

NPF 4: Save Stepps Greenbelt Campaign Committee



What do you want planning to do for your place?

Stepps community calls on NPF4 to acknowledge the importance of land designated as greenbelt in local plans and progress a mechanism that prevents simultaneous, multiple speculative applications for large-scale housing developments.

The Scottish Government should not be driven to release greenbelt sites to achieve housing targets while brownfields sites continue to be available.

NPF4 must play a significant role in reducing the constant conflict that exists among government, councils, communities and developers when it comes to Planning.

NPF4 is about the future of Planning. However, much, learned from the present, can be useful for the future. Present issues, if not resolved, will continue to dog any bright new future, with conflict continuing among all parties.

It is also extremely difficult for Stepps community to give consideration to a request to improve future planning when it is having to deal with serious current complex planning problems.

Consequently, we believe that NPF4 can only improve the future for Scotland by resolving current problems in planning.

With that in mind, Save Stepps Greenbelt Campaign Committee working with Stepps and District Community Council call on NPF4 to manage the development of land in the long-term public interest by introducing:

(a) requirements for developers to respect the Strategic and Local Development Plans for designated greenbelt

- (b) more robust policies for the protection of designated greenbelt.
- (c) mechanisms to prevent speculative planning applications for large-scale residential developments on designated greenbelt land.
- (d) more robust policies to direct development to brownfield, vacant and derelict sites.
- (e) powers for local authorities to request timeous intervention by the DPEA when multiple speculative planning applications for major developments on designated greenbelt, all in the same area, at the same time are received.
- (f) policy on a common methodology, to be used by all involved, to deal with the calculations surrounding 5-year land supply and housing targets.

Our place: Stepps, North Lanarkshire

Stepps is an attractive small semi-rural settlement enjoying excellent transport links to both Glasgow and Edinburgh and in a countryside setting. **The land surrounding Stepps is designated as greenbelt** in the Local Development Plan. The construction of the M80 and the expansion south of that road to Glasgow up to the mutual boundary with North Lanarkshire to the west of Stepps and also south at Cardowan is of great appeal to commuters. The situation of Stepps has attracted attention from prospective developers, landowners and potential house buyers.

Stepps community values the significant benefits of the Greenbelt status. Save Stepps Greenbelt and Stepps & District Community Council have been campaigning unrelentingly to prevent loss of greenbelt sites to speculative applications for large-scale residential developments.

At present there are **five speculative applications on greenbelt sites** at Gateside Farm, two at Whitehill Farm, Mount Harriet Drive and Dorlin Road, Cardowan. Based on previous submissions it can be estimated that 1,000+ residential units could be built.

In addition, a proposal for 250 residential units has been submitted on the site at Buchanan Business Park (see Appendix 1). This suggests a total of 1,150+ residential units.

Q1. What development will we need to address climate change?

The semi-rural nature of Stepps and its greenbelt make it a **climate friendly place** in which to live and for others to visit. Its greenbelt is a natural resource which must be retained to support the prevention of climate change. Greenbelt land supports green networks, nature, wildlife and biodiversity and is part of the Seven Lochs Wetland Park. Access to greenbelt offers improved air quality and reduced carbon emissions.

Resilience to the long-term impacts of climate change can be achieved by (a) preventing loss of open greenbelt land for future generations (b) initiating legislation that requires developers to include a percentage of brownfield, vacant or derelict sites for development in their portfolio, thus protecting the greenbelt (c) creating jobs related to greenbelt/wetland development, such as, tree planting, creating and managing woodland and forestry, including community woodlands, wildlife and nature conservation, wetland/peat/bog restoration and creation of green space and green networks.

Q2. How can planning best support our quality of life, health and wellbeing in the future?

Planners should be making the case that **free access to public space is a public health and well-being issue**. The inequalities in access to space, both outside and inside the house must be addressed. Better space standards in housing is required to improve the health and quality of life of people. Building

new houses near motorways or busy main roads often involves a 'windows-shut' specification. This specification should not be permitted. Houses should be set back from roads and accompanied by landscaping borders. Use of fences, particularly wooden types should be massively reduced in all developments and be replaced by mature vegetation. This will support will also support climate improvement.

