

Dear Sirs

In response to the initial consultation on NPF4, [REDACTED] wishes to submit the following points as regards the questions posed:

1. What development will we need to address climate change?
2. How can planning best support our quality of life, health and wellbeing in the future? and
4. What policies are needed to improve, protect and strengthen the special character of our places?

[REDACTED] has been active in opposing large scale development on 5 prime greenfield sites which border our village envelope for decades. Having successfully lobbied to prevent 5 of these sites from being allocated for development in our LDP at the end of 2016, unfortunately one of those sites has since been approved for development by the Reporter. We have also just been informed of a further appeal to the Reporter regarding one of the other sites.

Our residents are not against new development per se, however, our community feels very strongly that villages should be permitted to grow organically, commensurate to need and proportionately in size. Historic villages with viable tourist industries like [REDACTED] ought to be preserved by planning policy at the highest level of the system. The bolting on of large housing developments not only decimates special character but also places an intolerable strain on our already creaking infrastructure and services. In addition such measures obliterate prime agricultural land and habitats for many flora and fauna species, only a stones throw from the Firth of Forth SSI and SPA.

We would like to see the community voice being given far more weight in the planning system, which our experience suggests is weighted very much in favour of developers. We made representations on this not only during every stage of the LDP consultation, development applications and appeals and also in respect of the consultation on the recent SG planning reform legislation. Unfortunately, however, we are yet to see policies emerging which we think would sufficiently give communities their place in the system or appropriately safeguard greenfield sites and the special character of our settlements.

Accordingly we would propose the following be taken into account in shaping NPF4:

- strategic policies to better preserve greenfield sites, particularly those already specifically excluded from LDPs
- a policy giving absolute primacy to the protection of agricultural land, particularly prime land, with little or no exceptions
- the strengthening of policies to protect and preserve the special character of settlements including the right for communities to propose designations for local zones considered by the community to be of special local character or crucial for community use
- more focus on the renovation of disused council housing to reduce the housing shortage

Yours faithfully

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