implications of reviewing the Protocol as part of the LDP3 transport appraisal are that an agreement between North Ayrshire Council and Transport Scotland can be reached on:

- a) the detail of the mitigation required to address cumulative transport impacts to an acceptable level (considering impacts from, existing/current development, any potential future development and transport policies), which may be different to those identified by the Protocol in 2013;
- b) The potential for alternative funding sources/mechanisms to deliver required improvements

The requirement for the Protocol to remain in place and the scope to incorporate the details within LDP3 and its Delivery Programme can also be considered.

Statements of Agreement / Dispute

Transport Scotland confirmed that it is satisfied with the sufficiency of the transport evidence [TS7_12112025].

Homes for Scotland, on review of the Draft Evidence Report, highlighted two points relating to the transport evidence. These are addressed in the final report. Otherwise, Homes for Scotland, does not dispute the evidence set out in this schedule [HFS4_14112025]

Links to Evidence

CD112	Securing a green recovery on a path to net zero: climate change plan 2018 to 2032 – update (December 2020)
CD166	Transport Evidence Paper – January 2025
CD167	National Transport Strategy 2
CD168	Strategic Transport Projects Review

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

CD112	<u>Securing a green recovery on a path to net zero: climate change plan 2018 to 2032 – update (December 2020)</u>
CD169	<u>Islands Connectivity Plan – Strategic Approach – May 2025</u>
CD170	<u>Islands Connectivity Plan - The Vessels and Ports Plan for the Clyde and Hebrides and Northern Isles networks (2025 to 2045)</u>
CD171	<u>'Reducing car use for a healthier, fairer and greener Scotland': A route map to achieve a 20 per cent reduction in car kilometres by 2030 (January 2022)</u>
CD172	<u>North Ayrshire Local Transport and Active Travel Strategy (LTATS), 2023 to 2028</u>
CD173	<u>'A Call to Action: The Regional Transport Strategy for the west of Scotland' 2023 to 2038</u>
CD174	<u>Irvine Bay Transport Model Protocol</u>
CD175	<u>North Ayrshire Supplementary Street Development Guide</u>
CD176	<u>Transport Poverty: a public health issue</u>
CD177	<u>Trunk Roads Within North Ayrshire</u>
CD178	Pennyburn Roundabout Impact Testing – Paramics Base Model Development and Testing Report (February 2023)

Topic 5 – Productive Places

North Ayrshire became Scotland's first Community Wealth Building Council in 2020, introducing this approach to ensure social, economic and environmental justice for North Ayrshire's communities. Community Wealth Building (CWB) is about collaborating with communities and businesses to build a strong local economy. It seeks to address wealth inequality by supporting fair work; encouraging local spend; and using the land and property we own to benefit our communities. CWB aligns with national aspirations, including as set out in the [National Planning Framework](#) [CD002], to create a greener, fairer and more inclusive wellbeing economy.

This section of the Evidence Report summarises the key evidence relating to North Ayrshire as a 'Productive Place' with community wealth building at its heart. It considers evidence in relation to policies 25 to 33 of NPF4:

- 25. Community Wealth Building
- 26. Business and Industry
- 27. City, town, local and commercial centres
- 28. Retail
- 29. Rural Development
- 30. Tourism
- 31. Culture and creativity
- 32. Aquaculture
- 33. Minerals

Information required by the Act and Regulations

Section 15 of the Planning Act concerns the form and content of local development plans. Subsection 1(a) requires the local development plan to take account of matters mentioned in subsection (5), including:

- the principle economic characteristics of the area
- the principal purposes for which land is used.

the desirability of maintaining an appropriate number and range of cultural venues and facilities (including, but not limited to, live music venues). Section 16B of the Planning Act relates to the evidence report. As per subsection (3), the evidence report is to set out the planning authority's view on the matters listed in section 15(5), referred to above.

Summary of Evidence

Policy Context

In managing the development and use of land in the long-term public interest, North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan must facilitate sustainable development and the delivery of the National Outcomes. In an economic context, this means a plan which supports a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy, with thriving and innovative businesses, quality jobs and fair work for

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

everyone; tackles poverty by sharing opportunities and wealth more equally; and creates communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe.

NPF4 acknowledges that the economic performance of different parts of Scotland varies considerably, with challenges and opportunities for different places and sectors. At present, some communities – including within North Ayrshire – are particularly affected by high rates of poverty. There is significant scope to improve productivity and the scale and rate of business development. [Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation](#) [CD179] aims to make Scotland a successful place with opportunities for everyone, in every region of Scotland, to share in our economic prosperity. Building community wealth is a key component of the strategy, as are our town centres.

One of NPF4's spatial strategy overarching aims is to support the planning and delivery of productive places where we have a greener, fairer and more inclusive economy. This is supported by the spatial principles of rebalanced development – targeting development to create opportunities for communities and investment in areas of past decline – and encouraging sustainable development in rural areas. Hunterston is also identified by NPF4 as one of eighteen national developments supporting the delivery of the national spatial strategy. National developments will be a focus for delivery, as well as exemplars of the Place Principle, placemaking and a Community Wealth Building (CWB) approach to economic development.

The three Ayrshire local authorities, Scottish Enterprise, Ayrshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry and individual business leaders provide a strategic direction to the economic performance of Ayrshire & Arran through the Ayrshire Economic Partnership. The partnership launched the [Ayrshire Regional Economic Strategy](#) [CD180] in June 2023, establishing a 10-year vision to build wealth for everyone in Ayrshire by creating opportunities for those who want to live, work, learn and invest in the region.

The Partnership are currently developing a new three-year Delivery Plan, which will run from 2025 to 2028, and joint strategies focusing on the key sectors of food and drink, engineering, renewables and tourism.

The [Ayrshire Growth Deal](#) is a key enabler for delivering the vision of the Regional Economic Strategy vision. It represents a £251.5 million, ten-year programme aimed at matching business growth opportunities to employment progression, developing the future workforce and community development.

There are five Ayrshire Growth Deal projects in North Ayrshire, plus two pan-Ayrshire projects:

- Hunterston Strategic Development Area
- International Marine Science and Environmental Centre (IMSE)
- i3 Digital Process Manufacturing Centre and Flexible Business Space
- Marine Tourism (Arran Marina and Cumbrae Marina)
- The Great Harbour (Irvine Harbourside and Ardeer)

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

- Regional Skills and Inclusion programme
- Community Wealth Building

Principal economic characteristics

The Liveable Places schedule (Topic 1) provides an overview of unemployment economic activity and deprivation, including poverty, in North Ayrshire, informed by the latest quarterly economic briefing [CD047] and 'Wellbeing Economy Dashboard' [CD044] prepared by the Council's Economic Policy team and drawn from a range of primary sources. Together these provide an update on key economic indicators for North Ayrshire.

In general, North Ayrshire experiences higher than average deprivation linked opportunities relating to employment and income. The area's employment rate is around 10 percent lower than the country as a whole; unemployment and economic inactivity rates are among the highest in Scotland. Consequently, poverty is a significant issue in North Ayrshire, with around a quarter of children and young people in the area living in poverty.

Data included within the dashboard [CD044] on job density (the number of jobs per working-age resident) and average earnings indicate progress in the objective of more good quality jobs, but North Ayrshire continues to lag behind the Scottish average.

A review of Employment Land in North Ayrshire [CD181] provides an overview of economic trends and policy, noting the economic landscape in North Ayrshire is shaped by evolving policy and market dynamics. The report notes that in 2024, North Ayrshire's total estimated Gross GVA was £2,464 million which is 1.7 percent of total Scottish economic output compared to its population share which is 2.4 percent. GVA by industry is highest within manufacturing (23.9 percent) with this trend set to continue according to long-term forecasts. In 2024, GVA per job was £51,500 in comparison with the Scottish average of £52,000.

Compared to the Scottish average, North Ayrshire has more people employed in manufacturing, construction and wholesale and retail trade, with fewer people employed in comparison with Scotland in sectors including information and communication, professional, scientific and technical activities and human health and social work activities.

Data from the Scottish Government repeated within the report notes the number of registered businesses in North Ayrshire in national growth sectors rose by 4 percent from 1,135 businesses in 2008 to 1,180 in 2024. Sustainable tourism (9 percent), creative industries (18 percent) and energy (including renewables) (125 percent) are the main growth industries.

Community Wealth Building

NPF4 seeks to encourage, promote and facilitate community wealth building as a new strategic approach to economic development that also provides a practical

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

model for building a wellbeing economy. How communities and places benefit should be a primary consideration for local economic development to support local employment and supply chains. Community ownership and management of land and buildings is also supported.

In accordance with NPF4, LDP3 must be aligned to the Council's community wealth building strategy; address community wealth building priorities; identify community assets; set out opportunities to tackle economic disadvantage; and inequality; and seek to provide benefits for local communities.

North Ayrshire Council has adopted community wealth building (CWB) as a new approach centred on creating a fairer local economy focused on wellbeing and inclusion. In May 2020, we launched Scotland's first Community Wealth Building Strategy. The adoption of community wealth building is a response to the failure of traditional economic growth to address poverty and inequality and the need for radical, forward-thinking interventions to ensure a prosperous future.

The 2020 strategy [CD182] highlighted some of the challenges facing North Ayrshire which have led us to adopt a community wealth building approach, including just under a third of children living in poverty; 16 percent of workers earning below the living wage; a higher unemployment rate than the Scottish average and one of the lowest job densities in Scotland.

The Council is now in its second iteration of CWB strategy, following a refresh in 2024. The [North Ayrshire Community Wealth Building Strategy for 2024 to 2027](#) [CD183] builds on the pioneering approach of the first strategy, highlighting the progress made since 2020 and acknowledges the changing local and national economic context. This strategy outlines the next steps in North Ayrshire's journey to create a Wellbeing Economy and to support the [Council Plan](#)'s vision of a North Ayrshire that is 'Fair for All' [CD043].

Alongside the aspiration of being a Community Wealth Building Council, the strategic objectives of the CWB strategy are aligned with the five pillars of community wealth building:

- **Progressive Procurement:** a procurement system that actively encourages a growing, diverse and resilient local business base
- **Fair employment:** Encourage the creation of fair and meaningful jobs with progression opportunities to unlock the potential of our residents.
- **Land and assets:** Support the regeneration of our communities through maximising Council owned land and assets including through alternative uses for community and business benefit.
- **Diverse Ownership:** The Council will support plural ownership of the economy through the implementation of a range of business models including SMEs, social enterprises, employment ownership, cooperatives, municipal activity and community enterprises

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

- **Financial Power:** The Council will invest locally and encourage regional and national institutions to invest in our communities.

Since the launch of the CWB Strategy in May 2020, the Council has made significant progress towards embedding CWB practices within the North Ayrshire economy and this approach has taken on a regional dimension through the Regional Economic Strategy and Growth Deal programme. A Community Wealth Building '[Anchor Charter](#)' [CD184] and Commission bring together organisations, including North Ayrshire Council, Ayrshire College and NHS Ayrshire & Arran, which are significant local employers and have buying and selling power, committing them to long-term collaboration supporting shared CWB goals and the creation of a strong, resilient and inclusive local and regional economy.

In parallel with our achievements and progress on CWB, the Scottish Government is taking forward CWB legislation in the current Parliament which, if approved, may place a duty on public bodies to embed CWB principles into their economic development approaches.

Our approach to community wealth building aims to deliver a wellbeing economy that works for people and planet and delivers social, economic and environmental justice for all. The CWB strategy recognises that the impacts of climate change are likely to hit the most vulnerable in society the hardest, and that the climate crisis is a key concern for our young people. CWB encourages everyone to think more about keeping it local, allowing shorter supply chains while adapting our use of land and assets will support the Council to meet its net zero carbon targets and ensure a sustainable local environment. CWB is embedded within the [Sustainable North Ayrshire Strategy](#) [CD111].

Progress on each of the 53 CWB actions set out in the strategy is tracked, ensuring objectives are delivered across all CWB pillars and the Wellbeing Economy Dashboard (previously the 'inclusive economy dashboard') [CD044] has been developed to track our progress on delivering a wellbeing economy. The dashboard acts as a framework to ensure our CWB approach is being used to develop our local economy which is socially inclusive but also within safe environmental limits.

Community assets

North Ayrshire Council is committed to community asset transfer that benefits communities and contribute towards achieving the council's aims and objectives. The [Community Asset Transfer Policy](#) [CD185], updated in June 2024, aims to set out a transparent, positive and proactive framework that enables and manages the transfer of assets from the council to voluntary or community organisations in order to bring about long term social, economic and environmental benefits to the community and contribute towards achieving the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan.

The Council's asset portfolio includes buildings, land, playing fields and other facilities and structures which are used for a variety of different social, community and public purposes. Details of current asset transfer requests are [available on our website](#) along with a register of property that North Ayrshire Council owns or leases.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Business and industry

NPF4 seeks to encourage, promote and facilitate business and industry uses and to enable alternative ways of working such as home working, live-work units and micro-businesses.

LDP3 should allocate sufficient land for business and industry, taking into account business and industry land audits, in particular ensuring that there is a suitable range of sites that meet current market demand, location, size and quality in terms of accessibility and services. This allocation should take account of local economic strategies and support broader objectives of delivering a low carbon and net zero economic recovery, and a fairer and more inclusive wellbeing economy.

The adopted Local Development Plan (LDP2) [CD001] includes a schedule of employment locations (Schedule 5) totalling around 517 hectares across 15 sites. The employment land supply – land allocated or consented for Class 4, 5 and/or 6 use – is monitored through the [annual employment land audit](#) [CD186]. The most recent audit, covering the period April 2024 to March 2025, identifies 57 sites within the employment land supply and a marketable employment land supply of 493 hectares. The allocation of marketable sites is reasonably evenly split between small, mid-range and larger sites. Around a third of marketable sites (34 percent) are less than 1 hectare in size. In terms of location, the employment land supply is dominated by sites within the Irvine locality. Although the North Coast has the largest area of employment land, this is skewed by the size of the sites at Hunterston.

Table 24 – Employment Land: area and number of sites by locality

Locality	Area of Employment Land (hectares)	Number of Sites
Arran	1.6	2
Garnock Valley	14.8	11
Irvine	139.6	25
Kilwinning	15.8	3
North Coast	276.7	4
Three Towns	44.8	12
Total	493.2	57

An appraisal of the employment land supply was undertaken in 2024. The purpose of the appraisal was to inform LDP3 by identifying areas where there may be a need for additional designated employment sites – or where there is a surplus of land – and provide a view on how much employment land is required throughout North Ayrshire. A review of the effectiveness of the employment land supply was also undertaken to establish whether this meets market demand.

The appraisal provides evidence on regional economic trends, challenges and opportunities and a comprehensive analysis of the employment property market in North Ayrshire. It found that North Ayrshire has a dispersed portfolio of industrial estates and units around a large core market in Irvine (63 percent of floorspace). The stock of 597,000 square metres of industrial floorspace is well-occupied with a very

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

low vacancy rate of 1.5 percent but is ageing and in some cases approaching the end of buildings' lifespans. This limits the choices of units for local and incoming occupiers, particularly of modern, energy efficient units in their location and size of choice.

More than 20 units are taken up on average each year, largely by SMEs on established industrial estates, but only 16 are on the market across the whole of North Ayrshire. Detailed enquiries and survey responses indicate ongoing demand for industrial sites and premises, including medium to larger mobile enquiries in sectors well-aligned with economic priorities.

New industrial development is curtailed by low rents meaning public sector intervention in the property market is often required to support new development. There are now several new developments and proposals by both public and private sectors, particularly at Irvine Industrial Estate, North Newmoor and i3, and at Hunterston.

North Ayrshire's office market is less obviously affected by the market shock caused by hybrid working than city centres and larger business parks but is adapting to changing demand. The current low vacancy rate may mask latent under-use and available flexible space. Thirty-one available suites tend to be very small or sub-divisible, targeting very small occupiers. The office market records only a few formal transactions each year – around six on average - across North Ayrshire and particularly in Irvine.

