

# APRS ADVICE NOTE

## GREEN BELTS

REVISED 2024

APRS has been campaigning on Green Belts for over 90 years, and continues to do so because Green Belts can be an effective planning tool and we recognise the multiple benefits of protecting green space near urban areas for people, environment, climate and biodiversity. However, Green Belts are often under threat of piecemeal erosion and unsustainable development. This advice note is intended to help individuals and communities understand and protect their local Green Belt.

There are currently (January 2024) 11 Green Belt areas in Scotland: Aberdeen, Ayr and Prestwick, Clackmannanshire, Dunfermline, Edinburgh, Falkirk and Grangemouth, Greater Glasgow, Helensburgh, Perth, St Andrews and Stirling. Some of these 11 Green Belts have been designated by more than one local authority, so of the 34 Planning Authorities in Scotland, 21 have areas that are designated as Green Belt<sup>1</sup>.

### WHAT IS A GREEN BELT ?

A Green Belt is an area of land designated by a planning authority to protect open space and manage the growth of a town or city in the long term. In Scotland, designated Green Belts are mostly open land around, beside or in an urban area and for which there is a presumption (within the Planning System) against most development, except for some specified uses. More than in England where the purposes of Green Belts as a planning tool all focus on permanently preventing urban sprawl into the countryside (Ref NPPF 2012), Scotland's planning system has also long considered the use and amenity of Green Belts, and particularly their value in providing countryside and open space for access and recreation<sup>2</sup>. NPF4 has also given much stronger recognition to the role Green Belts can play in helping to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Green Belts are not intended to *prevent* all development but to 'direct

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<sup>1</sup> Local Authorities that have areas designated as Green Belt in their adopted LDP at the start of 2024 are: Aberdeen City; Aberdeenshire; Clackmannanshire; Fife; City of Edinburgh, Midlothian; East Lothian; West Lothian ("Countryside Belt"); Falkirk; Glasgow City; Inverclyde; East Renfrewshire; Renfrewshire; East Dunbartonshire; West Dunbartonshire; North Lanarkshire; South Lanarkshire; Argyll & Bute; Perth & Kinross; South Ayrshire; Stirling.

<sup>2</sup> eg in SDD 24/1985 and SPP21

planned growth to the most appropriate locations.’ That includes redeveloping ‘brownfield’ sites, encouraging an appropriate level of in-town density (while still allowing for open spaces), and other good planning practices. Expressed differently, green belts help to prevent careless urban sprawl, unsustainable growth in car-based commuting and unnecessary speculative development (ie. purchasing unused land without any clear commitment for its end use).

For-profit developers often prefer to build on ‘greenfield’ land (any site never built on) rather than face the costs of clearing previously developed brownfield sites. However, the choice of out-of-town development can result in external costs and impacts on people’s quality of life and their ability to live more sustainably as well as impacts on the environment and future land-use options that have not always been fully considered. Greenfield land is not the same thing as green belt land, but green belts can help to protect greenfield land.

Green Belts can help safeguard the quality, character, landscape, and identity of towns and cities. They help prevent insensitive development that has historically harmed towns, such as out-of-town developments, coastal sprawl, and supermarkets on the fringes.

Green Belts also promote local living and sustainable communities by guiding development to brownfield sites, increasing urban density, and minimising urban sprawl. This approach reduces the reliance on car-based travel and ensures that amenities are conveniently located and communities are more concentrated.

Green Belts also contribute to the preservation of green spaces, supporting physical and mental wellbeing. They provide local communities with access to nearby green areas, protect designated green belt areas from development, and help preserve biodiversity, even in seemingly "scrubby" land.

### **What do Green Belts NOT do?**

Green Belts are not intended to protect natural or cultural heritage. There are other designations for that purpose, such as Site of Special Scientific Interest, National Nature Reserve, Local Nature Reserve, Conservation Area or Listed Building, some of which may be present in Green Belts.

Green Belts do not prevent pylons or telecommunication masts, though

local communities can object to the design or location of the latter. Green Belts do not prevent would-be developers or speculators purchasing or taking options on pieces of countryside in the expectation that one day they will get planning permission and thereby increase the land value. Such land is often left untidy in the hope that unsightliness will increase the likelihood of planning permission. Local residents should be vigilant and alert their local Council if this appears to be a problem.

