Development Plan Scheme 2026

Draft – July 2026

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

Introduction

The development plan for North Ayrshire comprises the adopted Local Development Plan (LDP2) and National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4). North Ayrshire Council adopted LDP2 on 28 November 2019. Scottish Ministers adopted NPF4 on 13 February 2023.

This draft Development Plan Scheme sets out North Ayrshire Council's latest programme for reviewing LDP2 and preparing North Ayrshire's third local development plan, LDP3. It updates the previous Development Plan Scheme which was adopted by the planning committee and published in November 2024.

We are preparing LDP3 under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. The current legislative provisions and regulations relating to the development planning system came into force on 19 May 2023. Local development planning guidance, setting out the Scottish Ministers' expectations for implementing this new system, was also published in May 2023.

The local development planning guidance states that every planning authority in Scotland should have a new style LDP in place within around five years of the regulations coming into force, in other words by May 2028. The revised timetable proposed envisages adoption of LDP3 by this date.

The 2019 Act, Town and Country Planning (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2023 and guidance are at the centre of reforms to the Scottish planning system, including to the way local development plans are prepared. They are aimed at making LDPs more effective, more place-based with greater community involvement in their preparation and more focus on delivery. This means putting people and communities at the heart of a collaborative process to prepare LDP3 in a way that meets people's needs and aspirations and tackles inequalities.

This draft Development Plan Scheme includes a Participation Statement which sets out our intentions around ensuring engagement on LDP3 is early, collaborative, meaningful and proportionate; including when consultation is likely to take place, how and with whom.

Comments are sought on this draft Development Plan Scheme, specifically the proposed timetable and approach to engagement. The deadline for responding is Monday 31 August 2026. We intend to adopt and publish the finalised Development Plan Scheme in September 2026.

Any individual or organisation interested in the preparation of the development plan for North Ayrshire, including the details of future consultation events, is encouraged to sign up to our mailing list to receive updates direct to their mailbox.

Proposed Timetable

The proposed timetable for preparing North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan (LDP3) is set out below:

Key Stage	2024 Development Plan Scheme	**Revised Target Date**
Publication of Proposed Plan	October to December 2025	July to September 2027
Submission of Proposed Plan to Scottish Ministers	April to June 2026	October to December 2027
Expected Adoption of LDP3	January to March 2027	April to June 2028

The 2024 Development Plan Scheme envisaged publication of the Evidence Report between January and March 2025. It was published in December 2025.

A key reason for the delay in publishing the Evidence Report was the desire to ensure it passed the Gate Check first time. It was noted in the 2024 Development Plan Scheme that the Evidence Report is a new stage in the preparation of a local development plan, and the Regulations do not specify minimum evidence requirements. This has created some uncertainty around what constitutes 'sufficiency' which is assessed at the Gate Check stage.

The evidence reports of 10 planning authorities were found to be insufficient at Gate Check over the course of 2025 and, accordingly, the delay of nine months to our LDP programme was invaluable in ensuring that it was found to be sufficient. The additional time enabled discussions with other planning authorities and key agencies; to learn lessons from completed Gate Checks; to adopt emerging best practice and to refine the Evidence Report prior to publication.

The delay in submission of the Evidence Report and its progress through the Gate Check stage have had a knock-on effect on the indicative timetable for preparing LDP3. We now anticipate publishing the Proposed Plan in August 2027 and adoption in May 2028.

These revised dates are a consequence of the additional time required to pass the Gate Check and provide for an extended period for preparing the Proposed Plan, from five months to 13 months. This is considered a more realistic target for undertaking the required engagement and assessments required to prepare the Proposed Plan.

Key Stages

The following section of the Development Plan Scheme details what is involved in each stage of preparation of North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan.

Early Engagement & Data Collection

➢ **Complete**

In late 2022, the Planning Service commenced early engagement, including with other Council services, Elected Members, key agencies and community councils in advance of commencing work on North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan.

In March 2023 we launched an online hub to support the preparation of LDP3, including the launch of the 'Your Place' survey, based on the Place Standard.

Scoping was undertaken to consider the matters to be addressed in the Evidence Report; the relevant baseline information needed for each issue; the need for primary data collection; the stakeholders to be involved in collating and reviewing data and a timetable for this work. A programme of data collection was undertaken with several audits and studies also undertaken to inform the Evidence Report.

