

## **Planning for Scotland in 2050 - National Planning Framework 4**

### **Call for Ideas - Response from Rural Housing Scotland**

#### **What development will we need to address climate change?**

The kind of development we will need will encompass the following:

- ▶ Reform land use to drive climate-positive activities
- ▶ Prioritise adaptation and re-use of existing buildings over new build.
- ▶ Where materials are required for construction and refurbishment of buildings, these must be renewable and non-toxic and put together in a way that allows them to be taken apart easily at end of life.
- ▶ Increase design lifespans for buildings to at least 250 years.
- ▶ Set ambitious targets for operational energy use for buildings
- ▶ Set ambitious targets for embodied carbon for buildings (
- ▶ Test all new and refurbished buildings to ensure they perform as predicted, and do not contribute towards climate change more than they are predicted to.
- ▶ Ensure all new and refurbished buildings support good health.
- ▶ Increase housing density and diversify land use functions
- ▶ Set ambitious targets for all development that results in 'net biodiversity gain'.

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

The housing system is broken with house prices unaffordable to the young and those on average incomes. The development of new build housing has been monopolised by volume builders who build to minimum space and environmental standards and perpetuate the spirally cost of housing.

The planning system can enable alternative routes to the creation of affordable housing:

- ▶ by designating land for housing which integrates environmental and social benefits;
- ▶ by releasing land for community led housing; self build; cohousing; mutual homeownership cooperatives and social housing;
- ▶ by providing opportunities for smaller developers;
- ▶ by creating opportunities for innovation and new forms of housing which build the community cohesion and mutual support vital in the post COVID19 future.

The current crisis offers the opportunity to develop new ways of living and working post COVID19. There is a clear desire amongst many people to refocus on community, place, wellbeing, smaller scale and local enterprise, and climate-friendly development. The development of housing which offers models for mutual support - such as cohousing, collective self build and mutual home ownership - can create frameworks for these more cooperatives forms of living.

Rural areas in particular offer opportunities to create housing which encompasses opportunities for local food production, shared working space, renewable energy generation, community heat, mutuality and intergenerational living.

The allocation of land and planning for the creation of these opportunities would encourage more people to live in rural Scotland; in the post COVID 19 world to act on a resolve to think differently in the future.

NPF4 should encourage people to live in rural areas by promoting new sustainable forms of living and working in rural areas. We would like to see the designation of land for cooperative forms of housing; the creation of sites for new micro-settlements (Smart Clachans) which engender social and environmental benefits, foster mutuality and sharing (cars, energy production, food production, workspace) and create affordable opportunities for people to remain, return and move to rural Scotland.

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

The vitality of rural Scotland depends on the ability of the rural economy to grow and diversify, and crucial to rural economic development is the availability of affordable housing. Planning, land ownership and cost restrict the availability of land for housing in parts of rural Scotland, limiting the development of housing opportunities and limiting economic development.

Too often planning seeks to restrict development in rural Scotland or is hidebound by out of date notions regarding the type of employment pursued by rural dwellers. Planning needs to return to being town and country planning with policies to enable rural focussed development and planning. Planning authorities with rural areas should be required to develop specific rural development and rural planning policies that take account of the needs and nature of rural areas. Housing can be transformational to rural economies, rural services and rural sustainability. NPF4 should enable place-sensitive approaches which facilitate development to meet particular challenges, needs and opportunities. The increased use of Rural Exception Site policies in Scotland would provide a locus for this approach.

In our response to the Housing Technical Discussion Paper we highlight the failure of HNDA methodologies to identify growing housing need in rural communities and the concomitant failure to land and invest to meet this need in local housing strategies and strategic housing investment programmes. To address this there should be more fine-grained approaches to the identification of housing need and demand in rural areas.

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

The sustainable development of rural Scotland requires policies which protect landscape and natural heritage but also protect rural populations. Therefore rural specific development policies which meet the economic and housing needs of rural communities are crucial to enhance, protect and strengthen rural areas.