Green Belts do not prevent the implementation of controversial National Developments included in the National Planning Framework (there are 18 [National Developments](#) outlined in NPF4 some of which could impact GB areas). These would be likely to take priority over local designations or earlier Local Development Plans, but do still have to go through the normal planning process.

### **WHERE ARE THEY?**

Not every greenfield or green area around a town or city is identified as 'Green Belt' - it is only designated Green Belt if the area is identified as such on the relevant spatial strategy maps ("proposals maps") in the adopted Local Development Plan (LDP).

In 2023 Guidance on LDPs, the Scottish Government clarified that green belt is a distinct policy zoning, which has tighter restrictions in terms of acceptable uses compared with rural areas. As such, in any new LDPs designated Green Belt should be shown as identified areas on the "proposals map" rather than as an overlay policy on land identified as rural.

Twenty-one Scottish Planning Authorities have identified areas of Green Belt in their adopted Local Development Plans. This total includes West Lothian which uses the similar term "Countryside Belt". Other Councils have used other rural policies or local landscape designations to try to achieve similar policy outcomes, however, depending on the circumstances these may not carry the same weight and can certainly allow developers to argue an area is not subject to Green Belt policy.

To check if a location is within a designated Green Belt it is best to consult the relevant local authority LDP maps directly. These can be viewed online at the relevant LA websites (there are links from the [APRS website](#)). Green Belt Boundaries are usually shown on 'proposals maps' and the LDP should make reference to the evidence that determined the boundary or when the boundary was reviewed.

Alternatively, or for an overview, all of Scotland's Green Belt boundaries can in theory be viewed on the [Spatial Hub website](#). However, the data sets and preview map layers do not always seem to be complete, hence when dealing with a planning case it is best to consult the Local Development Plan maps directly. (The Spatial Hub data and maps are seemingly updated annually so may not incorporate a newly adopted LDP immediately and may not be comprehensive if data hasn't been submitted that year).

## **GREEN BELTS AND THE PLANNING SYSTEM**

Planning is about making hard choices, balancing the need for appropriate development with the desire to preserve the landscapes and environment that we cherish. The main way to influence where development happens in Scotland is through the town and country planning system, which is mostly administered by each local Council acting as the 'local planning authority'. A local authority can designate areas as Green Belt through the policies and spatial strategy set out in its adopted local development plan (LDP).

The [APRS Advice Note 'The Scottish Planning System'](#) gives a general explanation of the Scottish planning system. The basic system is set out in Acts of Parliament passed in 1997 and 2006, but it is still going through significant changes following the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. Some of these ongoing changes (eg to Supplementary Planning Guidance) may influence how the designation of Green Belts operates.

The National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) contains the national planning policy for Scotland and was adopted by the Scottish Government in February 2023 (ie NPF4 came into effect then). NPF4 sets out in policy the circumstances in which Green Belts may be designated by local authorities. In comparison to the previous NPF and Scottish Planning Policy (2014) it has a much clearer emphasis on addressing climate change (both mitigation and adaptation) and enhancing biodiversity. These are specifically addressed in policy and the spatial principles.

### **What is the purpose of Green Belts in planning?**

Green Belt designation is a planning tool intended, in conjunction with other policies, to encourage more sustainable land use and development. NPF4 states that the policy intent for Green Belts is to encourage,

promote and facilitate compact urban growth and use the land around our towns and cities sustainably.

The aims of Green Belts, as outlined in NPF4 policy outcomes, are that:

- Development is directed to the right locations, urban density is increased and unsustainable growth is prevented.
- The character, landscape, natural setting and identity of settlements are protected and enhanced.
- Nature networks<sup>3</sup> are supported and land is managed to help tackle climate change.

The anticipated policy impacts of implementing Green Belt policy are to support: a Just Transition; Conserving and Recycling Assets; Local Living; Compact Urban Growth; Rebalanced Development and Rural Revitalisation.

In addition to the outcomes stated in NPF4, Green Belts may support the spatial strategy in an LDP by<sup>4</sup>:

- making effective use of land and supporting regeneration (prioritising the re-use or re-development of brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings first, before new development takes place on greenfield sites), and minimising the need to travel using unsustainable modes; and
- protecting, enhancing and providing access to multifunctional blue and green networks and open space.