The appraisal concludes that a combination of new-build industrial and refurbishment is required to continue to ensure that North Ayrshire's ageing stock does not constrain activity, especially in Irvine. It recommends it would be prudent to anticipate 5 hectares' employment land take-up each year as a baseline, reflecting the proven need to continue to modernise the stock of employment property and invest in property to support economic development. A focus on serviced developable plots of typically 0.25 to 0.5 hectares, rather than large allocations, to meet SME and development demand but that current growth sectors in the regional economy, such as energy, indicate that a significant land reserve is also appropriate in target locations to accommodate new, mobile and land-hungry uses.

An addendum to the Employment Land Appraisal was prepared in 2025 with a specific focus on large, 'single-user' sites in light of proposed developments at Hunterston and i3 in Irvine [CD187]. The report downplays the significance of the potential take-up of large strategic sites at i3, Hunterston and Portland Road, stating it would not necessarily undermine the recommended effective employment land supply of 5 hectares per annum (or 50 hectares over a 10-year LDP period). This take-up would have a disproportionate impact on the supply of large sites in the area suitable for inward investment and large-scale, land-hungry uses but the report notes that development is likely to be gradual, and how quickly sites will be developed and therefore come off the employment land register is unknown. Site interests may change or fall away as commercial conversations continue.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

If these suggested large-scale sites are developed and removed from the supply it brings into focus other large-scale sites in the area at Ardeer, i3 and Hunterston (Estate and NDA site). None of these other large-scale sites, however, have the perfect combination of market appeal and technical deliverability.

Hunterston Strategic Asset

Hunterston is one of six national developments designated by NPF4 to support the delivery of productive places. As Scotland's largest strategic deep-water port with direct rail and grid connections, the site has a critical role in Scotland's energy, blue economy, offshore wind and the circular economy futures. The Hunterston Strategic Asset national development supports the repurposing of Hunterston port as well as the adjacent former nuclear power station sites and marketable business land of the Hunterston Estate. Classes of development identified as contributing to the Hunterston Strategic Asset include those which support the redevelopment and reuse of the existing strategic assets and land contributing to a net zero economy, including renewable energy generation, storage, new and replacement transmission and distribution infrastructure and emerging low-carbon and zero emissions technologies such as hydrogen and carbon capture utilisation and storage (CCUS).

In June 2022, planning approval was granted for the UK's first subsea cable manufacturing facility, at Hunterston. This £1.4 billion project will see development of 50 hectares of the 140-hectare Hunterston PARC site and is expected to support 900 jobs in the area.

NPF4 also recognises, within the regional spatial priorities for central Scotland, the Ardeer peninsula as a significant site for redevelopment of the wider Ayrshire area and that a planned marine centre at Ardrossan will provide further opportunities. In 2022, Ardeer was shortlisted among four other sites as the location of the UK's first fusion energy plant, a form of power generation which generates electricity using heat from nuclear fusion reactions.

A site in Nottinghamshire was ultimately chosen by the UK Government as the location for the Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production (STEP) project. As noted under Topic 3, NatureScot are currently reviewing the biodiversity value of Ardeer with regard to a potential designation of a SSSI.

Town centres and retail

The [Town Centre Action Plan 2](#) [CD188] – the joint response of the Scottish Government and COSLA to the independent review of the 2013 Town Centre Action Plan – was published in April 2022 and reaffirms the commitment to the Town Centre First Principle. The action plan sets a new vision for town centres and recognises the critical importance of planning in enabling the diversification of city, town and commercial centres to better manage their role, help them thrive, improve their resilience and respond to ongoing changes to the way we shop and access services.

In this context, NPF4 seeks to encourage, promote and facilitate development in our city and town centres, to help centres adapt positively to long-term economic,

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

environmental and societal changes, and by encouraging town centre living. Retail development and the location of shops, specifically, should support vibrant city, town and local centres and be accessible to communities by a range of sustainable transport modes including on foot, by bike, and by public transport, as part of local living.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan should:

- support sustainable futures for North Ayrshire's town and local centres, in particular opportunities to enhance town centres.
- support proposals for improving the sustainability of existing commercial centres where appropriate.
- identify a network of centres that reflect the principles of 20-minute neighbourhoods and the town centre vision.
- identify, if appropriate, any areas where drive-through facilities may be acceptable.
- consider where there may be a need for further retail provision.
- identify areas where proposals for healthy food and drink outlets can be supported.

Schedule 6 of the Adopted Local Development Plan (LDP2) identifies our existing network of centres, including the role, function and opportunities within each centre.

Irvine's role is identified as a regional centre with an inner retail core. It supports North Ayrshire's largest concentration of commercial and civic uses and provides a hub for retail. Irvine has been successful in securing a UK Government Award under the '[Plan for Neighbourhoods](#)' (previously the Long-Term Plan for Towns Programme), extended via the '[Pride in Place](#)' programme. The funding award provides for £20 million of investment in the town over 10 years. A Neighbourhood Board has been established comprising local people, businesses and political representatives, to develop, oversee and deliver a Long-Term Plan for the regeneration of Irvine. North Ayrshire was also successful in receiving £1.5 million over two years under the Pride in Place Impact Fund, with the neighbourhoods to be selected by the Scotland Office later this year, following an evidence-led process involving local partners.

Largs, Kilwinning and Saltcoats are considered to have roles wider than a town centre, while Ardrossan, Stevenston, Beith, Dalry, Kilbirnie, West Kilbride and Millport have local town centre roles, predominately supporting day-to-day retail needs. Four commercial centres are included within this network of centres. These provide for a North Ayrshire-wide need for large comparison retail and bulky goods.

To inform Local Development Plan 2, we worked with Scotland's Town Partnership and EKOS to prepare town-centre audits [CD189]. Published in 2016, the 'Your Town Audits' draw on the [Understanding Scottish Places](#) (USP) data platform to provide a comprehensive audit of North Ayrshire's towns, with data on up to 180

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

KPIs across seven themes – Locality, Accessibility, Local Services, Activities and Events, Development Capacity, Tourism, and Place and Quality Impressions.

These town centre audits were refreshed by the Council in 2021, including updated information on vacancy rates [CD190]. In 2024, to support the UK Government's Plans for Neighbourhoods programme, EKOS consulting were re-appointed by the Council's regeneration service to update the town audit for Irvine [CD191].

To inform preparation of LDP3, a [Retail Capacity Study for North Ayrshire](#) [CD069] has also been prepared. The study reviews retail and leisure trends and provision within North Ayrshire; provides an assessment of potential future supply and demand for retail floorspace through to 2037; considers the food environment and access to food shopping and a review of principal retail and town centre locations within North Ayrshire.

A strategic retail model ('SRM') for the period to 2037 was prepared using household survey, detailed floorspace information provided through the Ayrshire Regional Assessor, data on existing retail and leisure expenditure and growth forecasts. Different modelling scenarios and sensitivity tests are used within the study to reflect uncertainties.

An analysis of quantitative and qualitative retail deficiencies has been undertaken both by comparing expenditure and notional average turnover for North Ayrshire as a whole, identified study zones, the Irvine market area and taking account of existing expenditure flows as well as market potential. This concludes:

- No significant quantitative retail deficiency is identified to support additional convenience goods floorspace in North Ayrshire overall.
- In Arran, North Coast (Largs) and Kilwinning, additional floorspace can address local deficiencies in floorspace.
- Significant new convenience floorspace serving local markets is expected to adversely impact on existing foodstores in North Ayrshire.
- There is a substantial quantitative retail deficiency for comparison goods floorspace throughout North Ayrshire, however, market trends indicate that demand is unlikely to support the scale of deficiency identified. National retailers more likely to reduce space occupied in Irvine town centre, while there is low likelihood of any significant change in comparison space provision in principal town centres out with Irvine.
- In the long-term, demand for commercial leisure space is expected to grow significantly, with the potential to offset the decline in comparison goods retailing. There is also the significant potential for additional leisure space to serve the long-term growth of tourism especially in Arran and Cumbrae.

Analysis of the food environment has been informed by a review of the distribution of food shops; analysis of responses to questions about food shopping habits and experience from the household survey; results from North Ayrshire Council's People's Panel on access to food/fresh food and survey responses from foodbank/community larder operators. Alongside the distribution of shops selling

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

food, affordability is also a key issue. Deprivation and rurality are identified as key factors in accessing affordable food, including in limited more-affluent areas where there is less choice resulting in higher prices/limited ranges of food goods available in shops.

Local accessibility to retail and related services is also considered in the context of 20-minute neighbourhoods, with only limited areas – notably areas to the north and east of Irvine and Arran identified as not having relatively easy access to small-scale local retail/service facilities. More detailed [20-minute neighbourhood analysis](#) has subsequently been undertaken ([CD055] – see Liveable Places schedule).

The review of principal retail and town centre locations included within the study provides the number of units and space for principal types of retail, commercial leisure and services in each centre; an update to the town centre health check information; a summary of the perceptions of each centre from the household and in-centre surveys and an assessment of the retail characteristics of each centre, including identification of primary and secondary catchment areas, market penetration/share within North Ayrshire study zones and variation in forecasts of future turnover according to the Strategic Retail Model based on different future growth scenarios. Minor changes to the existing Network of Centres are recommended, including most notably the inclusion of Brodick as a Local Town Centre.

Town-centre living

The development of housing – either new-build or the reuse and conversion of vacant buildings or upper floors – brings more people to live within town centres and can have a major role in creating strong and sustainable places, as well as supporting key policy aims around active travel, affordable and independent living, local living, the wellbeing economy, net zero, and the re-use of existing built assets. Encouraging more people to live in town centres is a key policy aspiration for Scottish Government and local authorities, reflected in the Town Centre Action Plan and Housing 2040.

The Council's [Local Housing Strategy](#) [CD080] and [Regeneration Delivery Plan](#) [CD192] both support the development of town centre living opportunities in recognition that housing can make a strong contribution to regeneration. The LHS Action Plan [CD193] includes as an action the consideration of opportunities to provide homes in and around our town centres. New homes in Saltcoats town centre, Stevenston and Largs have been delivered since 2023, with work ongoing to deliver six amenity flats at the former King's Arms, a category C-Listed former public house in Irvine town centre.

Rural development

The revitalisation of rural areas is one of the six overarching spatial principles and a cross-cutting outcome of NPF4. The strategy and policies of NPF4 encourage and support sustainable development that contributes to rural economies and communities, helping to retain and increase the population of rural areas. The policy intent is to encourage rural economic activity, innovation and diversification, whilst

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

ensuring that the distinctive character of rural areas and the service function of small towns, natural assets and cultural heritage are safeguarded and enhanced.

Using the Scottish Government's 6-fold Urban Rural Classification, around three-quarters of mainland North Ayrshire is defined as 'accessible rural'. Our islands, including Arran and Great Cumbrae, are identified as remote rural areas, as is an area of approximately 80 square kilometres straddling the North Coast and Garnock Valley localities. In terms of population distribution, around 10 percent of North Ayrshire's total population lives in a rural area. The mainland figure is approximately 5 percent. Within the Garnock Valley and North Coast the proportion is higher, one in ten, however, the majority of the population still live in urban areas, including accessible small towns. The remote rural area of the mainland is not populated, forming part of the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park and Clyde Muirshiel Uplands candidate Local Landscape Areas.

► [See 6-fold Urban Rural Classification Map](#)

Ten-year local island plans for [Arran](#) [CD031] and [Cumbrae](#) [CD032] were published in May 2022. These plans were developed with, and for, the island communities to drive the development of community, economic and environmental wellbeing of Arran and Cumbrae. They form the foundations on which to address long standing issues and challenges and help maximise the potential of Arran and Cumbrae.

The island plans highlight the characteristics, pressures, community priorities and economic needs of both islands. In 2020, the Council commissioned and published research from the Fraser of Allander Institute (FAI) on the disproportionate [economic impact of Covid-19 on the Arran economy](#) [CD194]. The work also provided an outline socio-economic baseline for Arran to support the evidence of need to help understand the long-term challenges the island economy faces and provide tailored support to the island.

The key messages and feedback from the engagement exercise that, along with this research, informed the Arran Local Island Plan were that the pandemic amplified and exacerbated issues that existed before COVID, making them more visible and urgent. These, often interconnected, challenges include: the supply of affordable housing; a population that is getting smaller and older, with fewer people of working age; public services, including health and service care; issues with the reliability of the ferry service; and the dependency of many businesses upon tourism and 'social spend', which can create tensions.

Similarly on Cumbrae, within the Local Island Plan island accessibility; economic diversification; community resources and addressing the population profile and tourism tensions are identified as priorities for the longer-term sustainability of island life. More recently, Cumbrae Community Council have prepared a [Local Place Plan](#) [CD023 and CD024] which prioritises a number of priorities relating to accessibility; climate change; and housing, including for those requiring additional care.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Tourism

The visitor economy is an important sector of North Ayrshire's economy. Scottish Growth Sector Statistics show that 5,000 people or 8.6 percent of those in employment, were employed in tourism within North Ayrshire in 2023, with tourism businesses accounting for 12 percent of all businesses. Scottish Tourism Economic Impact Modelling (STEAM) data from 2022 shows that there were 2.9 million visitor days with an economic impact of £229 million and supporting 3,391 full time jobs [figures from Committee Report for 2025 North Ayrshire Visitor Management Plan – NAC196].

NPF4 seeks to encourage, promote and facilitate sustainable tourism development which benefits local people, is consistent with net zero and nature commitments, and inspires people to visit Scotland. LDP3 should support the recovery, growth and long-term resilience of the tourism sector. Its spatial strategy should identify suitable locations which reflect opportunities for tourism development, taking account of the needs of communities, visitors, the industry and the environment and consider any areas of pressure where tourism is having adverse impacts and further development is not appropriate. Built and natural heritage has an important role in attracting visitors to North Ayrshire but is also vulnerable to unsustainable pressures.

The [Ayrshire Regional Economic Strategy](#) [CD180] identifies tourism as a key sector and strength of the Ayrshire economy. The [Ayrshire and our Islands Visitor Economy Strategy](#) [CD195] establishes a vision, ambition, strategic priorities and actions aimed at building a thriving, inclusive visitor economy across the region. The strategy was developed based on the findings of an evidence review, analysis of global benchmarks, industry consultations, a youth workshop carried out in late 2021, and input from the members of the Ayrshire Visitor Economy Steering Group (now the Ayrshire and Arran Visitor Economy Leadership Group, AAVELG) during the period January to April 2022.

The strategy seeks to build 'place prosperity' through supporting regenerative tourism which embeds community wealth building principles. This will ensure tourism benefits local residents as well as visitors and that the visitor economy offers good job opportunities, with fair working conditions, as part of a sustainable, balanced economy.

Tourism is one of five Ayrshire Growth Deal programmes, comprising two projects: marine tourism – which will deliver step-ashore and transit marina facilities at both Cumbrae and Arran; and The Great Harbour, a tourism-led regeneration, place making and destination development project for Irvine and the wider Ayrshire coast.

Locally, an annual [Visitor Management Plan](#) [CD196] is prepared to provide a strategic approach to managing the impact of tourism within North Ayrshire on our communities and our environment, place and infrastructure assets. The 2025 Plan takes account of the challenges and opportunities to manage the impact of visitors to North Ayrshire, setting out priorities and actions for the coming year.

Key impacts identified within the Plan relate to litter, parking, and public toilet provision. Some prominent issues continue in relation to 'hotspots,' such as

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

motorhome usage in certain locations. Area specific interventions, such as parking bay line marking, have been put in place, with work underway to review the provision of motorhome facilities across North Ayrshire as a whole.

Alongside the Visitor Management Plan, Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plans (STIPs) for the North Ayrshire [mainland](#) [CD197] and [islands](#) [CD198] expand on the strategic approach to managing the impact of tourism demonstrated in North Ayrshire Council's Visitor Management Plans, but take a longer-term view of potential projects, considering ongoing impacts of a post-pandemic increase in visitors, changes in behaviour, and the impact on our infrastructure and communities.