To support the preparation of the Evidence Report, Place Profiles for all six localities in North Ayrshire were published in October 2024. These set out key baseline information and data, summarise early engagement to date and reflect on the outcomes of other community engagement initiatives such as Charrettes, Local Place Frameworks, Local Place Plans and Island Plans.

Evidence Report

➢ **Complete**

The Evidence Report is the first stage in preparing an LDP. 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

To support the preparation of the Evidence Report, in addition to the Place Profiles, we prepared topic papers on housing, transport and the environment. These papers formed the basis of our engagement with key agencies and the corresponding Evidence Report sections. The housing and environment papers were also published in March 2025 for wider stakeholder comment.

The final Evidence Report was approved by the Local Development Plan Committee on 9 December 2025. Supporting documents include a Record of Engagement which sets out a detailed account of the engagement carried out in the preparation of the report.

Gate Check

➢ **Complete**

The Evidence Report was submitted to Scottish Ministers on 20 January 2026. Scottish Ministers appointed a Reporter on 24 February 2026 to carry out a 'Gate

Check' of the Evidence Report to assess whether it contains sufficient information to enable the planning authority to prepare a Local Development Plan.

On 1 July 2026, the Reporter gave notice of their assessment that the Evidence Report contains sufficient information to enable the planning authority to prepare a Local Development Plan. The Reporter's assessment and decision can be viewed at the case page on the Scottish Government's Planning and Environmental Appeals (DPEA) online portal.

Call for Ideas

- **Complete**

Acknowledging the delay to the publication of the Evidence Report, we went ahead with a 'Call for Ideas' during 2025, having initially intended to undertake this after the Gate Check. In April 2025, individuals, community bodies, organisations, landowners and developers were invited to submit their ideas for what should be included in North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan, LDP3. Ideas relating to any aspect of the new local development plan, not limited specifically to suggestions for development sites or types of development, for example housing, were sought.

The deadline for the submission of ideas was Monday 30 June 2025 however late submissions have also been accepted. Around 110 ideas have been submitted to date, with 100 of these relating to the development or use of land.

We will continue to assess the Call for Ideas submissions alongside the preparation of the Proposed Plan.

Proposed Plan

- **In progress**

Following successful completion of the Gate Check, we are now preparing the Proposed Plan.

The Proposed Plan will be our settled view on the policies and proposals that will make up LDP3, including where new development should take place and where it should not. In preparing the Proposed Plan, we will consider the Evidence Report; submissions made at the Call for Ideas stage; registered Local Place Plans and any other place-based community-led plans; and undertake further engagement with stakeholders to test proposals to be included within the Plan.

The Proposed Plan requires the approval of the full Council. Once Council has had the opportunity to consider and approves the Proposed Plan, it will be published to allow any representations from stakeholders, including the general public, which seek to make changes to the plan, for a period of at least 12 weeks.

Following the close of the period for representations on the Proposed Plan, we may make modifications to the plan to take account of representations, consultation responses or correct minor drafting and technical matters. A Modification Report, if necessary, will set out any modifications made and explain the reasons for making

them and for not making changes where matters have been raised in significant numbers.

We will then republish the Proposed Plan and submit it to Scottish Ministers, who will examine any unresolved representations via an Examination.

We will aim to publish the Proposed Plan for consultation by **August 2027** and submit to Scottish Ministers in **December 2027**.

Examination

The examination is the opportunity for independent consideration of any issues raised during the formal consultation on the Proposed Plan that have not been resolved through modifications. Scottish Ministers will appoint a person, known as a Reporter, to examine the Proposed Plan, starting with whether the consultation and involvement of the public in the preparation of the plan meets or exceeds the requirements of the Participation Statement.

The scope of the examination is limited only to issues raised in unresolved representations. These issues will be set out in the summary of issues prepared by the planning authority and it is the Reporter who will determine the form the Examination will take. Only where the Reporter feels they do not have all the information they need to make a proper assessment of an issue will they request further information from any person.

The Reporter will provide conclusions and recommendations for each of the unresolved issues identified at the start of the Examination process.

Adoption

Following receipt of the examination report from the Reporter – and subject to the recommendations of the Reporter on the unresolved representations – we will progress to adopt LDP3, further modified as required.