## **The Development Plan**

Since February 2023, NPF4 plus the relevant LDP together form the Development Plan for a particular area. This is important as the Development Plan is the most important factor in deciding planning applications and the policies in both the LDP and NPF4 should be considered by decision makers. [NPF4 Policy 8 \(NPF4 p48-49\)](#) sets out the national policy specifically on Green Belts, but other policies will be

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<sup>3</sup> NPF4 Glossary Definition of Nature Network:- A Nature Network is a joined-up system of places important for wild plants and animals, on land and in water. It allows plants, animals, seeds, nutrients and water to move from place to place and enables the natural world to adapt to change, providing plants and animals with places to live, feed and breed. Effectively functioning nature networks will connect existing nature rich areas through habitat corridors, habitat 'stepping stones', or habitat restoration areas.

Scotland's Nature Networks will enable opportunities for achieving ecological connectivity that meet local priorities for biodiversity and nature; whilst building and strengthening an evolving regional and national connectivity. Opportunities for implementation may be identified through, e.g. LDPs and/or Local Biodiversity Action Plans and/or other existing or new mechanisms such as those developed under the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy Delivery Plan, to achieve connectivity within and across urban, peri-urban and rural landscapes.

<sup>4</sup> Scottish Government [Local Development Plan Guidance \(May 2023\)](#)

relevant to particular decisions affecting specific areas of Green Belt. The Scottish Government have emphasised that NPF4 must be read as a whole, rather than considering any policy in isolation. (See national policy sections below)

## **Local Development Plans and the Identifying and Modifying of Green Belts**

All areas of Scotland are required to have new Local Development Plans (LDPs) within 5 years of the adoption of NPF4 (ie by early 2028). These new LDPs will last 10 years rather than 5 years as was previously the case - a change made in the 2019 Planning (Scotland) Act. NPF4 contains instructions on Green Belts for local authorities producing new LDPs which say:

*LDPs should consider using green belts, to support their spatial strategy as a settlement management tool to restrict development around towns and cities.*

*Green belts will not be necessary for most settlements but may be zoned around settlements where there is a significant danger of unsustainable growth in car-based commuting or suburbanisation of the countryside.*

*Green belts should be identified or reviewed as part of the preparation of LDPs. Boundary changes may be made to accommodate planned growth, or to extend, or alter the area covered as green belt. Detailed green belt boundaries should be based on evidence and should be clearly identified in plans.*

This means that all existing Scottish Green Belts should be reviewed before 2028 at the latest and new Green Belt areas may be identified and included in proposed LDPs<sup>5</sup>.

The Scottish Government [Local Development Plan Guidance \(May 2023\)](#) gives further guidance to LAs about the LDP process. Particularly relevant to Green Belts is the need for authorities to take the six overarching spatial principles for planning places set out in NPF4<sup>6</sup> into

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<sup>5</sup> Proposed LDPs or 'proposed plans' are the draft LDPs which local authorities must consult the public on. Following consultation they can be modified prior to being examined by Scottish Government Reporters before the LA can adopt them.

<sup>6</sup> 6 Overarching spatial principles in NPF4 are: **Just transition** ('... empower people to shape their places and ensure the transition to net zero is fair and inclusive'); **Conserving and recycling assets** ('...make productive use of existing buildings, places, infrastructure and services, locking in carbon, minimising waste, and building a circular economy'); **Local living** ('... support local liveability and improve community health and wellbeing by ensuring people can easily access services, greenspace, learning, work and leisure locally'); **Compact urban growth** ('... limit urban expansion

account in preparing their Proposed Plan. The guidance also suggests that *'planning authorities may consider building the spatial strategy up from the perspective of protecting and promoting the assets, including nature based assets, and infrastructure, needed **to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change**. A whole-systems approach to emissions management is the ultimate aim'*. The guidance continues:

*'Green belts can form a part of the spatial strategy and where appropriate may be considered as **part of a strategic, integrated approach to blue green infrastructure and ecosystem services**. Therefore in developing their spatial strategy, planning authorities can consider green belts alongside other policy designations such as blue and green infrastructure, green networks, nature networks, countryside around towns and rural areas. Together, these tools can be used to progress action towards climate change mitigation and adaptation e.g. safeguarding and enhancing natural capital that can support carbon capture (tree planting) and/ or as part of a natural capital approach for water management and storage (e.g. safeguarding floodplain capacity and areas that do or could provide key flood risk management services to safeguard communities). They can play a role in providing outdoor access to green networks which link urban and rural areas.'*