The importance of tourism to our island communities – and the tensions created – are highlighted in the Local Island Plans for Arran and Cumbrae. Tourists can create challenges to the capacity of infrastructure and services on Arran and some residents feel that they can be inconvenienced and occasionally displaced by tourists. This creates some potential tension between sections of the community who have differing views on the importance of investment in tourism and the hospitality sector. The Cumbrae Local Island Plan highlights the impact of spikes in visitor numbers on local infrastructure, transport provision and hospitality sector capacity. This has the potential consequence of negatively impacting the island's reputation as a desirable place to live as well as on visitor numbers.

The impact of tourism on local housing markets on Arran and Cumbrae is also an issue, related to the number of second homes and short-term let properties – see Housing schedule for further discussion

Culture and creativity

Published in March 2022, A [Culture Strategy for Scotland](#) [CD199] shows how important culture is to Scotland's prosperity and sets the future direction for supporting culture in Scotland. Place has an important role in inspiring our rich cultural heritage and creativity and, conversely, arts, music and culture are among the factors that create a positive identity for a place that supports a strong sense of belonging.

NPF4 seeks to encourage, promote and facilitate development which reflects our diverse culture and creativity, and to support our culture and creative industries to enable locally distinctive places that reflect the diversity of communities and support regeneration and town centre vibrancy; the expansion of cultural and creative industries, providing jobs and investment; and access to cultural and creative activities for communities. LDP3 should recognise and support opportunities for jobs and investment in the creative sector, culture, heritage and the arts.

[Place profiles](#) [CD003 to CD008] prepared for each of our six localities provide an overview of culture, creativity and community within North Ayrshire [located within the 'Liveable' section of the Profile], identifying important events and cultural and community facilities, including museums, libraries and community centres. Venues include The Harbour Arts Centre in Irvine; North Ayrshire's cultural hub offering a varied programme of theatre, comedy, music and visual arts, classes and

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

workshops; Vikingar! in Largs, home to an interactive, hands on heritage and cultural experience, the Barrfields Pavilion Theatre, a swimming pool plus other leisure facilities; the Barony Centre forms the heart of Scotland's 'Craft Town', West Kilbride; Garrison House in Millport and the Town Hall and North Ayrshire Heritage Centre in Saltcoats.

The 2021 North Ayrshire Town Centre Audits [CD190] include analysis of the nighttime economy of each town, which includes public houses and restaurants. The nighttime economy can be an indication of the vitality of leisure uses within centres that can often be related to cultural uses. The 2023 [Retail Capacity Study](#) [CD069] contains an in-depth analysis on leisure uses and forecasts future demands and spends. It advises that leisure spend is, inherently, discretionary and is, therefore, likely to be more volatile according to the wider economic situation leading to uncertainty as to the prospects for growth. Some commentators forecast sustained strong growth, especially in key sectors such as coffee shops and gyms. Other forecasts are more circumspect, identifying only modest expenditure growth and reduced margins resulting in a high susceptibility to business failure.

The sector is also rapidly evolving, with new formats and experiences coming forward each year, often linked to new advances in technology with lower potential impact of the internet affecting the location of leisure services. A greater potential for ongoing requirement for space for the provision of leisure services rather than for retail is implied.

Aquaculture

Involving the farming or culturing of fish, molluscs, crustaceans and seaweed, aquaculture is an increasingly important industry for Scotland, helping to sustain economic growth in the rural and coastal communities of the north and west and producing our most valuable food export. The Scottish aquaculture industry is led by Atlantic salmon farming but also produces significant quantities of Rainbow trout and mussels

Scotland's first [National Marine Plan](#) (NMP) [CD146] was adopted and published in March 2015, setting out the Scottish Government's vision for clean, healthy, safe, productive and diverse seas, managed to meet the long term needs of nature and people. Aquaculture is one of 11 sectors for which the National Marine Plan sets out objectives and marine planning policies; overall, these seek to achieve an aquaculture industry that is sustainable, diverse, competitive economically viable and which contributes to food security whilst minimising environmental impact.

In accordance with the legislation set out in the Marine Acts, statutory reviews of the National Marine Plan were undertaken in 2018 and 2021 with the 2021 review concluding that, although the NMP remained effective, there had been significant developments which could impact the use and management of our seas. In the [Programme for Government 2022 to 2023](#) [CD200], Scottish ministers committed to start developing a new national marine plan for Scotland - National Marine Plan 2 (NMP2) - to address the global climate and nature crises by carefully managing our

North Ayrshire’s third Local Development Plan

shared marine space. This commitment was reaffirmed in the [Programme for Government 2024 to 2025](#) [CD201].

Alongside the national marine planning regime introduced by the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, eleven Scottish Marine Regions have been created which cover sea areas extending out to 12 nautical miles. The Clyde Marine Planning Partnership (CMPP) are developing a Regional Marine Plan. North Ayrshire Council is a member of the CMPP and a draft plan is expected to be published following the Scottish Parliamentary Elections in 2026.

The national planning framework (NPF4) seeks to encourage, promote and facilitate aquaculture development and minimise any adverse effects on the environment, including cumulative impacts. LDP3 should guide new aquaculture development in line with National and Regional Marine Planning.

[Scotland’s aquaculture](#) website and database identify the locations of aquaculture sites. There are two active sites in North Ayrshire, at Kingscross in Arran and Fairlie.

In March 2025, consent was granted for a terrestrial salmon rearing facility at Hunterston. The ‘Recirculated Aquaculture System’ is expected to generate 15 direct jobs and 35 jobs in the supply chain in North Ayrshire when operational. In 2021, an application for an Atlantic salmon fish farm east of Millstone Point, Lochranza in the north of Arran was refused planning permission, with the decision upheld on appeal (ref. [PPA-310-2033](#)) [CD202] on the grounds of the significant landscape and visual impact – including on the North Arran National Scenic Area – arising from the introduction of a fish farm to this sensitive and isolated area of coastline.

Minerals

Aggregates are needed for the construction of transport and renewable energy infrastructure, housing and other buildings that are a vital part of the Scottish Government's future infrastructure investment plans. The most important sources for primary aggregates in Scotland are crushed rock (from igneous rock, sandstone and limestone) and sand and gravel.

NPF4 aims to support the sustainable management of resources and minimise the impacts of the extraction of minerals on communities and the environment. LDP3 should adopt a landbank approach to planning for the supply of construction aggregates, ensuring at least 10 years’ supply of minerals always exists. It should also safeguard important workable mineral resources and take steps to ensure these are not sterilised by other types of development.

There are nine active quarries in North Ayrshire (Source: [BritPits - British Geological Survey](#))

Table 25 – Active quarries in North Ayrshire

Quarry Name	Location	Commodity
Bogarrie Quarry	Sliderry, Isle of Arran	Igneous and Metamorphic Rock

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Quarry Name	Location	Commodity
Dereneneach Quarry	Blackwaterfoot, Isle of Arran	Igneous and Metamorphic Rock
Garnock West Quarry	Ardeer	Sand
Hullerhill Quarry	Kilwinning	Silica Sand
Knowes Farm Clay Pit	Beith	Clay and shale
Loanhead Quarry	Beith	Igneous and Metamorphic Rock
Mid Sannox Quarry	Sannox, Isle of Arran	Sand and gravel
Middleton Quarry	Lugton, Beith	Limestone
Swinlees Quarry	Dalry	Igneous and Metamorphic Rock

The [2023 Aggregate Minerals Survey for Great Britain](#) [CD203] provides data on UK, national and regional sales, inter-regional flows, transportation, consumption and permitted reserves of primary aggregates. This updates the [Aggregate Minerals Survey for Scotland \(2019\)](#) [CD204]. The response rate for the survey by active quarries was 46 percent for Scotland but substantially higher at 78 percent for Wales and 90 percent for England

The 2023 survey shows that the Ayrshire is one of the largest crushed rock producing regions in Scotland and a net exporter of minerals, with sales of total primary aggregates (2,192,000 tonnes) exceeding consumption (1,051,000 tonnes). Total reserves in 2023 were 87 million tonnes, which would provide a supply of approximately 40 years.

Summary of Stakeholder Engagement

The evidence presented above refers to several research studies, reports, plans and strategies that themselves have been subject to stakeholder engagement and consultation during their preparation.

Wider place-based engagement with local communities has been focused on the 'Your Place Survey' and engagement on the 'Place Profiles'. Based on the Place Standard, the Your Place Survey asked respondents to consider how active their local economy is and whether there are there good opportunities for work, volunteering and training. The engagement on the profiles, including public 'drop-in' meetings, focused on the needs and wants of communities.

Registered [Local Place Plans](#), 'Place Frameworks' prepared for Kilwinning, Largs and Saltcoats and Local Island Plans also identify local economic issues and priorities and have been informed by community engagement. For example; the Stevenston and Garnock Valley Local Place Plans both identify town centres as a local priority, with the Garnock Valley plan priorities also including supporting local business and jobs, including manufacturing. Proposals to enhance visitor and tourist facilities are included in the plans for West Kilbride, Largs, Cumbrae and the Garnock Valley.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Business and industry

A business survey and consultation with stakeholders was conducted as part of the employment land supply appraisal. While the business survey returned a limited number of responses (40) from mainly small businesses across a wide range of sectors, it indicated one third of occupiers had a requirement to expand or relocate, and a further third had a possible requirement. Potential demand was focused on industrial property or industrial/office mix. Occupiers rated their existing properties and environments positively, although some specific measures such as energy efficiency scored less well and in some instances transport links and amenity scored lower too.

Consultations sought to understand stakeholder views on employment property market in North Ayrshire, availability and constraints, and how to help unlock opportunities. A structured interview was undertaken with 16 consultees including Scottish Enterprise, property and land agents, landowners and the Council's Business Support and Development, Growth and Investment, and Economic Policy teams.

Consultees agreed that the industrial market focus within North Ayrshire is on Irvine, where stock ranges from dated (with some basic refurbishment) to modern and new build. Target sectors for North Ayrshire are considered to be the green and blue economy (at Hunterston in particular), retention of existing companies ensuring provision for SMEs. Demand for medium to larger offices is considered to be limited or zero, however there is still demand for small office suites and in business centres. Large sites are considered to be undevelopable by local businesses and are an area where the Council could intervene to offer a full range of sites from strategic sites to small, local sites.

Town centres and retail

A key component for accurately understanding the operation of retail patterns and estimates of actual retail turnover is the use of extensive and detailed surveys. A household survey has been undertaken to establish both behavioural and attitudinal information about retail habits within the study area. The design of the survey was undertaken jointly by Gravis Planning/Hargest Planning Ltd and NEMS Market Surveys and was implemented as a telephone interview survey by NEMS in December 2023 to January 2024. In total 1000 interviews were completed reflecting the distribution of population and the zones used in the Strategic Retail Model. This information was combined with additional data from a recent household survey undertaken by Hargest Planning/NEMS for other parts of Ayrshire.

Results from North Ayrshire Council's People's Panel on access to fresh food and survey responses from foodbank/community larder operators were also considered in the Retail Capacity Study.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Tourism

The tension between the importance of tourism to our island communities and its impacts is recognised in the Local Islands Plans prepared for Arran and Cumbrae.

The [Largs Local Place Plan](#) [CD021] includes a proposal for a major new tourist attraction in the form of a cable car. The [West Kilbride Local Place Plan](#) [CD018] has proposals to improve visitor facilities at Seamill beach.

Summary of Implications for the Proposed Plan

Our view on what this evidence and stakeholder engagement means for LDP3 is summarised below:

Community Wealth Building

Through the actions of our Community Wealth Building Strategy, we are committed to embedding community wealth building within LDP3 to ensure future development takes account of local economic priorities and provides benefits for communities.

Since commencing our community wealth building journey, the Council has implemented several initiatives to use our organisational power to retain wealth locally and build a wellbeing economy. This includes increasing local spend with North Ayrshire businesses; creating a 'Community Benefits Wish List' to match organisations delivering Council contracts with community organisations in need of support; and developing our approach to using our land and assets for community benefit through our Regeneration Delivery Plan; Vacant and Derelict Land Strategy and Investment Programme; and the Sustainable North Ayrshire Strategy.

A strategic approach which enables community benefits to be delivered by all development, not just Council or other anchor institution projects, is required to be progressed as an integral part of the preparation of the Proposed Plan, to ensure the new plan is aligned with the Community Wealth Building Strategy. This will focus on how local supply chains and the creation of fair and meaningful jobs with training and progression opportunities and can be boosted through the proposals of private developers and secured through the development management process.

The proposed site appraisal methodology includes, at Stage 3, a framework for the assessment of development proposals in the context of community benefit and wealth building and incorporates objectives relating to each of the five pillars. The site appraisal methodology will be used to inform allocations for the Proposed Plan. The National Development Statement of Need for the Hunterston Strategic Asset set out in NPF4 notes that a community wealth building approach would be expected to form a part of future development proposals in that location, to ensure the economic benefits are retained locally as far as possible, strengthening local supply chains and supporting businesses and communities across Ayrshire.

The Proposed Plan's approach to community wealth building should further the links between LDP3 and the North Ayrshire Partnership Plan (LOIP), Locality Plans, the

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

local island plans, Local Place Plans and other community-led plans, by identifying local priorities and the community and place benefits that new development should focus on as a central and primary consideration. Community ownership and management of buildings and land can also be supported by LDP3, including through the identification of opportunities for community asset transfer.

Business and industry

Having an adequate supply of employment land allows business to grow, invest and create jobs. Land and property are key factors in enabling businesses to start up, scale up or come to North Ayrshire.

The Employment Land Audit identifies 57 sites within North Ayrshire's employment land supply and a marketable employment land supply of around 500 hectares. The Employment Land Appraisal found existing industrial floorspace is well-occupied with a very low vacancy rate but is ageing, and in some cases approaching the end of buildings' lifespans. Occupancy rates and relatively low turnover restrict the choices of units for local and incoming occupiers, particularly of modern, energy efficient units in their location and size of choice.

The appraisal found that only a limited number of allocated employment sites in North Ayrshire offer both good market potential and likely technical deliverability. Furthermore, new industrial development is curtailed by low rents meaning public sector intervention in the property market is often required to support new development. The recommendation is made that a combination of new-build industrial property and refurbishment is required to continue to ensure that North Ayrshire's ageing stock does not constrain activity, especially in Irvine.

Our view, informed by the Employment Land Appraisal, is that there is no requirement to allocate further employment land; the existing supply significantly exceeds the recommendation of the Employment Land Appraisal to anticipate five hectares' employment land take-up each year, which would represent a requirement of 50 hectares over the plan period for LDP3. However, enabling delivery of new floorspace, including serviced developable plots of 0.25 to 0.5 hectares to meet SME and development demand, is required, albeit this is challenging from a financial perspective.

Alignment with the Council's Regeneration Delivery Plan, as a key mechanism for delivering new energy efficient commercial property and associated low carbon infrastructure at key employment locations, including Kyle Road, Annickbank and i3, will be important for the Proposed Plan and Delivery Programme. An updated Regeneration Delivery Plan is due to be developed and published in 2026.

LDP2 allowed for residential uses at established employment locations, including West Byrehill and North Newmoor, with these sites now delivering new homes. There is scope for further low scoring employment sites to be de-allocated or identified for alternative uses, including housing. As with LDP2's housing allocations, Schedule 5 sites will be assessed as part of the preparation of the Proposed Plan in order that sufficient land for business and industry is allocated in the new plan.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Further examination of larger sites at Hunterston, i3 and Ardeer is required to confirm the feasibility of these as locations for inward investment and large-scale, land-hungry uses, to ensure a sufficient range of employment land is maintained for future needs. This will be progressed via the site appraisal process, with any actions included within the Delivery Programme. A key component of the assessment of Ardeer will be the biodiversity value of the site and how any future development can protect, conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity in line with the mitigation hierarchy.

Ayrshire Growth Deal

The Ayrshire Growth Deal has secured £251.5 million worth of funding and aims to facilitate private sector investment of more than £300 million into the region and to support up to 7,000 new jobs. The five programmes of the Ayrshire Growth Deal are at various level of progression, and projects have evolved since some were identified as 'Strategic Development Areas' by LDP2

LDP3 and its associated Delivery Programme should support and help facilitate Ayrshire Growth Deal projects, including the Great Harbour in Irvine, aligning with the Masterplan prepared for the area.