Stepps with its distinct character, identity and setting within greenbelt land supports the quality of life and health and well-being of its community. Stepps could be a model to influence the future planning of new settlements, namely, small community settlements rather than volume housing estates. Creating the availability of surrounding open space to breathe is essential. Density of streets and the over-development of sites to accommodate volume housing estates is not conducive to peoples' health and quality of life. New developments should include 'pocket parks' and green corridors and borders and be much more sympathetic to exercise opportunities, particularly cycling.

Q3. What does planning need to do to enable development and investment in our economy so that it benefits everyone?

The present planning process does not benefit communities campaigning to protect the greenbelt land where they live. It is driven by developers' need to make profits not by their concern for communities. The **development of brownfield, vacant and derelict sites** must be considered before greenbelt and care of communities before profit. Stepps' community has shared these concerns with Fulton MacGregor (MSP) and Kevin Stewart (Housing and Planning Minister) to no avail.

The Scottish Government requires to review (a) its relationship with developers and (b) its drive to achieve housing targets at any cost to communities (c) its planning policy deficits as indicated at question 4.

Any intended deregulation in Planning resulting from the Corona virus pandemic and Brexit should not reduce the quality of design of housing, the quality of materials used, nor the amenity, character and setting of communities. In particular, there should be no reduction in rights of community to be fully represented throughout a development planning process which will negatively affect their way of life.

Q4. What policies are needed to improve, protect and strengthen the special character of our places?

Designated greenbelt is a special place and needs stronger policies to protect it. The greenbelt surrounding Stepps defines and strengthens the character and identity of the settlement and loss of greenbelt to residential development will mean coalescence with neighbouring villages and Glasgow.

Preventing erosion of greenbelt is essential in the present climate crisis.

A new stronger government policy is required to deal with **speculative applications on greenbelt sites** not designated for housing in the local development plan. Speculative applications run counter to the plan-led approach bringing interruptions to it. Such applications fail to utilise available derelict or brownfield sites thus conflicting with sustainability objectives.

A perfect example of the negative outcomes of **multiple speculative planning applications** for greenbelt land not designated for development in North Lanarkshire Council (NLC) local plan is currently evident in Stepps.

NLC state that each speculative application will be dealt with individually. This could see the ad hoc erosion of all Stepps greenbelt over a short period of time. Save Stepps Greenbelt campaign committee state that government planning policy should include a **mechanism to address and pause multiple speculative applications** with the appointment of a DPEA Reporter to take an holistic view of the planning issues inherent in such a situation. The Campaign Committee also claims that Stepps, because of the volume of these speculative applications, is **a community growth area by stealth with no strategic masterplan**. This lack of government planning policy to deal with this situation is unacceptable to Stepps community.

Developers submitting speculative applications take advantage of the lapse of the local development plan and set out arguments in their favour which challenge the **5-year land supply and housing targets** in North Lanarkshire. This opportunity to debate figures and calculations exists due to the **absence of government policy**. The Scottish Government must address this deficit of policy.

This was the case in the differing methodologies used by the developer's appeal for an application for a greenbelt site at Hornshill Farm. NLC claimed it did have an effective 5-year Housing Land Supply. On the other hand, the developer contended a shortfall in the council's 5-year land supply. The developer's calculations influenced the Reporter to grant the appeal for the site at Gateside.

Steps: Speculative Planning Applications as at April 2020

Appendix 1

18/01462/MSC | Construction of 200 Dwellinghouses, Associated Infrastructure, Landscaping and Engineering Works (Approval of Matters Specified in Conditions of Permission 16/01271/PPP) | Land To The North Of Cumbernauld Road And East Of Hornshill Farm Road Stepps North Lanarkshire

18/00074/PAN | Erection of Residential Development and Ancillary Development | Site Off Whitehill Farm Road Stepps North Lanarkshire

18/00075/PAN | Proposal of Application Notice: Erection of Residential Development and Ancillary Development | Site Adjacent To 3 Mount Harriet Drive Stepps Glasgow North Lanarkshire G33 6DB

18/00181/PAN | Proposal of Application Notice: Residential Development and Ancillary Development | Whitehill Farm Whitehill Farm Road Stepps Glasgow North Lanarkshire G33 6BT

19/01336/PAN | Residential Development, Ancillary Works and Wetland Management | Site At Dorlin Road Cardowan Stepps North Lanarkshire

19/00587/PAN | Renewal of Planning Permission in Principle for Mixed Use Development (16/01347/AMD) | Buchanan Business Park Cumbernauld Road Stepps Glasgow North Lanarkshire G33 6HZ