## **TYPES OR FORMS OF GREEN BELT AND GREEN BELT BOUNDARIES**

The word 'belt' implies a circle around a settlement, but the term 'Green Belt' can also refer to other forms:

- some inner-city green spaces
- green networks
- green buffers eg. to prevent the merging of settlements
- green corridors and green wedges into towns
- strips , including coastal strips

The LDP Guidance (2023) says the form should be appropriate to the location and that the LDP should show the detailed boundary of the Green Belt. It also states that the following should be excluded from

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so we can optimise the use of land to provide services and resources, including carbon storage, flood risk management, blue and green infrastructure and biodiversity'); **Rebalanced development**. *'...create opportunities ...in areas of past decline, and manage development sustainably in areas of high demand.'*); **Rural revitalisation** (*'... encourage sustainable development in rural areas, recognising the need to grow and support urban and rural communities together'*).



Green Belts as alternative zonings should cover them: existing settlements, major educational and research uses, major businesses and industrial operations (including existing mineral extraction operations), airports and Ministry of Defence establishments.

The LDP Guidance (2023) also says that significant areas of brownfield and vacant and derelict land, which may have potential for development should be excluded.

Green belts are intended to be retained long term, but are not necessarily permanent. It is helpful for the boundaries to be physically clear, and the LDP Guidance (2023) expects them to have *'clearly identifiable visual boundary markers based on landscape features, such as rivers, tree belts, topographical features, railways or main roads. It states that 'Hedges and field enclosures, or back gardens will rarely provide a sufficiently robust boundary'.*

However, it can be argued that there is much value in having jagged and porous Green Belt boundaries because that maximises access to the open space. It may be that as the quality and availability of digital planning information increases the need for clear visual boundaries on the ground is reduced.

Where boundaries are unclear or are altered, more clarity could be achieved by planting a line of trees or some other physical feature. For example if a new LDP releases land from the existing Green Belt there may be a need to define a new boundary. In these circumstances, the LDP Guidance suggests LAs consider using development briefs or masterplans for the developments prompting this release, to set requirements for new boundaries. This could be landscaping or tree belts which will mature over time and define development edges.

## **WHAT CAN LOCAL COMMUNITIES DO TO PROTECT THEIR GREEN BELT?**

Public and community involvement in the planning system is a key principle behind the reform of the planning system introduced in the 2019 Planning (Scotland) Act. There are two main ways this can be done within the planning system : Proactively, by engaging with the creation of **Local Development Plans (LDPs)** and reactively by **responding to planning applications** for development affecting the Green Belt.

### **Engaging with new Local Development Plans (LDPs)**



These spatial plans set out how areas will change in the future, including where development should and should not happen. There are several opportunities for local people to engage with the LDP process and to highlight the importance of your Green Belt to the local community in terms of wellbeing and recreation, as well as its environmental and sustainability benefits. It is a good idea to highlight your preferred options around Green Belts early - the Scottish Government has put a lot of emphasis on early engagement with communities. As a rough guide the table below describes the main, formal engagement opportunities:

<p><b>Participation statement</b> (Details how your local planning authority intends to engage with the community in developing the LDP)</p>	<p>You can comment on this and ask for changes if you think the engagement could be more effective<sup>7</sup></p>
<p>Preparation of the <b>Evidence Report</b> (early engagement). Evidence gathering can involve public meetings, surveys or more innovative methods. You could also submit views and information direct to the LA planning department</p>	<p>You should have the opportunity to contribute to the evidence gathering at the start of the LDP process. Evidence for new Green Belts, or changes to Green Belt boundaries should be included in the Evidence Report so reasons why areas should be protected can be submitted at this stage. As highlighted in the LDP section above these can refer to using Green Belts as part of wider blue green infrastructure and ecosystem approaches to climate mitigation and adaptation</p>
<p><b>Call for Ideas</b> (optional additional stage that LAs may or may not treat as a separate opportunity to engage)</p>	<p>You can submit specific ideas for what should happen at a site if you haven't done so already. Previously known as 'Call for Sites' this was an opportunity for landowners or developers to ask for areas to be allocated for types of development but is now intended to be broader so communities can propose ideas too</p>
<p><b>Proposed Local Development Plan (PLDP)</b></p>	<p>There will be a 12+ week public consultation on the published draft LDP or PLDP - at which point you can support what is proposed or ask for modifications to the PLDP by highlighting any concerns over which areas are proposed for designation as Green Belt</p>

<sup>7</sup> The Scottish Government consulted on draft guidance on how LAs should engage with the public on LDP production in 2023 and are currently finalising it.