Town Centres and Retail

Town centres are the beating heart of our communities and are still where most people access services. In this regard, thriving town, village and smaller local centres are essential to delivering local living, where people can access most of their daily needs within a 10-minute walk. LDP3 must support a sustainable future for North Ayrshire's network of centres, enabling them to be vibrant, healthy, creative, enterprising, accessible and resilient places for people to live, learn, work, enjoy and visit.

Irvine has the principal concentration of retail, service and civic uses across its town centre and adjacent retail parks and is considered to have a sub-regional role within Ayrshire. LDP3 should align with proposals for Irvine developed by the Town Board as part of 'Plan for Neighbourhoods' investment.

A Retail Capacity Study for North Ayrshire has found, overall, there is no quantitative convenience retail deficiency in North Ayrshire and that significant new convenience floorspace would likely adversely impact on existing foodstores. In Arran, Largs and Kilwinning, however, additional floorspace would address local deficiencies in floorspace. This will be a consideration for the LDP3 spatial strategy for these locations. Additionally, should the spatial strategy propose urban expansion, the requirement for new small scale neighbourhood retail development will require to be assessed in the context of local living; areas to the north and east of Irvine have already been identified as not having relatively easy access to small-scale local retail/service facilities.

The importance of Brodick as a local centre on Arran is not reflected in the Network of Centres established by LDP2. This, and other minor changes to the geography and/or function of centres recommended by the Retail Capacity Study, should be

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

considered in confirming the Network of Centres to be defined by LDP3. This network should reflect the principles of 20-minute neighbourhoods; smaller 'local centres' could form part of the network centres where 20-minute neighbourhood analysis identifies important clusters of retail and commercial uses.

By its very nature, drive-through development encourages unsustainable travel choices. However, such uses can also provide valuable social spaces for local communities and service sector job opportunities. In preparing LDP3, we will have to consider where it may be appropriate to support any future drive-through development proposals.

NPF4 states LDPs should identify areas where proposals for healthy food and drink outlets can be supported. Notwithstanding the difficulty in restricting retail offering within Class 1A, it is not considered such areas would differ from general retail provision in accordance with NPF4 Policy 28.

LDP3 should also consider opportunities for town centre living. Through an urban capacity study, we will be proactive, working alongside colleagues in Housing and Regeneration Services, in identifying opportunities to support residential development in our town centres, recognising that such projects may require public sector support to be delivered, as was the case with the King's Arms development in Irvine.

Rural development

Around three-quarters of North Ayrshire's mainland is classified as 'accessible rural' and our inhabited islands, Arran and Cumbrae, are remote rural areas with their own challenges. While our rural population is relatively small, our rural areas are vitally important. They are where our most valuable landscapes and nature sites and networks can be found; locations that attract visitors and for outdoor recreation, agriculture and forestry; and where the most opportunity exists for blue green infrastructure expansion and development aimed at adapting to climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, including renewable energy development.

LDP3 will be required to balance these interests within its spatial strategy, setting out an appropriate approach to development in rural areas which reflects the characteristics of our rural areas. This will include directing where and what type of new housing, employment and energy related development will be supported.

The community priorities of our islands are set out in Local Island Plans for Arran and Cumbrae. LDP3 should take cognisance of these plans, and the Cumbrae Local Place Plan and other emerging community-led plans that encompass rural areas, in establishing its approach. The new plan will also need to consider how community services in these areas can be supported, to sustain communities and help reverse the trend of declining population of working age residents.

Tourism

Informed by our Visitor Management Plan and Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plans, LDP3 should support the recovery, growth and long-term

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

resilience of the tourism sector in North Ayrshire and identify locations where tourism development will be supported. The spatial strategy should take account of the needs of communities, visitors, the industry and the environment, including as highlighted by the Arran and Cumbrae Local Island Plans.

Culture and creativity

LDP3's spatial strategy is required to recognise and support opportunities for jobs and investment in the creative sector, culture, heritage and the arts and ensure that communities have access to cultural and creative activities. A consideration of local culture should be reflected for proposals to support development that is locally distinctive.

The Retail Capacity Study highlights that there is a greater potential for ongoing requirement for space for the provision of leisure services than for retail. The Proposed Plan should consider how new commercial leisure developments should be accommodated within LDP3's spatial strategy. Where appropriate, existing cultural assets should be safeguarded, particularly where communities have shown interest in protecting and enhancing these.

Aquaculture

The Proposed Plan must align with the current and emerging National and Regional Marine Plans in guiding new aquaculture development and supporting an aquaculture industry that is sustainable. Any views from the aquaculture industry expressed during the preparation of the Clyde Regional Marine Plan may also usefully inform the preparation of LDP3.

Other related sections of this Evidence Report, such as the biodiversity, natural places and coastal development, will be relevant to ensuring any future proposals are developed within environmental limits to ensure unacceptable adverse impacts on the environment are avoided.

Minerals

The Aggregate Minerals Survey for Scotland in 2019 and 2023 Aggregate Minerals Survey for Great Britain indicate that the Ayrshire region has a significant supply of permitted sand and gravel and crush rock reserves, around ten-times greater than the 10-year landbank of construction aggregates NPF4 requires LDPs to support.

It is considered Ayrshire is an appropriate geography to focus as a market area, enabling the sustainable management and use of mineral resources while limiting the distances aggregates require to travel for the construction of important infrastructure including transport, renewable energy infrastructure and housing. Further analysis of the position on Arran is warranted, in recognition of transport costs from the mainland and consequential higher build costs on the island.

A requirement to undertake a survey of local operators, including on Arran, is identified to obtain more evidence on quarry outputs, consented reserves, distribution and any future plans to further inform LDP3. This will be progressed before the end of 2025.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Statements of Agreement / Dispute

No statements from stakeholders have been received highlighting agreement or disputes with the evidence presented in this schedule.

Links to Evidence

CD069	North Ayrshire Retail Capacity Study – June 2024
CD146	Scotland's National Marine Plan (March 2015)
CD179	Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation (March 2022)
CD180	Ayrshire Regional Economic Strategy (June 2023)
CD181	North Ayrshire Employment Land Appraisal (March 2024)
CD182	North Ayrshire Community Wealth Building Strategy for 2020 to 2025
CD183	North Ayrshire Community Wealth Building Strategy for 2024 to 2027
CD184	Community Wealth Building Anchor Charter
CD185	North Ayrshire Council Community Asset Transfer Policy – June 2024
CD186	North Ayrshire Employment Land Audit 2024 to 2025
CD187	North Ayrshire Employment Land Appraisal – 2025 Addendum (September 2025)
CD188	Town centre action plan review: joint Scottish Government and COSLA response (April 2022)
CD189	Your Town Audits (November 2016)
CD190	Town Centre Audits 2021
CD191	Irvine Your Town Audit (May 2024)
CD192	North Ayrshire Council Regeneration Delivery Plan (February 2020)
CD193	Local Housing Strategy 2023 to 2028 – Action Plan – Year 2 (August 2025)
CD194	Fraser of Allander Institute, The impact of Covid-19 on the Arran Economy (September 2020)
CD195	Ayrshire and Arran Visitor Economy Leadership Group, Ayrshire and our Islands Visitor Economy Strategy
CD196	North Ayrshire Visitor Management Plan 2025
CD197	North Ayrshire Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan – Mainland (December 2023)
CD198	North Ayrshire Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan – Islands: Arran and Great Cumbrae (December 2023)
CD199	Culture Strategy for Scotland (March 2022)
CD200	Programme for Government 2022 to 2023
CD201	Programme for Government 2024 to 2025
CD202	Appeal Decision Notice – Ref PPA-310-2033
CD203	Collation of the results of the 2023 Aggregate Minerals Survey for Great Britain (2025)
CD204	Collation of the results of the 2019 Aggregate Minerals Survey for Scotland (September 2023)

Topic 6 – Infrastructure

Infrastructure considerations are integral to development planning and decision-making within the planning system, particularly in the context of delivery. National planning policy calls for an infrastructure first approach to land use planning which puts infrastructure considerations at the heart of placemaking. As part of an evidence-based approach, potential impacts on infrastructure and infrastructure needs should be understood early in the development planning process. This section of the Evidence Report considers [health care](#), [education](#), [energy](#), [digital](#) and [water](#) infrastructure within North Ayrshire.

The evidence presented in this schedule relates primarily to NPF4 policy 18. Blue and green (including water management) and waste infrastructure is included within the Sustainable Places schedule (Topic 3). Sustainable transport infrastructure is addressed in the Transport schedule (Topic 4)

Information required by the Act and Regulations

Section 15 of the Planning Act concerns the form and content of local development plans. Subsection 1(a) requires the local development plan to take account of matters mentioned in subsection (5), including:

- the health needs of the population of the district and the likely effects of development and use of land on those health needs
- the education needs of the population of the district and the likely effects of development and use of land on those education needs
- the capacity of education services in the district
- the infrastructure of the district (including communications, transport and drainage systems, systems for the supply of water and energy, and health care and education facilities) and how that infrastructure is used

Section 16B of the Act relates to the Evidence Report. As per subsection (3), the evidence report is to set out the planning authority's view on the matters listed in section 15(5), referred to above.

Summary of Evidence

Policy Context

National planning policy seeks to encourage, promote and facilitate an infrastructure first approach to land use planning, where infrastructure considerations are integral to development planning, placemaking and decision making. Potential impacts on infrastructure and infrastructure needs should be understood early in the development planning process, as part of an evidenced based approach which considers infrastructure capacity, condition, needs and deliverability. Infrastructure requirements to deliver the spatial strategy and where, how, when and by whom infrastructure priorities will be delivered should be set out in LDP3 and the Delivery Programme.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

In line with the infrastructure investment hierarchy, existing infrastructure assets should be used sustainably, and low-carbon solutions favoured. The infrastructure investment hierarchy is a Scottish Government-wide common hierarchy to aid planning and decision-making, which prioritises enhancing and maintaining our assets over new build. Further detail is set out in the [Infrastructure Investment Plan for Scotland 2021 to 2022 to 2025 to 2026](#) [CD205]

Where required, the type, level (or method of calculation) and location of any financial or in-kind contributions towards infrastructure should be indicated within the plan and delivery programme, including the types of development from which they will be required.

Health Care

The regional health board covering the North Ayrshire Council area is NHS Ayrshire and Arran. The Health Board is structured into five main operational divisions: Acute and Maternity Hospital Services; Health and Social Care Partnerships for each of the three Council areas, East, North and South Ayrshire; and Public Health.

Acute Services

Acute health services in Ayrshire are delivered by NHS Ayrshire and Arran predominantly at the University Hospital Ayr and University Hospital Crosshouse, both out with North Ayrshire. Some specialties are duplicated on both sites, while some services are provided for the whole of Ayrshire from one hospital. Similarly, not all health services can be provided within the geographical boundaries of Ayrshire. Notably, neurosurgery, radiotherapy, specialist children's services and some specialist services are delivered in Glasgow, cardiac and lung surgery is delivered at Golden Jubilee National Hospital and inpatient vascular care for Ayrshire patients is at Hairmyres Hospital in East Kilbride

Health and Social Care Partnership

The North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership (NAHSCP) is responsible for community-based health and social care services in North Ayrshire. An Integration Joint Board (IJB) oversees the operation of the NAHSCP, which also delivers a Lead Partnership role across all of Ayrshire for mental health services and the children's immunisation programmes. Primary Care Services (GP practices, dentistry, optometry) are managed by East Ayrshire HSCP on behalf of the whole of Ayrshire.

'Caring Together' is the NAHSCP's [Strategic Commissioning Plan for 2022 to 2030](#) [CD100]. In response to population need, the plan informs how health and social care services are planned and delivered in North Ayrshire. A review of the strategic plan at the end of 2024 recommended that, due to the circumstances under which the HSCP is currently operating being significantly different to when the previous plan was developed, a full refresh should be undertaken. It is anticipated that a new plan will be finalised by the end of 2025. As with previous plans, the content of the plan will take account of a Strategic Needs Assessment and community engagement.

North Ayrshire’s third Local Development Plan

Public Health

The Department of Public Health works to improve health and reduce health inequalities by addressing the building blocks of health. Key functions include health protection, health improvement, healthcare public health, resilience and civil contingency planning, and public health intelligence and research. As well as its roles in strategic and service planning, it also delivers a number of operational services such as immunisation, screening, and smoking cessation programmes.

Primary health care services

Figure 8 and Table 26, below, taken from the most recent NAHSCP Profile [CD206], illustrate the location and number of health care services located in North Ayrshire. Note: where a practice has more than one surgery, satellite surgeries are not shown in Figure 8 or noted in Table 26. For example, the Ayrshire Medical Practice incorporates The Three Towns Medical Practice and West Kilbride Medical Practice. The West Kilbride surgery is not identified on this map.

Figure 8 – Map of services by locality within the North Ayrshire HSCP area

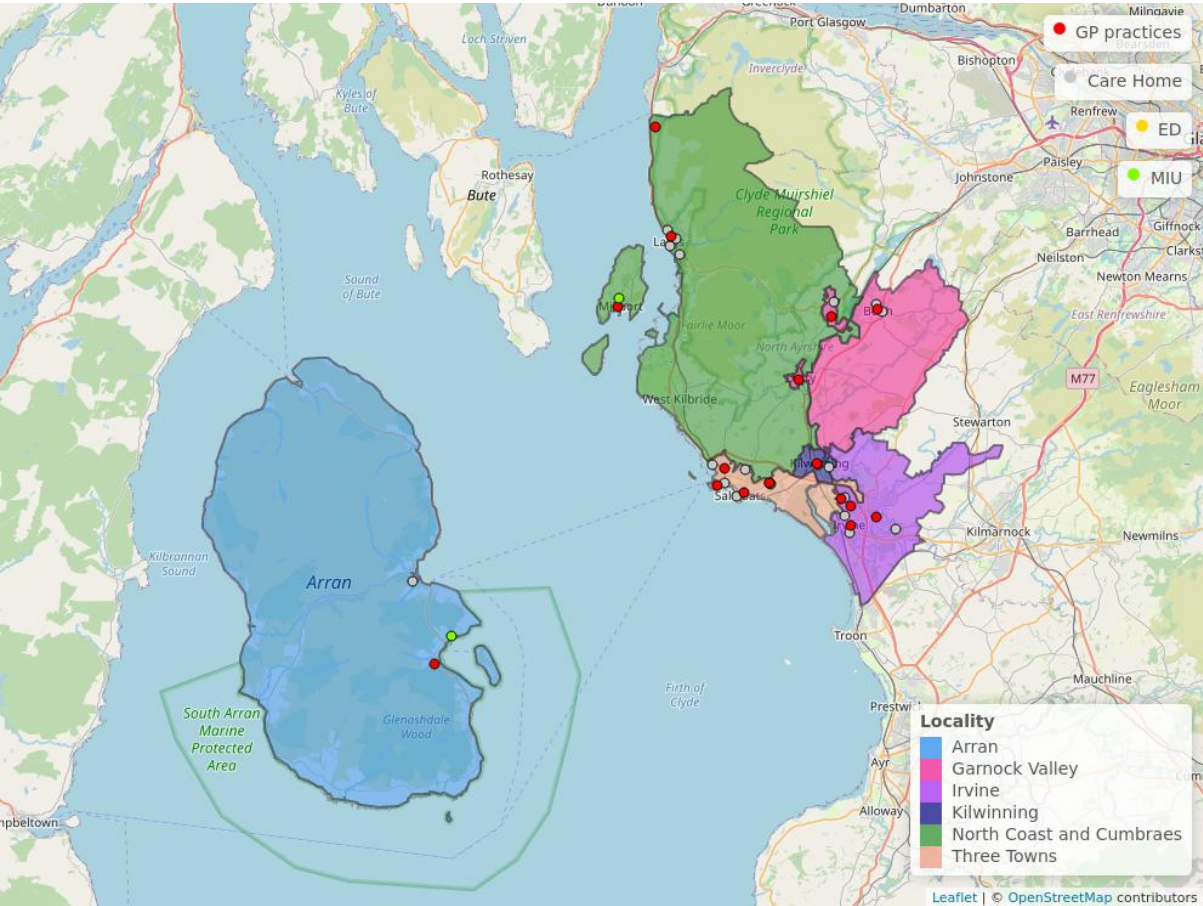


Table 26 – Number of each type of service in North Ayrshire HSCP

Service Type	Service	Number
Primary Care	GP Practice	18
Accident and Emergency	Emergency Department (ED)	0
Accident and Emergency	Minor Injuries Unit (MIU)	2
Care Home	Elderly Care	18

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Service Type	Service	Number
Care Home	Other	18

The closest Accident and Emergency service to North Ayrshire is provided at University Hospital Crosshouse.