As with the Gate Check, it is difficult to be certain how long the examination of the Proposed Plan will take. This will be determined by the number of issues being examined, the requirement for further information to be submitted; the need for any hearing sessions; resources available to DPEA, among other factors. Our programme allows for five months for the examination and adoption of the plan.

Notwithstanding the potential for the examination to take longer than four months, we anticipate adopting LDP3 on or before **May 2028**.

Monitoring & Delivery

Whilst the adoption of a plan is a significant milestone, it is not the end point. Monitoring will form a feedback loop, providing data that will be needed for the evidence gathering for amendment of the plan, or the next LDP and – in line with the aspiration to achieve a delivery focussed system – focus will turn to facilitating development that supports the spatial strategy, in particular developments that are proposals of the plan.

A key component of this is the **Delivery Programme**, which we are required to adopt and publish a within threem months of the LDP being constituted. A draft Delivery Programme will be published alongside the Proposed Plan in August 2027.

Participation Statement

The Participation Statement forms an important part of the Development Plan Scheme and sets out when consultation is likely to take place, with whom and its likely form, including the steps to be taken to involve the public in the preparation of the local development plan.

To inform this Participation Statement we published an Engagement Survey seeking views on how we should publicise LDP3 and its engagement opportunities; how people would like to be involved in LDP3 and how we could reach more people to involve them in the local development plan process.

Throughout the preparation of LDP3 we will develop and tailor our approach to engagement and seek to ensure it is effective and update our Participation Statement as part of the Development Plan Scheme. We would welcome comments on how the Participation Statement can be improved to allow interested stakeholders to have a say in how they can be most effectively involved.

When engagement will take place:

We will engage and consult with stakeholders throughout the preparation of LDP3. In line with our proposed timetable and the key stages, there are five distinct opportunities for engagement, three of which are complete (early engagement; Place Profiles and Evidence Report; and Call for Ideas). The Record of Engagement sets out a detailed account of the engagement carried out in the preparation of the Evidence Report. The following two stages remain:

4) **Proposed Plan engagement**

   We will engage with all stakeholders to seek their views on proposals, including those submitted at the 'Call for Ideas' stage, to inform the preparation of the Proposed Plan. Four distinct engagements are proposed:

   a) **Development sites** – September to October 2026

      We will seek the views of local communities on the sites submitted via the Call for Ideas, and other sites identified as potentially suitable for development and allocation within LDP3. This consultation will inform our site assessments. It is envisaged this will primarily be undertaken using our online engagement hub, with in-person or video call appointments also offered to any individual or group seeking further information or assistance to submit comments.

   b) **Vision and Priorities** – October to December 2026

      LDP3 will share its vision and priorities with the North Ayrshire Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP). The current Local Outcomes Improvement Plan is reaching its halfway point in 2027. To ensure it remains reflective of the needs and aspirations of our communities, especially in the context of improving long term outcomes and tackling inequalities, a range of engagement methods are anticipated to be employed, with a particular focus on seeking the views of a wide range of groups.

c) **Spatial strategies** – January to June 2027

Taking account of the site assessment process and agreed vision and priorities, we will engage with all stakeholders on the development of spatial strategies for North Ayrshire's localities and settlements, prior to their inclusion within the Proposed Plan. These spatial strategies will set out how we anticipate places in North Ayrshire evolving over the plan period, including where development should and should not take place.

d) **Background Housing Paper** – April to June 2027

Noting the publication of updated household projections in December 2025, after the approval of the Evidence Report, and the Council's intention to prepare a new Housing Needs and Demand Assessment (HNDA), we will compile a background housing paper to support the preparation of the Proposed Plan.

The paper will consider the implications of the up-to-date household projections; HNDA outputs and other new evidence for the Local Housing Land Requirement figure and the location and types of new housing to be delivered by LDP3. We will work with relevant stakeholders, including Homes for Scotland and housing developers, to prepare a joint statement detailing areas of agreement and disagreement with the intention that is leads to a shorter and more focussed discussion on housing at an Examination.

5) **Proposed Plan consultation** – September to November 2027

After the Council has approved the Proposed Plan it will be published to allow any representations from stakeholders, including the general public, which seek to make changes to the plan for a period of at least 12 weeks.