Ayrshire Central Hospital in Irvine provides young disabled and rehabilitation services, and a number of assessment beds for elderly mental health services. Recent years have seen significant developments on the site, with a new general outpatient department and rehabilitation centre. Woodland View, NHS Ayrshire and Arran's inpatient mental health facilities; Foxgrove, the new National Secure Adolescent Inpatient Service for Scotland, an inpatient unit for children aged 12 to 18 years who have complex difficulties and need a high level of care; and the Eglinton Family Practice are also located at Ayrshire Central Hospital.

On our islands, Arran War Memorial Hospital and Lady Margaret Hospital in Cumbrae provide minor injury services, staffed by local GPs supported by other professions, both visiting and in-house. Outpatient services are also available at Arran War Memorial Hospital and at the Cumbrae Medical Practice.

There are four GP clusters across North Ayrshire, noted below alongside additional information on NHS dental practices [CD207] and pharmacies:

- Garnock Valley Cluster

There are three GP practices within the Garnock Valley Cluster: Beith Health Centre, Dalry Medical Practice and Kilbirnie Medical Practice. Additionally, the Mistylaw Medical Practice (Lochwinnoch) has a surgery in Beith.

One dental practice operates at locations in Beith, Dalry and Kilbirnie. At May 2025, the practice in Beith was accepting new NHS patients. There are six pharmacies.

- Irvine / Kilwinning / Dundonald Cluster

There are six practices within this cluster, which extends beyond North Ayrshire into parts of South and East Ayrshire around Dundonald and Symington.

There are four GP practices within the Irvine locality: Frew Terrace Surgery, which has a branch at Lanfine Way; Townhead Surgery; Eglinton Family Practice; and Bourtreehill Medical Practice. Additionally, the Dundonald Medical Practice has a surgery in Dreghorn. There are two GP practices within the Kilwinning locality: Kilwinning Medical Practice; and Oxenward Medical Practice.

Five dental practices within Irvine and Kilwinning are accepting new NHS patients and there are 13 pharmacies.

- Three Towns

There are five GP practices within the Three Towns locality: Central Avenue and the South Beach Medical Centre in Ardrossan; Saltcoats Group Practice and Stevenston Group Practice plus the Ayrshire Medical Group, also based at the Health Centre in Stevenston.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Two dental practices within the Three Towns locality are accepting new NHS patients at May 2025, with another accepting only children. There are eight pharmacies.

- North Coast and Islands

This cluster covers the North Coast locality, including the Isle of Cumbrae plus the Isle of Arran. There are four GP practices identified by the Primary Care Services and Premises Review: Largs Medical Practice; Cumbrae Medical Practice; Dr Rai's Practice and the Arran Medical Group, which has three main surgeries, Brodick Health Centre, Lamlash Medical Centre and Shiskine Surgery. There are also branch surgeries held in Whiting Bay Surgery.

The Ayrshire Medical Group additionally has a branch in West Kilbride. One dental practice within Largs is accepting only children and adults who are exempt as new NHS patients. Neither dental practice on Arran – Arran Dental Care in Brodick and Lamlash Dental Clinic – is accepting new NHS patients. There are seven pharmacies in the North Coast and three on Arran.

Drivers for change

Led by Ayrshire and Arran NHS Board and the three Ayrshire Integration Joint Boards, '[Caring for Ayrshire](#)' is a whole-system health and care redesign and reform ambition driven by a vision that care should be delivered as close to home as possible, supported by a network of community services with safe, effective and timely access to high quality specialist services for those whose needs cannot be met in the community.

Caring for Ayrshire recognises that people are living longer and healthier lives, supported by medical advances, technology and improved public health. This increases the number of people needing care and means health and care services need to evolve, to make sure we can look after more people, in better ways now and in the future.

North Ayrshire's changing demographics are just one driver for change relevant to the delivery of Primary Care services and associated health care infrastructure requirements. The new General Medical Services contract, published in 2018, fundamentally changes how primary care services are to be managed and delivered. It sets out the future focus for the GP role as 'expert medical generalists', with the requirement for some tasks, historically carried out by General Practitioners (GPs), to be undertaken by a wider multi-disciplinary primary care team. The Ayrshire and Arran Primary Care Improvement Plan (PCIP) sets out how the three Ayrshire HSCPs will work alongside General Practice and the NHS Board to deliver the implementation of the General Medical Services contract. An update on this work was provided on 8 December 2025 [CD208]

Factors including persistent levels of deprivation and inequality and increasing mental health and drug and alcohol misuse; new housebuilding (notwithstanding the longer-term trend of population decline in North Ayrshire); the increased use of technology; the importance of infection control; alongside recruitment and retention issues for both GPs and other clinical staff all also have implications for models of service delivery and associated accommodation needs in the future.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Also relevant is that the Health Board faces an extremely challenging financial position. The [NHS Ayrshire and Arran Delivery Plan 2025 to 2026](#) [CD209] indicates the forecast budgetary gap for the current financial year is £33.1 million. These challenges are replicated within health and social care partners, and it is acknowledged that these financial pressures could impact the delivery of the Caring for Ayrshire vision over the short to medium term.

Review of services

A Primary Care Services and Premises Review [CD210] was undertaken in 2024, as part of the Caring for Ayrshire Programme. Taking into account these 'drivers for change', it aims to identify the appropriateness and functionality of current accommodation and assess the estate requirements to support the implementation of the primary care transformation programme.

As part of the analysis, information was collected from practices across Ayrshire and Arran to understand better how the current infrastructure was being utilised and some of the key challenges inherent in the estate. To support this, a data collection proforma was developed and issued to all practices covering information requirements related to the current clinic timetable; the number and type of rooms available within the practice, details of its functionality; and current practice-based workforce, including any additional visiting services incorporating both whole-time equivalent (WTE) staffing levels and sessions based at the practice.

This information provided a snapshot of the space and people currently within primary care and was further analysed to determine what new workforce roles were in place in the practice; what space is available (vacant clinic rooms per day) to accommodate new services; issues relating to the condition of the premises; and opportunities to convert under-used space, for example education rooms, to support clinical functions.

The review also considers Primary Care Improvement Plan (PCIP) service impacts and estate asset management information. The 'Estate Asset Management System' (EAMS) '6 facet analysis' provides information about the status of all primary care buildings (NHS, GP-owned, and leased premises). The analysis used information on four of the six facets: physical condition (building and engineering), functional suitability, quality, and space utilisation

Capacity and condition

Based on the information sources outlined above, a summary of the baseline position for the North Ayrshire HSCP and associated GP practices is set out by Figure 2-5 of the Review. This uses a RAG (Red/Amber/Green) scale which scores room use, timetable gaps, staffing levels and estate.

Overall, the data on GP practices set out in the review shows significant challenges with overall high room use and a requirement to address gaps in the current timetable to accommodate the full roll-out of the Primary Care Improvement Fund (PCIF) expanded roles. Although the estate data is more favourable, the review indicates that 20 to 30 percent of the primary care infrastructure is in poor physical condition, over 50 percent has unsatisfactory functional suitability or quality, and 32

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

percent of the buildings are overcrowded. There is surplus capacity regarding timetable gaps at a few locations, but most noticeably on Arran.

Assessment of future capacity requirements, taking into account the potential impact of new housing, indicates across the NAHSCP there is a shortfall of 153 clinical sessions, equivalent to around 16 rooms, required to enable the full allocation of new roles to be met. There are pressure points from new housing developments within the Irvine/Kilwinning/Dundonald cluster, which will require a long-term solution as part of any proposed investment [Figure 4-3].

A programme for annual review of General Medical Services (GMS) contracts has been developed and due to be implemented by the primary care team to review practice operating models, quality indicators and identify any improvement work. This will enhance oversight of core service delivery by the Board and help to early identify any issues or additional support GP Practices may need to sustain service delivery. The [NHS Ayrshire and Arran Delivery Plan](#) (2025 to 2026) [CD209] indicates this work will be completed by March 2026.

As noted in the Delivery Plan, all NHS Boards are required to prepare a whole-system infrastructure plan by January 2026. In response, NHS Ayrshire and Arran have prepared a whole-system Programme Initial Agreement (PIA) document. The whole-system PIA narrative is expected to empower the health board to focus on engaging stakeholders, communities, staff and services in the essential work needed to drive forward the service reform and redesign required to deliver on the Caring for Ayrshire ambition. NHS Ayrshire and Arran subsequently advised that the whole system planning process will now continue through an alternative process involving a series of Strategic Assessments.

Education

The learning estate in North Ayrshire comprises eight standalone secondary and 49 standalone primary schools. In addition, there is one 'all through' facility – Garnock Community Campus – which combines an Early Learning Centre, primary and secondary school. There is one all-through establishment dedicated to learners with Additional Support Needs - Lockhart Campus, which was opened in 2021, with six other facilities also providing services for children and young people with additional support for learning needs.

Early Years

There are 36 early years classes located across North Ayrshire primary schools and five Early Years Centres operated by the Council. These are:

- Castlepark Early Years Centre, Irvine
- Dalry Early Years Centre, Dalry
- Largs Early Years Centre within Largs Campus
- Marress Early Years Centre, Irvine
- Springvale Early Years Centre, Saltcoats

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Additionally, there are 16 private early years providers. Funded early learning and childcare (ELC) is available to all three and four-year-olds in Scotland and eligible two-year-olds. The entitlement is 1140 hours per year and there are three main operating models: (term time; AM/PM; or two-and-half days).

Unlike with schools, there are no catchment areas for early years establishments. Parents and carers are asked to select up to three suitable establishments when enrolling their child for an early years place. Early Learning and Childcare admissions are managed through a central allocation procedure and includes a priority banding system to ensure places are allocated fairly, based on identified needs and circumstances. This priority banding policy was [updated in October 2025](#) [CD211].

Against a background of falling birth rates, taking into account current uptake of places, and with the input of private sector partners in the Authority area, a recent review of Early Years capacity across North Ayrshire undertaken by Education Service has concluded that demand over the next four years can be met. Early Years capacity will continue to be closely monitored. Demand is measured based upon the number of births and Public Health Scotland data records.

Key data on the condition, capacity and suitability of the learning estate in North Ayrshire is submitted annually to the Scottish Government as part of the School Estates Core Facts Survey. The reported data for each establishment, published by the Scottish Government in September 2025, is set out the 'North Ayrshire Council Learning Estate: Information for LDP3 Evidence Report' [CD212] data prepared by the NAC Education Service and is summarised below:

Condition

A measure of the current state of the fabric and of safety and security of each establishment is given in the form of a rating between A to D. Condition surveys are undertaken at least every 5 years but are reviewed quarterly during the interim period between surveys, as part of the management of the learning estate.

The condition of the majority – 55 out of 59 establishments in 2024 – of schools in North Ayrshire are rated 'Satisfactory' (B). Ardrossan Academy is Category D and is due for replacement as part of a new Community Campus. Springside Primary School was reported as 'C' in May 2025 and consideration is being given to the actions required to restore the rating to a 'B' as soon as possible. Both Montgomerie Park and Moorpark Primary Schools are brand new buildings, opened in August and October 2024, and are rated 'A'

Occupancy

North Ayrshire Council applies '[Determining primary school capacity: guidance for local authorities](#)' [CD213] in calculating the reported planning capacity for each primary school. For secondary schools, a formula is used to determine planning capacity which includes an allowance for required timetabling of spaces. Each year, the school census roll number reported for that session is divided by the capacity figure to find the occupancy rate of each building. Full occupancy of 100 percent is

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

rarely achieved due to school size, the number of available classrooms and differences in class sizes for different stages and composite classes. It should be noted that where the occupancy rate exceeds 87 percent, schools can experience operational difficulties.

Average primary school occupancy within North Ayrshire as reported in May 2025 was 66.2 percent - this is just below the current national average of 71.4 percent. Table 27 provides an overview of occupancy, with the published occupancy of all schools provided in the 'North Ayrshire Council Learning Estate: Information for LDP3 Evidence Report' data

Table 27 – Overview of Primary and Secondary Occupancy (2025)

Occupancy (2024)	Number of primary schools	Number of secondary schools
<50 percent	7	1
50 to 75 percent	33	3
75 to 90 percent	10	5
90 to 100 percent	0	0
Over 100 percent	0	0

Only one school in North Ayrshire has a published occupancy for 2024/25 of 87 percent or higher, Annick Primary School in Irvine. This school is noted to have a declining roll projection, a direct result of the opening of Montgomerie Park Primary School.

Occupancy provides a snapshot of the pupil numbers in schools at a point in time. North Ayrshire Council also considers the 'sufficiency' of the number of places within each school catchment area. This supports the management of the learning estate in line with evolving demand by taking account of the potential number of pupils who may attend schools, based on the number of dwellings in each school catchment area. The Education Service has developed a calculation which takes the number of existing dwellings and active developments within the school catchment area and the three-year average locality ratio of actual pupils to homes. The number of homes is multiplied by the local average number of pupils per home to provide an 'expected' number of pupils for the catchment. This is compared to the school capacity to provide an indication of schools which are at risk of exceeding their capacity, based on this calculation.

Alongside this calculation, individual school roll projections are updated annually once pupil census information is finalised and issued. The forecasting school rolls considers the following:

- Pupil Census data
- Local birth data
- Community Health Index data from Public Health Scotland
- Early Years' data, including intended primary school, if provided by parents on registration

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

- Placing request trends
- Housing Land Audit projections
- Stay-on rates for secondary school pupils

Using all of the inputs above, schools are noted as having either increasing, static or decreasing rolls.

The Education Service use a specific 'child per home' ratio for proposed new housing developments to calculate the likely number of new pupils coming forward from the housing. Analysis has shown that typically an average of 0.31 children per home, up until around year nine of any development are generated and then numbers start to fall back to the local long-term average. While some developments have reached as many as 0.45 children per home at their peak, the applied ratio has worked in principle and is re-checked with each major development within the authority area for accuracy, as well as benchmarking with other local authorities.

Based on the school sufficiency measure and taking account current occupancy and new housing developments with school catchment areas, the current capacity of North Ayrshire's educational establishments is summarised below:

- **Schools with capacity**
 - All schools within the Garnock Valley locality
 - All schools on the Isle of Arran, except Corrie Primary School
 - Lawthorn Primary School
 - Skelmorlie Primary School
- **Schools with limited capacity**
 - Six secondary schools (Ardrossan, Auchenhavie, Greenwood, Kilwinning, Largs and St. Matthews)
 - 29 primary schools (see 'North Ayrshire Council Learning Estate: Information for LDP3 Evidence Report')
- **Schools without capacity**
 - Castlepark Primary School, Irvine – The school merged with John Galt Primary School 2012, absorbing its catchment area upon its closure. Despite a four-classroom extension being added, the school breached its capacity in 2018. Numbers have been reducing, however, development of the 200 homes at Ayrshire Central, currently under construction, will take this school to its limit in terms of sufficiency.
 - Fairlie Primary School – This small five-class school has seen its roll increase by 51 children over the last seven years, resulting in a six-class structure and the conversion of a small general purpose room into a classroom. The roll continues to grow as a direct result of new homes and all parent/carers now choosing their non-denominational provision in the village, rather than the denominational provision.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

- Irvine Royal Academy – Montgomerie Park has contributed around 600 new homes to this school catchment to date, with a further 500 planned, the majority of which are concentrated over the next three years. A reduction in placing requests made out of the school compounds increased demand for places here, which is being closely monitored against the school capacity.
- Mayfield Primary School, Saltcoats – a significant sized development of 370 homes adjacent to this single stream school, means that many more new children are expected to enrol at the school. The P1 intake has been capped here in order to protect spaces for these new children. The new homes take this school to its limit in terms of the sufficiency measure.
- Montgomerie Park Primary School – the school opened in August 2024 and its catchment covers the adjacent area, as well as the Knadgerhill area. In planning the new school capacity, all of the homes mentioned above were taken into account. P1 at the school has been capped in order to protect places for catchment children, expected to come forward in high numbers over the next three years.
- Pennyburn Primary School, Kilwinning – a development of 426 homes at West Byrehill, Pennyburn takes this school sufficiency measure to its limit. Numbers here will be continually reviewed in order to assess actual impact against expected numbers.
- St. Anthony's Primary School, Saltcoats – as Mayfield Primary School, above.
- West Kilbride Primary School – 220 units being built at Portencross Road have resulted in a developer contribution toward a school hall. The expected numbers from this development take this school sufficiency measure to its limit. Numbers here will be continually reviewed in order to assess actual impact against expected numbers.

Identified future capacity issues

Roll projections – which consider HLA projections – indicate that seven schools in North Ayrshire have an increasing school roll. Five of these schools are considered not to have capacity for future housing and are rated 'Red': Montgomerie Park Primary School, Irvine; Fairlie Primary School; Mayfield Primary School; West Kilbride Primary School plus Irvine Royal Academy.

Most schools in North Ayrshire (70 percent) are expected to maintain rolls around their current level. Three of these schools are noted not to have capacity for future (unprogrammed) housing: Castlepark Primary School, Irvine; Pennyburn Primary School, Kilwinning; and St. Anthony's Primary School, Saltcoats.

The Planning Service meets quarterly with the Education Service and Housing Service to monitor the impact of the affordable housebuilding programme and private sector housebuilding on the capacity of schools. Detail on the number of new homes programmed to be built within each school catchment area, taken from the 2025

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

HLA, is included within the 'North Ayrshire Council Learning Estate: Information for LDP3 Evidence Report' spreadsheet.

Suitability

Suitability is a measure of how well a school building and its grounds facilitate the delivery of the education curriculum. It should be noted that suitability should be assessed as distinct from condition, that is, the assessment is carried out under the assumption that building condition is 'Good'. In essence, suitability looks at how schools use the building that they occupy.

Most schools in North Ayrshire are ranked 'Good' or 'Satisfactory' meaning they are performing well and operating efficiently and the school buildings support the delivery of services to children and communities or well but with minor problems. Three schools are rated 'Poor' for suitability for school session 2024 to 25: Ardrossan Academy and Winton Primary School, which are being replaced as part of the Ardrossan Community Campus project; and Corrie Primary School. A 'Poor' rank means the school is not operating optimally and/or has major problems meaning the school buildings impede the delivery of activities that are needed for children and communities in the school.

School Estate investment

Despite the challenging economic landscape, North Ayrshire Council has continued to make significant investment provision within its learning estate. In recent years this has included a new primary school at Montgomerie Park, Irvine, planned as part of the Council's capital investment strategy to support housing-led growth within this Strategic Development Area. Montgomerie Park can accommodate 342 primary pupils and up to 47 early years pupils. This school does not have capacity for further housing development within the catchment, beyond what is programmed within the Housing Land Audit.

Moorpark Primary School in Kilbirnie was also replaced and opened in October 2024. The school has capacity built in to accommodate new homes within the catchment.

The 'Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Programme' (ELCEP) across the learning estate has seen improvement works of varying scale take place across 42 establishments to allow the Council to meet the needs of expanding the provision to 1,140 hours per child, annually. The major project has been the transformation of Marress House from a vacant office building into a new Early Years Centre and Training Base. Total expenditure across all 42 ELCEP projects has been in excess of £11.5 million.

A new all-through education and community Campus is planned to open in Ardrossan in 2027. This project will see the merger of Ardrossan Academy and Winton Primary School, along with community leisure facilities, a shared school/public library and accommodation for Health and Social Care staff within the building. The new campus will offer capacity for up to 1400 secondary and primary school pupils, replacing the current available capacity of 1762 places across both

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

schools. The current combined current roll is 881. Around 50 percent funding for this project was obtained through the Scottish Government's Learning Estate Investment Programme (LEIP).

The Council is also committed to ensuring that the learning estate in North Ayrshire is fully prepared for the introduction of Universal Free School Meals (UFSM). A number of projects to improve kitchen and dining accommodation have been identified, with improvement works planned for completion across all project sites by 2029. Beyond this programme and investment in Information and Communications Technology, no further school extensions, replacements or builds are included within the Council's [Capital Investment Programme 2025/26 to 2033/34](#) [CD214].

Energy

Electricity

Grid capacity can be a significant constraint to new development, including renewable energy projects, in terms of connection to the grid. The UK Government and Ofgem have published a joint [Connections Action Plan](#) [CD215] which sets out actions to significantly reduce connection timescales and ensure a timely transition to net zero. This seeks to address the significant delays in network connections by removing stalled projects to release capacity for viable projects and ensure that remaining capacity is better utilised.

The UK Government is looking to support an overall shift from a smaller number of large-scale generators to a more balanced number of generators. Increasingly, the grid is required to respond to the intermittent, fluctuating production from renewable power, and additional energy plants and energy storage are required to facilitate the transition to renewable and low carbon energy generation. Battery storage proposals offer benefits in terms of grid management however they still require a grid connection. Proposals are therefore increasingly required to demonstrate viability to secure a connection, to ensure that speculative proposals do not take up grid capacity.

Power distribution is serviced by Scottish Power Energy Networks (SPEN) on North Ayrshire's mainland and Scottish and Southern Energy Networks (SSEN) on the Cumbraes and Arran. SPEN have produced an interactive indicative [SP Distribution Heat Map](#) showing the main areas of constraint in terms of grid supply point and primary substations. For Extra High Voltage lines (EHV), this indicates that the whole of the network within North Ayrshire is constrained. For High Voltage (HV) lines, which serve local areas primarily at a street level, this is equally as constrained. For constrained areas of the grid, detailed network analysis is required to ascertain if a grid connection can be achieved. Broadly speaking, there are capacity issues across the Council area and beyond, which may impact energy generation projects coming onstream, particularly for the short-medium term.

SPEN have also produced a [Network Development Plan](#) [CD216] which sets out their approach to upgrading electricity grid infrastructure including distribution plants, overhead lines, and transmission projects. There are three areas identified within North Ayrshire: Hunterston Farm; Kilwinning; and Saltcoats (A & B). Expected by

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

2025/2026, Hunterston Farm will receive the installation of real time fault level monitoring equipment. At Kilwinning, flexibility services to manage thermal constraints are expected between 2024 and 2028. Currently underway, Saltcoats A is receiving installation of real time fault level monitoring equipment and replacement transformer. Planned for 2025/2027, Saltcoats B will have switchgear replacement as part of the switchgear modernisation programme.

SSEN produce Distribution Future Energy Scenarios (DEFS), an annual process which forecasts future load growth for both demand and generation. The output of the DEFS inform SSEN's Strategic Development Plans (SDPs) which provide information on long term electricity needs. There are two SDPs which cover North Ayrshire, Inverarnan which covers the Cumbraes, and Port Ann and Carradale which covers the isle of Arran.

SSEN have produced [Local Energy Net Zero Accelerator](#) (LENZA), a geospatial planning platform, to support informed decision making, including information on network capacity, building stock, and energy consumption. All the SSEN identified primary substations supply areas have been given a rating of green indicating that they have more than 5 percent headroom. The majority of secondary supply substations are also rated green, where there is information available, with two identified as red (more than 5 percent overloaded) on Arran at Tighenmenach and Ballygowan substations and Upper Kirkton on Cumbrae. LENZA also includes the same information for SPEN. All primary substations supply areas across NAC have a green rating. Where information is available for secondary supply substations, which is less than half, areas of constraint are identified around Skelmorlie, Kilwinning train station, south Stanecastle and Ayr Road in Irvine indicating 5 percent overloading. These areas identified as being overloaded or less than 5 percent headroom, will help aid in identifying suitability of future sites in LDP3.

NPF4 policy 11e) states that 'Grid capacity should not constrain renewable energy development. It is for developers to agree connections to the grid with the relevant network operator.' The grid capacity constraints do not have a direct bearing on the planning process. It is considered that the indirect impacts of this will be an increase in applications being resubmitted due to lapsing consents and the implications of upgraded grid infrastructure coming forward.

SSEN are investing over £15m in a project which will see the undergrounding of up to 90 kilometres of OHL in designated scenic areas across their distribution network. To date, approximately a dozen sites on Arran have been put forward for consideration of undergrounding, with the outcome currently pending.

Gas

The larger settlements within North Ayrshire's mainland are connected to the gas network. MSOA (Middle Layer Super Output Area) non-domestic gas demand is shown to be highest around the general area of Irvine, extending west to Stevenston and east towards Kilmaurs. It is typically lower in the rural area which stretches from the coast in land, above Irvine and below the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park. Domestic gas demand, at LSOA (Lower Layer Super Output Area) level is indicated

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

at being the highest around the north and west of the Three Towns, North of Largs and some rural pockets in the east and north of the region.

As of April 2024, all new housing in Scotland must have a non-carbon-based heat source. This should result in zero direct emissions from new buildings through the avoidance of fossil fuels. New housing development should therefore not rely on gas for their utilities, LDP3 must be cognisant of this.

Digital infrastructure

[‘A changing nation: how Scotland will thrive in a digital world’](#) presents an updated digital strategy for Scotland [CD217]. Key actions set out in the strategy aim to support and accelerate the country's journey towards being an inclusive, ethical and sustainable digital nation. In this context, NPF4 seeks to encourage, promote and facilitate the roll-out of digital infrastructure to unlock the potential of all our places and the economy, ensuring appropriate, universal and future proofed digital infrastructure across the Scotland.

North Ayrshire Council has undertaken an assessment of its digital maturity, challenges and ambition as the first step of a comprehensive digital connectivity strategy for the area [CD218]. The Council's ambition is to become a ‘smart connected place’ underpinned by highly available, future proof connectivity. Smarter connected places can deliver positive social, economic and environmental impacts and can pave the way for enhanced service delivery.

In evaluating ‘digital maturity’, the state of digital connectivity across North Ayrshire has been assessed to provide an insight into the existing digital connectivity landscape within the Council and more widely across the area, identifying coverage gaps and the challenges and aspirations for enhancement.

Overall, North Ayrshire has been found to exhibit a digital attainment gap in its digital infrastructure landscape, use case development, approach to open data and leadership. North Ayrshire's full fibre availability (65 percent) is above the Scottish (48 percent) and UK (58 percent) average but there are significant disparities across the area. The estimated minimum investment required to achieve near 100 percent full fibre availability is £13 to 26 million.

Table 28 – Fibre availability by Locality (September 2023)

Locality	Premises Count	Premises Served by fibre	Percentage of premises unserved
Arran	3,348	2,645	20 percent
Garnock Valley	10,580	9,230	13 percent
Irvine	20,264	8,214	59 percent
Kilwinning	8,590	1,644	81 percent
North Coast and Cumbraes	12,344	1,705	86 percent
Three Towns	17,878	16,033	10 percent

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

In terms of 4G coverage, there is 96 percent outdoor availability from four mobile network operators (MNOs) with only 57 percent geographic coverage. No areas in North Ayrshire have 5G coverage from all MNOs; the Scottish average is 11 percent coverage. Expanding 4G and 5G - focusing on extending geographical coverage for 4G and 5G connectivity to reach underserved areas, including Arran, and encouraging multiple operators to provide comprehensive 5G coverage; encouraging investment in fibre infrastructure to enhance high-speed internet availability and reliability for businesses and households in addition to establishing outdoor public Wi-Fi hotspots in key public spaces, parks, and high-traffic areas to improve digital access for residents and visitors are identified as recommendations to enhance digital readiness and to create a more inclusive and digitally empowered and thriving digital economy.

Water

Information, in the form of GIS data, was supplied by Scottish Water in August 2025 relating to the capacity of both water treatment works (WTW) as well as wastewater treatment works (WwTW) for the North Ayrshire Council area. Facilities are given the status of either: 'capacity currently available' or 'potential future investment required'. It should be noted that these facilities are not all fully located within North Ayrshire Council's boundary but extend into neighbouring authorities to the north, east and south.

Of the eight WTW's, six (75 percent) currently have available capacity. Two have been given the status of potential future investment required and are both located on Arran.

Of the 35 WwTW's, only eight (22.86 percent) have been given the status of capacity currently available. The wastewater treatment works with existing capacity are located in Fairlie, Stevenston, Blackwaterfoot, Brodick, Kinloch, Lamblash and Meadowhead plus the Inverclyde WwTW, serving Skelmorlie.

Scottish Water are required to identify and provide new strategic capacity to meet the demand of new housing and the domestic requirements of commercial and industrial development. Factors such as the total number of proposed developments, their scale and their distance from treatment works will impact Scottish Water's ability to service them and the need for future growth investment. We will engage with Scottish Water on the scale and location of any future proposed developments identified within the status of potential future investment required to inform their strategic plans and potential future growth investment priorities.

Scottish Water have also installed four 'Top Up Taps' in North Ayrshire, at Brodick, Irvine Harbourside, Largs and Millport, as part of the wider 'Your Water Your Life' campaign. The campaign is aimed at highlighting the vital role water plays in the lives of people across the Scotland and encourages everyone to refill bottles and drink water, described as the 'nation's greatest natural resource', straight from the tap. The locations of these taps can be [viewed online](#).

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Summary of Stakeholder Engagement

We have engaged with relevant infrastructure providers to obtain the evidence presented in this schedule: NHS Ayrshire & Arran and the North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership (NAHSCP); NAC Education; Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) and SP Energy Networks (SPEN); NAC's Digital Renewal Manager and Scottish Water.

The Strategic Planning Team at North Ayrshire Council has quarterly meetings with NHS Ayrshire & Arran's Head of Property Services, Strategy & Partnerships and Health Improvement Lead and attends NAHSCP Property Group Meetings. Engagement with the HSCP Strategic Planning and Equalities Team Manager has provided evidence to inform the Liveable Places, Infrastructure, and Housing schedules.

A draft of the full Evidence Report was shared with NHS Ayrshire & Arran on 7 October 2025. Within a combined response received on 3 November 2026, the Infrastructure & Support Services directorate raise the issue of developer contributions, requesting provision for developer contributions towards health is included within the Evidence Report. Reference is made to the established position NHS Ayrshire & Arran has with East Ayrshire Council under their LDP, supported by supplementary guidance. NHS Ayrshire and Arran requested the same calculation methodology is adopted with North Ayrshire Council and referenced within the Evidence Report.

Comment was also made in relation to the whole system planning process. This section of the Evidence Report has been updated accordingly.

Homes for Scotland's comments [HFS4_14112025] on the Infrastructure schedule highlight the absence of a methodology to determine the capacity for the number of patients registered at a general practitioner (GP) practice and the number of clinicians required to manage delivery of General Medical Services based on the number of patients registered with the practice. Homes for Scotland note, in support of local living and maximising the use of existing assets. it is likely that more detailed analysis of local healthcare provision will be required. This is accepted within the Evidence Report.

Engagement with local communities has indicated that access to GPs and the capacity of medical practices is a key concern, particularly in the context of new housing development. This is also reflected in the engagement carried out by the Health and Social Care Partnership (see Liveable Places schedule for summary), which identifies access to services the most consistent concern among North Ayrshire residents.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Summary of Implications for the Proposed Plan

As part of an 'infrastructure first' approach, LDP3 must consider infrastructure constraints and needs in planning future development and identify the key investment priorities.