Who engagement will take place with:

We want to ensure that everyone – either as an individual or on behalf of a group, organisation, body or company – with an interest in North Ayrshire as a place to live, work or visit is involved in the preparation of LDP3. Identified stakeholders include:

- North Ayrshire residents
- Elected Members, MPs & MSPs
- Children and young people
- Community Bodies, including Community Councils
- Locality Planning Partnerships
- Other Community and Interest Groups, including the Third Sector
- Landowners and Developers
- Business and Industry
- Key Agencies (Nature Scot, SEPA, Scottish Water, Scottish Enterprise, Historic Environment Scotland, SPT, Scottish Forestry, the Crofting Commission, NHS Ayrshire & Arran, and Transport Scotland)
- Infrastructure providers
- North Ayrshire Council Departments

How engagement will take place:

We want to make it as easy as possible for everyone with an interest to engage in the preparation of LDP3. Responses to the Engagement Survey have expressed support for:

- In-person exhibitions: drop-in events at convenient times and in convenient locations for communities
- Online exhibitions: material hosted online to provide information
- Workshops: interactive session to facilitate community (both in-person and online)
- Online resources: using social media and an online hub to gather views and enable the submission of comments.
- Tailored resources: bespoke resources tailored to particular groups which make it easier to participate.

In the first instance, we welcome the opportunity to speak to both individuals and groups to understand the method of engagement that works best for them.

Finally, in accordance with Planning Circular 2/2021, we will consider opportunities to use mediation as a means of exploring, resolving or reducing disagreement in the preparation of LDP3. Mediation is one of a range of techniques sometimes labelled as 'alternative dispute resolution (ADR)' which can include facilitation, conciliation and arbitration as well as mediation. These techniques can be used to help to resolve issues of dispute.

Whether facilitated by an independent third-party or not, there may be scope to use mediation to resolve differences and build support for proposals through discussion and negotiation prior to the publication of the Proposed Plan. Mediation is a voluntary process; no stakeholders in the process of preparing LDP3 will be required to enter into mediation.

Local Place Plans

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 introduces a new right for communities to produce Local Place Plans (LPPs). The aim of LPPs is to enhance engagement in development planning by empowering communities to play a proactive role in defining the future of their places by setting out their proposals for the use and development of land. In preparing a Local Development Plan, planning authorities must take into account registered Local Place Plans.

Secondary legislation to govern the implementation of LPPs came into force in January 2022 and Planning circular 1/2022 provides further guidance on their preparation.

On 19 May 2023, in accordance with Section 15A of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 we published an invitation to community bodies in North Ayrshire to prepare a local place plan.

Community bodies that intend to prepare a local place plan were encouraged to submit a 'notice of intention to prepare a local place plan' by completing the notice of intention online form. To date, six Local Place Plans have been registered and can be viewed on the Local Place Plan Register.

We have supported and worked with community bodies developing Local Place Plans to ensure they can be registered and maximise their potential to inform LDP3. A Handbook setting out local guidance and the support available to local communities to prepare local place plans was shared with bodies expressing their intention to prepare a local place plan in April 2024.

We have been flexible with the deadline for submitting Local Place Plans, reflecting changes to the timetable for LDP3. Now we are at the stage of preparing the Proposed Plan, the scope for newly registered Local Place Plan to shape the new LDP is decreasing, however, we would still welcome discussions with any community body interesting in preparing a Local Place Plan.

Impact Assessments

A number of different assessments must be undertaken to support the preparation of LDP3. These assessments are an integral part of the plan making process and should inform and be informed by the plan as it is prepared. They are:

- Equalities Impact Assessment;
- Public Sector Equality Duty Assessment;
- Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment;
- Island Communities Impact Assessment,
- Strategic Environmental Assessment; and
- Habitats Regulations Appraisal
- Transport Assessment

Further detail on these assessments is included at Annex C of the Local Development Planning Guidance.

Preparation of the Evidence Report provided the opportunity to align with the Scoping stage of the Strategic Environmental Assessment through the establishment of the environmental baseline and engagement with the Consultation Authorities. In this regard, the Environmental Evidence Paper published in April 2025 incorporates Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Scoping Report.

All assessments will be published in draft alongside the Proposed Plan and revised and updated as required.