Health Care

Primary healthcare services are under considerable pressure across the whole of North Ayrshire, due to a variety of factors. This applies to both the capacity and condition of existing infrastructure, including buildings, to deliver primary health care services. NHS Ayrshire and Arran and the North Ayrshire HSCP are in the process of reviewing practice operating models, quality indicators and identifying improvement work, which in turn will highlight future accommodation requirements to meet these challenges and deliver on the long-term 'Caring for Ayrshire' ambition. LDP3 will need to reflect emerging solutions to the modernisation of the primary healthcare estate.

As raised by NHS Ayrshire & Arran, developer contributions may be required to support investment in the primary healthcare estate, where this is required to create capacity for future housing development.

Should developer contributions for new or extended medical practices within the Irvine/Kilwinning/Dundonald cluster, noted to require a long-term solution in light of pressures from new housing developments, or elsewhere in North Ayrshire, any contributions must be in compliance with the tests within NPF4 Infrastructure Policy 18 and Circular 3/2012: Planning Obligations and Good Neighbour Agreements [Post approval note: this guidance was revoked and replaced by [Planning Circular 4/2025 Planning obligations and good neighbour agreements](#) on 12 December 2025]. It is noted that seeking contributions towards healthcare could make development viability challenging, especially if this is alongside potential affordable housing contributions.

Further evidence is required to inform LDP3 spatial strategy; site allocations and support any approach to developer contributions towards primary health care infrastructure, in the context of NHS Ayrshire and Arran's Strategic Assessment and whole-system infrastructure plans, which are expected to emerge next year. We will continue to work alongside NHS Ayrshire and Arran to understand implications for the emerging LDP3 and to inform the Proposed Plan, noting the importance of this issue to local communities.

Education

Managing the school estate to match the evolving demand for school places with supply to deliver education and other services is a major challenge for all local authorities. In North Ayrshire, school rolls overall are declining in line with falling birth rates. Conversely, increased housebuilding is expected to create capacity issues in some locations; as settlements have expanded, demand for school places in some towns has shifted away from town centres and historical school catchment areas.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

This has been addressed, in part, within Irvine with the opening of a new primary school at Montgomerie Park.

The availability of resources in a difficult financial climate for local government will impact on future learning estate provision within North Ayrshire. The anticipated end of Public Private Partnership contracts which manage and maintain four schools in 2037 and a not-for-profit, 'Design, Build, Finance, Maintain' (DBFM) contract, due to end in 2043, is also relevant.

The current occupancy, school roll projections and the calculation of the 'sufficiency' of the number of school places within each catchment area will be important considerations in planning the location of new housing in North Ayrshire. This applies especially within catchments where schools do not have capacity or only limited capacity due to occupancy or the sufficiency of the number places (based on the number of existing catchment homes plus new housing under construction), including where larger developments are on site and an increase to the school roll is forecast.

The Proposed Plan should allocate housing development within school catchments where there is capacity within the catchment schools (primary and secondary) or where there is an agreeable solution, in line with the infrastructure first principle. Options within catchments with school capacity issues may include:

- Phasing – In some instances it may be possible to accommodate new development without creating additional capacity at a school by controlling the phasing of completions in line with roll projections. This may be possible as a school's roll can fluctuate over time. Where agreed as a solution, phasing can be controlled by condition limiting the number of units delivered each year.
- Reconfiguration – Reflecting the Council's approach to delivering teaching and learning and practical issues, for example class formation, options for repurposing accommodation within a school to create additional teaching space may be explored where additional capacity is required, based on an assessment of the existing accommodation at a school.
- School extension – The creation of additional capacity within a school may require an extension, where feasible. In addition to classrooms, this may also include the requirement for additional accommodation, for example dining/assembly halls, general purpose teaching rooms, staff room, activity areas and toilets, in accordance with current standards.
- Rezoning or new school – in larger settlements, the rezoning of school catchments or the creation of a new school are options where there are capacity issues arising from new development and, in the case of rezoning, where there is availability of provision in another school which is close to the development. Such proposals are likely to be longer-term, strategic solutions and will only be considered within the wider context of

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

the spatial strategy of LDP3, the school estate and overall education provision.

The impact of proposed housing development on the learning estate, along with potential actions to enable new development where school capacity is restricted, will be assessed by the Education Service as part of the preparation of LDP3, including site appraisal. Where options require capital investment because of proposed development, contributions may be required from developers in accordance with Planning Circular 3/2012 [Post approval note: this guidance was revoked and replaced by [Planning Circular 4/2025 Planning obligations and good neighbour agreements](#) on 12 December 2025]. The capacity, occupancy, sufficiency of places and condition of the school estate will be a consideration when developing the spatial strategy at the Proposed Plan stage.

Energy

North Ayrshire has been the focus of several energy infrastructure projects and proposals in recent years, including battery storage. The location and infrastructure at Hunterston are identified as offering potential for electricity generation from renewables. Grid capacity should not constrain development. It is for developers to agree connections to the grid with the relevant network operator. LDP3's spatial strategy should consider the scope for more localised renewable energy developments and local connections in the short-to medium term, in line with support for a transition to renewable and low carbon energy generation.

Digital Infrastructure

LDP3 should support the delivery of digital infrastructure, including fixed line and mobile connectivity, particularly in areas with gaps in connectivity and barriers to digital access. In North Ayrshire, Irvine, Kilwinning and the North Coast and Cumbraes localities lag behind in terms of the proportion of premises with fibre internet.

Water

Scottish Water are required to identify and provide new strategic capacity to meet the demand of new housing and the domestic requirements of commercial and industrial development. A high-level snapshot of current capacity indicates potential future investment may be required, however, factors such as the total number of proposed developments, their scale and their distance from treatment works will impact Scottish Water's ability to service them and the need for future growth investment.

We will continue to engage with Scottish Water on the scale and location of future proposed developments in North Ayrshire to inform their strategic plans and potential future growth investment priorities.

Statements of Agreement / Dispute

No specific statements from stakeholders have been received highlighting agreement or disputes with the evidence presented in this schedule.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Links to Evidence

CD046	North Ayrshire HSCP Strategic Needs Assessment 2025
CD100	<u>North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership, 'Caring Together' Strategic Commissioning Plan 2022 to 2030 (March 2024)</u>
CD205	<u>A National Mission with Local Impact: Infrastructure Investment Plan for Scotland 2021 to 22 to 2025 to 26 (February 2021)</u>
CD206	Public Health Scotland – North Ayrshire HSCP Profile (March 2023)
CD207	<u>NHS Ayrshire and Arran, Dental Practices Accepting New NHS Patients (September 2025)</u>
CD208	<u>NHS Ayrshire and Arran Board – Primary Care Update – 8 December 2025</u>
CD209	<u>NHS Ayrshire and Arran, Delivery Plan 2025 to 2026 (August 2025)</u>
CD210	NHS Ayrshire and Arran, Primary Care Services and Premises Review – Final Report (July 2024)
CD211	Cabinet Report - Review of the priority banding policy for Early Years admissions – 28 October 2025
CD212	North Ayrshire Council Learning Estate: Information for LDP3 Evidence Report (November 2025)
CD213	<u>Determining primary school capacity: guidance for local authorities (October 2014)</u>
CD214	<u>North Ayrshire Council Capital Investment Programme 2025/26 to 2033/34</u>
CD215	<u>Connections Action Plan, November 2023</u>
CD216	<u>Scottish Power Energy Networks, Network Development Plan (May 2024)</u>
CD217	<u>A changing nation: how Scotland will thrive in a digital world (March 2021)</u>
CD218	An Assessment of North Ayrshire's Digital Maturity, Challenges and Ambition (March 2024)

Site Appraisal Methodology

[Local development planning guidance](#) advises that a site appraisal methodology, to be used to appraise sites and inform allocations for the Proposed Plan, can usefully be established at the Evidence Report stage [para. 108]. The proposed methodology to be used by North Ayrshire Council in the preparation of LDP3 is set out in this section of the Evidence Report.

Summary of Site Appraisal Methodology

Site allocations – land (or buildings) identified in the local development plan for a specified use – are an important component of the development plan. An allocation confirms the principle of future development as part of the LDP's role in defining where development should and should not take place. In respect to housing land, LDP3 must allocate deliverable land to meet the 10-year Local Housing Land Requirement, in locations that create quality places for people to live.

Local development plans are required to manage the development and use of land in the long-term public interest by enabling development that contributes to sustainable development and seeks to achieve the national outcomes. As demonstrated by the breadth of evidence presented in this report, this encompasses the consideration of a wide range of environmental, social and economic objectives. In this context, we have sought to develop a straightforward site appraisal methodology that allows an overview of environmental impact, deliverability and community benefits to be highlighted and considered.

A three-stage appraisal approach is proposed. Stage 1 of the site appraisal methodology is aligned with the SEA Assessment Framework set out in the Environment Evidence Paper [CD109], which incorporates the SEA scoping report. Stage 2 considers the deliverability of the proposal, taking account of constraints to development and available infrastructure. Stage 3 considers the benefits of development, including in relation to community wealth building.

While a score will be assigned against each topic, it is not the intention to aggregate or average the scores for each site at Stage 1, 2 or 3, or to provide an overall score. The site appraisal is not intended to be an empirical exercise, rather, it will inform the site selection process by highlighting potential issues for each site, which may warrant further investigation, mitigation or enhancement. Given the number of topics and narrow scoring range, the comparison of aggregate or average scores could obscure potentially significant effects and does not allow for more nuanced assessment. For a similar reason, no weighting of the individual topics is proposed.

All existing sites allocated within LDP2 (which are not complete or under construction); sites which come forward through the 'Call for Ideas' exercise; and other sites identified by the Council with development potential will be subject to assessment – no site will automatically roll forward from one plan to the next without being assessed. The outputs of the appraisal will inform the preparation of LDP3.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

It is the responsibility of North Ayrshire Council as the Planning Authority to undertake the three stages of the site appraisal in accordance with the methodology. Individuals, community groups, landowners and/or developers promoting sites via the 'Call for Ideas' are not expected to assess their sites but are encouraged to provide information to assist the Council in the appraisal.

A Site Assessment Report will be prepared for all proposed sites (including LDP2 sites which are not complete or under development which the Council may consider rolling forward), setting out the relevant evidence and assessment and will inform the Council's allocation of sites in the Proposed Plan as well as masterplans, development briefs, site specific technical/infrastructure requirements and the statutory Delivery Programme.

Stage 1 – Environmental Assessment

Stage 1 of the site appraisal will assess each site against the nine SEA objectives set out in SEA Assessment Framework, using the assessment questions. For each of the nine topics, a score of between -2 and 2 will be awarded, where 0 equals no or a neutral impact.

Table 29 – Stage 1 scoring

Stage 1 Assessment	Score
Significantly positive	2
Positive	1
Neutral	0
Adverse	-1
Significantly adverse	-2

In relation to water, the flood risk of every site must be fully understood at the time of appraisal. This can be via the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, for example the site is clearly shown to be within or out with an area of flood risk or if not, that a submitted Flood Risk Assessment has been undertaken.

The duration of the effects identified, and any potential cumulative and/or synergistic effects, will be considered as part of the SEA once preferred options and reasonable alternatives have been established. This will be set out in the Environmental Report. This stage of the SEA will be informed by the site appraisal and evaluate the combined significance of any overlapping effects and judge whether, together, they result in a greater effect than would occur individually. Synergies can result in new effects and could magnify individual effects, both adversely and advantageously.

Stage 2 – Deliverability Assessment

In addition to being place-based and people-centred, Local Development Plans should be delivery-focused. All sites proposed to be allocated for development in plans will be assessed for their deliverability through Stage 2 of the site appraisal process. Taking an 'infrastructure-first' approach is central to this: considering the infrastructure implications at every stage of the plan making process. Infrastructure considerations will inform site selection and the evolution of the spatial strategy.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Stage 2 of the site appraisal methodology considers the deliverability of sites by assessing key factors relating to delivery, including the capacity and condition of relevant infrastructure. NPF4 defines 'deliverable land' as 'land that is free from constraints or there is a commitment to overcome constraints'. In the context of housing land, the definition extends to development that is able to be delivered in the period identified for the site within the Deliverable Housing Land Pipeline. LDP3 will be required to allocate Deliverable Land to meet the 10-year Local Housing Land Requirement. The Deliverable Housing Land Pipeline is the expected sequencing of the Local Housing Land Requirement over the short (1 to 3 years), medium (4 to 6 years) and long-term (7 to 10 years), to be set out in the Delivery Programme.

Information gathered at this stage and the assessment will inform both site selection and the Delivery Programme. Sites which are proposed to be allocated should be free of constraints as far as possible. Where constraints exist, sites can still be regarded as deliverable providing that the actions required to remove any constraints are established and there is a commitment and timescale to do so. The actions required to deliver allocated sites will be set out in the Delivery Programme.

A score of between -2 and 2 will be awarded against each criterion as follows:

Table 30 – Stage 2 scoring

Stage 2 Assessment	Score
Objective met	2
Objective can be met	1
Neutral or not applicable	0
Objective unlikely to be met	-1
Objective cannot be met	-2

Stage 3 – Community Benefit and Wealth Building Assessment

North Ayrshire Council launched Scotland's first Community Wealth Building Strategy in 2020. Community Wealth Building is viewed as a key mechanism for delivering a wellbeing economy for North Ayrshire – an economy which works for people and planet. This aligns with the requirement for development planning to manage the development and use of land in the long-term public interest, contributing to sustainable development and the achievement of the National Performance Framework National Outcomes which describe the kind of Scotland we want to see.

Policy 25 of NPF4 supports development proposals which contribute to community wealth building strategies and are consistent with local economic priorities. Accordingly, stage 3 of the site appraisal methodology considers how proposals can provide benefit to local communities, including its potential contribution to the five pillars of our Community Wealth Building Strategy concerning diverse ownership, fair employment, financial power, land and assets and procurement.

The same scoring mechanism as at Stage 2 will apply.

The Site Appraisal Matrix is provided at [Appendix 2](#).

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

Summary of Stakeholder Engagement

We launched a 'Call for Ideas' to inform the next stage of the local development planning process in April 2025. At the same time, we published and sought comments on a draft site assessment methodology and matrix.

On 16 July 2025, the views of the SEA consultation authorities – Historic Environment Scotland, NatureScot and SEPA – were sought on the site appraisal methodology alongside the draft Sustainable Places (Topic 3) schedule. Meetings were held with NatureScot on 29 July 2025 and Historic Environment Scotland on 13 August 2025.

Historic Environment Scotland confirmed it is content with the proposed site assessment methodology, based on the understanding that it is not the intention to aggregate and average the scores for each environmental topic. This has been clarified, above. Advice was given not to factor in potential mitigation or enhancement measures in the scoring. We have removed this from the matrix [HES3_15082025].

NatureScot and SEPA have shared a site assessment template and site appraisal guidance. Homes for Scotland have also provided a site assessment methodology template, alongside a guide to deliverability [CD220]. We have reviewed both templates in creating our site appraisal methodology, for example including the conditions identified by Homes for Scotland as indicating deliverability within the objectives at Stage 2.

Homes of Scotland support the three-stage approach but have expressed concerns regarding the limited consideration given to the weighting of different factors (with the position that viability and financial factors should be given significant weight) and the application of the assessment. As noted above, the site appraisal is intended to inform the site selection process by highlighting potential issues for each site, which may warrant further investigation, mitigation or enhancement. Accordingly, it is not proposed to include topic weighting or adopt an overly restrictive assessment at this early stage, in order to ensure the process is proportionate. Where additional information is reasonably required and not available, this will be sought from site proposers.

Iceni on behalf of Mountrose Properties and Lovell Strategic Land have asked that the site assessment methodology is amended to consider the length of time a site has been on the housing land supply, with the inference that sites which have been on the 'register' for more than ten years and lack any development activity are likely to be ineffective and undeliverable and should be negatively weighted. We consider that the deliverability and viability of proposed developments sites can be adequately assessed by reviewing sites against the objectives set out at Stage 2, without reference to the length of time a site has formed part of the housing land supply. It is the current position which is of most relevance.

Iceni also encourage the site assessment methodology to 'bring forward' consideration of the potential for sites to deliver affordable housing and give

North Ayrshire’s third Local Development Plan

additional weighting to sites which would bring forward proportions of affordable housing above the 25 percent requirement outlined in NPF4. We do not intend to assign a weighting to topics within the appraisal methodology for the reasons stated. Stages 1 to 3 will be undertaken concurrently.

Summary of Implications for the Proposed Plan

We have proposed a site assessment methodology, supported by the matrix included at Appendix 2, which will inform the spatial strategy of Proposed Plan and site selection in a proportionate, pragmatic and transparent manner. The process will highlight potential issues for each site, which may warrant further investigation, mitigation or enhancement.

It is acknowledged that there is a requirement to balance different environmental, social and economic objectives and consider site deliverability to deliver the objectives of NPF4 and sustainable development. For this reason, a rigid framework and approach to site appraisal is not proposed at this stage.

The site appraisal methodology is central to the allocation of enough deliverable land to meet the 10-year Local Housing Land Requirement, in locations that create quality places for people to live and are consistent with local living principles and an infrastructure first approach (see Topic 2). The transport appraisal (Topic 4) will also inform this process.

It will also be important to establish the views of the public, key agencies and other stakeholders early in the site selection process in the preparation of the Proposed Plan. Historic Environment Scotland, NatureScot and SEPA have provided guidance on their role in engaging with initial site appraisal.

Statements of Agreement / Dispute

No statements from stakeholders have been received highlighting agreement or disputes with the Site Appraisal Methodology.

Links to Evidence

CD219	Key Agencies, Local Development Plan: Site Assessment and SEA Checklist (updated 6 February 2024)
CD220	Homes for Scotland, Site Assessment Methodology

Position Statement

The following Position Statement is provided to assist with the Gate Check, as recommended by the Planning and Environmental Appeals Division (DPEA). It summarises the implications for the Proposed Plan and the main areas where the evidence is disputed or uncertain.

Summary of the Implications for the Proposed Plan

The Evidence Report sets out North Ayrshire Council's view on the implications of the evidence gathered and the views of stakeholders for the Proposed Plan in relation to the six topic areas plus the evaluation of LDP2 and proposed site appraisal methodology. This section seeks to bring together these implications, acknowledging the interrelationships between the topics in the overall aim of supporting the planning and delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places. It is not intended to be exhaustive but instead summarises the considerations for LDP3.

- LDP3 must address the twin reinforcing global climate emergency and nature crises. Reducing emissions, adapting to current and future risks of climate change and the promotion of nature recovery and restoration should underpin decisions made in the preparation of the Proposed Plan. LDP3 should encourage, promote and facilitate all forms of renewable, low-carbon and zero-emission energy generation and infrastructure. Blue and green infrastructure has a key role to play in achieving a range of environmental objectives, including in relation to climate change and biodiversity.
- A place-based approach must be taken to the preparation of LDP3. The plan should seek to create good quality places that promote people's health, happiness and wellbeing; reduce inequalities and are resilient to the effects of climate change. This approach should be joined-up, collaborative, and participative and inclusive.
- 20-minute neighbourhoods, and blue green infrastructure, with nature networks at their heart, are important devices for delivering new development in our urban areas that contributes to creating sustainable, liveable and productive places. The accessibility of development proposals should be assessed in the context of 'local living' and protecting, enhancing and expanding blue and green infrastructure assets and networks, including the North Ayrshire Nature Network.
- LDP3 must encourage, promote and facilitate the delivery of more high quality, affordable and sustainable homes, in the right locations, providing choice across tenures that meet the diverse housing needs of people and communities across North Ayrshire. We have identified an indicative Local Housing Land Requirement of 4,500 new homes over the LDP3 plan period to support this. Within this figure, there is a need to deliver new housing that will

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

meet the needs of a population which is growing older and for the continued delivery of affordable housing. Developer contributions are identified as a potential means of supporting this.

- Opportunities for the positive and sustainable reuse of brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings should be identified by LDP3, acknowledging that redevelopment will not always be the most appropriate use. Making productive use of existing buildings, places and infrastructure and optimising the use of land to provide services and resources will limit urban expansion.
- Informed by a Transport Appraisal, LDP3's spatial strategy must seek to reduce the need to travel unsustainably and take account of existing transport infrastructure capacity constraints.
- Through the actions of our Community Wealth Building (CWB) Strategy, we are already committed to embedding community wealth building within LDP3 to ensure future development takes account of local economic priorities, provides benefits for communities and helps deliver a wellbeing economy that works for people and planet and delivers social, economic and environmental justice for all. This will require a strategic approach which enables community benefits to be delivered by all development, not just Council or other Anchor institution projects.
- Infrastructure constraints and requirements and deliverability must be central to the preparation of the Proposed Plan as part of an 'infrastructure first' approach. The capacity of local services, primarily health care facilities, has been identified as a significant concern by local communities and we must work with the NHS and HSCP to support emerging models of care.

Summary of the evidence disputes and gaps

Topic 1 – Liveable Places

Disputed evidence

No disputes identified.

Further evidence required

No requirement for further evidence identified.

Topic 2 – Housing

Disputed evidence

Homes for Scotland support the uplift of 1,550 from the Minimum All-Tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR) to arrive at the proposed Local Housing Land Requirement (LHLR) of 4,500.

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

A dispute has been raised by Homes for Scotland regarding the Council's position that it is minded to introduce an affordable housing developer contribution policy (AHDC).

Further evidence required

The requirement for further evidence to support the development of an Affordable Housing Developer Contribution policy has been identified, including in relation to the impact any policy would have on development viability in North Ayrshire.

Topic 3 – Sustainable Places

Disputed evidence

Historic Environment Scotland, NatureScot and SEPA have confirmed that they are content with the evidence provided in the report and raise no disputes.

Iceni Projects Ltd on behalf of The Mac Mic Group disputes the evidence presented in the North Ayrshire Settlement Edge Landscape Sensitivity Study in relation to a specific site.

Further evidence required

The Council is in the process of identifying a nature network. The North Ayrshire Nature Network Strategy, approved in March 2025, outlines a methodology for developing the North Ayrshire Nature Network (NANN) and an action plan for its implementation and delivery. As an inherent component of blue and green infrastructure, the NANN will be central to LDP3 increasing ecological connectivity and restoration of nature.

The nature network will also inform decisions on the designation of green belt, noting that the functions of green belt include supporting these.

Work will continue throughout 2026 to map the NANN and we will align the preparation of LDP3 with this process to ensure the spatial strategy and site selection process is cognisant of the nature network.

NatureScot have identified a gap in the evidence moving forward relating to urban nature habitats and networks. This will be addressed, as appropriate, during the site assessment stage.

Topic 4 – Transport

Disputed evidence

Transport Scotland have confirmed that it is satisfied with the sufficiency of the transport evidence, which includes a commitment to undertake a transport appraisal and outlines the next steps.

Further evidence required

We are committed to producing an appropriate and effective transport appraisal of the Proposed Plan in line with the relevant transport appraisal guidance. The appraisal will adopt the 'infrastructure first' principles, focusing on the existing

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

infrastructure and prioritise sustainable travel consistent with the sustainable travel and investment hierarchies.

Topic 5 – Productive Places

Disputed evidence

No disputes identified.

Further evidence required

No requirement for further evidence identified.

Topic 6 – Infrastructure

Disputed evidence

No disputes identified.

Further evidence required

Further evidence is required to support any approach to developer contributions towards primary health care infrastructure, in the context of NHS Ayrshire and Arran's Strategic Assessment and whole-system infrastructure plans.

Appendix 1 – Evidence Index

The table below is included to assist in finding evidence relation to each NPF4 policy within the Evidence Report.

NPF4 Policy	Evidence Report Section
1. Tackling the climate and nature crises	Topic 3 – Sustainable Places
2. Climate mitigation and adaptation	Topic 3 – Sustainable Places
3. Biodiversity	Topic 3 – Sustainable Places
4. Natural places	Topic 3 – Sustainable Places
5. Soils	Topic 3 – Sustainable Places
6. Forestry, woodland and trees	Topic 3 – Sustainable Places
7. Historic assets and places	Topic 3 – Sustainable Places
8. Green belts	Topic 3 – Sustainable Places
9. Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings	Topic 3 – Sustainable Places
10. Coastal development	Topic 3 – Sustainable Places
11. Energy	Topic 3 – Sustainable Places
12. Zero waste	Topic 3 – Sustainable Places
13. Sustainable transport	Topic 4 – Transport
14. Design, quality and place	Topic 1 – Liveable Places
15. Local Living and 20-minute neighbourhoods	Topic 1 – Liveable Places
16. Quality homes	Topic 2 – Housing
17. Rural homes	Topic 2 – Housing
18. Infrastructure first	Topic 6 – Infrastructure
19. Heat and cooling	Topic 3 – Sustainable Places
20. Blue and green infrastructure	Topic 3 – Sustainable Places
21. Play, recreation and sport	Topic 1 – Liveable Places
22. Flood risk and water management	Topic 3 – Sustainable Places
23. Health and safety	Topic 1 – Liveable Places
24. Digital infrastructure	Topic 6 – Infrastructure
25. Community wealth building	Topic 5 – Productive Places
26. Business and industry	Topic 5 – Productive Places
27. City, town, local and community centres	Topic 5 – Productive Places
28. Retail	Topic 5 – Productive Places
29. Rural development	Topic 5 – Productive Places
30. Tourism	Topic 5 – Productive Places

North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan

NPF4 Policy	Evidence Report Section
31. Culture and creativity	Topic 5 – Productive Places
32. Aquaculture	Topic 5 – Productive Places
33. Minerals	Topic 5 – Productive Places

Appendix 2 – Site Appraisal Matrix

Stage 1 – Environmental Assessment

Topic	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Air	Climatic Factors	Material Assets	Cultural Heritage	Landscape
Objective	Protect, maintain and enhance biodiversity	Protect and enhance quality of life and reduce health inequalities	Maintain and improve soil quality	Reduce flood risk and protect and enhance the water environment	Maintain and improve air quality	Minimise greenhouse gas (GHS) emissions and adapt to the current and future impacts of climate change	Promote the sustainable use and management of material assets	Protect and enhance the historic environment and its setting	To safeguard and enhance landscape character
Sub-Objective(s)	See Environment Evidence Paper	See Environment Evidence Paper	See Environment Evidence Paper	See Environment Evidence Paper	See Environment Evidence Paper	See Environment Evidence Paper	See Environment Evidence Paper	See Environment Evidence Paper	See Environment Evidence Paper
Relevant Spatial Data and Assessments	Map of biodiversity designations Map of North Ayrshire’s woodlands	North Ayrshire 20-Minute Neighbourhood analysis Open Space Audit	Map of agricultural land quality and carbon rich soils and peatland	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Water Classification Hub	Blank	Blank	North Ayrshire Vacant & Derelict Land	Map of cultural heritage designations	Map of Landscape Character Areas and Designations Settlement Edge Landscape Sensitivity Study
Assessment Questions	Will the proposal protect both designated and non-designated sites from adverse impacts? Will the proposal contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity/geodiversity, including strengthening habitats and/or nature networks? Will the proposal protect and expand forest, woodland and trees? Will the proposal protect and enhance protected species and/or their habitats?	Is the proposal consistent with the principle of local living? Will the proposal promote and enhance access to open space/green-blue networks? Will the proposal have a positive impact on health, wellbeing and health inequalities?	Will the proposal have an adverse impact on high value agricultural land? Will the proposal protect and enhance carbon rich soils? Will the proposal contribute to maintaining or improving soil health and function?	Will the proposal protect and enhance water quality? Is the proposal be at risk of flooding (from any source) or result in additional flood risk elsewhere?	Will the proposal avoid adverse impacts to air quality? Will the proposal contribute to reducing emissions of key pollutants? Will the proposal contribute to reducing levels of nuisance?	Will the proposal minimise lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions? Will the proposal promote climate change adaptation? Will the proposal prioritise sustainable travel in accordance with the hierarchy	Will the proposal support development of renewable technologies? Is the proposal consistent with the waste hierarchy? Will the proposal promote and facilitate the reuse of brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings?	Will the proposal safeguard both designated and non-designated sites from adverse impacts? Will the proposal enable the positive re-use of historic environment assets? Will the proposal improve the resilience to climate change of the historic environment?	Will the proposal have an adverse impact on the special qualities of a designated landscape or area of wild land? Will the proposal maintain or enhance the landscape character of the area?

North Ayrshire’s third Local Development Plan

Topic	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Air	Climatic Factors	Material Assets	Cultural Heritage	Landscape
Assessment	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed
Potential Mitigation and Enhancement	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed
Summary	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed
Overall Score	2 / 1 / 0 / -1 / -2	2 / 1 / 0 / -1 / -2	2 / 1 / 0 / -1 / -2	2 / 1 / 0 / -1 / -2	2 / 1 / 0 / -1 / -2	2 / 1 / 0 / -1 / -2	2 / 1 / 0 / -1 / -2	2 / 1 / 0 / -1 / -2	2 / 1 / 0 / -1 / -2

Stage 2 – Deliverability Assessment

Note: not all topics will be applicable to non-housing proposals.

Topic	Ownership	Marketability	Viability	Access & Accessibility	Water and Wastewater Capacity	GP Capacity	School Capacity
Objective	Site owned or controlled by a developer/Site owned by a public body and identified for disposal/Landowner interest in development	Site located in area with sales potential (taking account of market absorption factors) and/or developer has track record of delivery	Site is viable taking into account land values, expected sales values, site abnormalities and infrastructure requirements	Access to the site is available, without needing third party agreement or a formal agreement is in place	Existing capacity at Water Treatment and Wastewater Treatment Works	Existing capacity at catchment GP practices	Existing capacity at catchment primary and secondary schools
Assessment	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Informed by Scottish Water	To Be Informed by NHS Ayrshire & Arran	To Be Completed by NAC Education
Potential Mitigation and Enhancement	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Informed by Scottish Water	To Be Informed by NHS Ayrshire & Arran	To Be Completed by NAC Education
Summary	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Informed by Scottish Water	To Be Informed by NHS Ayrshire & Arran	To Be Completed by NAC Education
Overall Score	2 / 1 / 0 / -1 / -2	2 / 1 / 0 / -1 / -2	2 / 1 / 0 / -1 / -2	2 / 1 / 0 / -1 / -2	2 / 1 / 0 / -1 / -2	2 / 1 / 0 / -1 / -2	2 / 1 / 0 / -1 / -2

Stage 3 – Community Benefit (note: not all topics will be applicable to non-housing proposals)

Topic	Local Housing Requirements (including affordable housing)	Local infrastructure, facilities and services	Residential amenity	Community Wealth Building – Diverse Ownership	Community Wealth Building – Fair Employment	Community Wealth Building – Financial Power	Community Wealth Building – Land and Assets	Community Wealth Building – Procurement
Objective	Meets local housing requirements, including affordable homes	Proposal provides or enhances local infrastructure, facilities and service	Proposal improves the residential amenity of the surrounding area	Enable SMEs, employee-owned businesses, cooperatives and community enterprises to locally generate wealth to stay within the community	Create fair pay, local recruitment, progression and training opportunities	Maximise the impact of financial investment and grow local businesses, enhance innovation and empower communities	Maximise the function and ownership of land and buildings for the benefit of communities and enterprises	Goods and services are bought locally, creating dense local supply chains
Assessment	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed
Potential Mitigation and Enhancement	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed
Summary	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed	To Be Completed
Overall Score	2 / 1 / 0 / -1 / -2	2 / 1 / 0 / -1 / -2	2 / 1 / 0 / -1 / -2	2 / 1 / 0 / -1 / -2	2 / 1 / 0 / -1 / -2	2 / 1 / 0 / -1 / -2	2 / 1 / 0 / -1 / -2	2 / 1 / 0 / -1 / -2