<p><b>Local Place Plans</b> (LPP)</p>	<p>LAs will issue an invitation to communities interested in producing their own LPP early in the LDP cycle. LAs have to take notice of any registered LPPs during the production of a new LDP but as yet we don't know how influential they will be.</p>
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More information on how to engage with the LDP process is available on the APRS webpages and in [APRS's Community Guidance on Local Development Planning](#).

A change following NPF4 is the intention (in policy) that new housing development should be plan-led and thus happen on sites allocated for it in the LDP, with far fewer exceptions<sup>8</sup> (and at least following NPF4 policy) no Green Belt land releases for large scale speculative housing developments. This means that the allocation of land for housing during the development of the LDP is potentially more influential in terms of what subsequently gets developed than was previously the case. Whilst the use of existing buildings and brownfield sites for housing is encouraged by NPF4, lobbying by commercial developers for the allocation and development of generally more lucrative greenfield sites and for changing Green Belt boundaries to allocate sites for housing is likely to continue and increase at all stages of the LDP process. Writing in support of proposals you agree with in the PLDP may be just as important as opposing ones you'd like to see changed. Planning Authorities have to allocate enough land for housing in the LDP to more than meet the MATHLR<sup>9</sup> figure set out in NPF4. The MATHLR is the minimum amount of land, by reference to the number of "housing units", that is to be provided by each planning authority in Scotland for a 10 year period, as set out in Annex E of NPF4. The final housing land allocation in the LDP is now referred to as the Local Housing Land Requirement and should be managed as a 'housing land pipeline' by the LA with allocations earmarked for short, medium and longer term development.

### **Responding to Planning Applications**

Whilst NPF4 is clear that many types of development will not be supported on designated Green Belt, anyone (individuals or would-be developers) can nevertheless apply for planning permission on Green Belt land. NPF4 policy 8 gives support for some development types (mostly

<sup>8</sup> Exceptional releases of unallocated land for housing are possible under NPF4 policy 16 in limited circumstances and if certain criteria are met.

<sup>9</sup> MATHLR = Minimum All Tenure Housing Land Requirement

related to rural land management or where the open nature of the land will be maintained) **as long as the requirements set out in policy 8 a) ii) are met.** It also gives support to other potentially more intrusive developments eg essential infrastructure and renewable energy developments. Those deciding planning applications should consider them based on the development plan (NPF4 and the LDP) and any material considerations.

Be ready to respond, either to support or object to the proposal based on planning criteria, within the specified time scale. Most planning applications, once announced, only give 21 days to respond, though some planning departments are flexible about allowing late responses if you contact them.

Depending on the scale or impact of the proposal, planning decisions may be made by delegation to planning officers or by Councillors (often in a special planning or development committee), having been advised by council officials who, among other things, will summarise the objections received.

### **How to find planning applications**

Planning applications will be announced in the local press, online, or in weekly lists produced by LA planning departments<sup>10</sup>. Direct neighbours of the application site should be notified directly and Community Councils are sent weekly lists of 'live' planning applications affecting their area. Planning Registers are now usually made public online on LA 'Planning Portals'. These are updated regularly, so it is a good idea to check potential applications often and look at the details if Green Belt appears to be affected, though this can be time consuming. To find planning applications online, go to your Local Authority website and find the Planning Portal - usually via a link such as 'planning applications' or 'planning and building'.

Community Councils should be especially alert, but others in the local community should not assume that official bodies are safeguarding the interests of Green Belts. It's a good idea to establish a local Green Belt Group (either as part of the community council or separate from it) which will focus on issues in your area to ensure that green belts are both protected and enhanced, eg. with footpaths or community woodlands.

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<sup>10</sup> Publicity requirements are set out in the Scottish Government's Planning [Circular 3/2022](#): development management procedures

Several such groups already exist in Scotland; APRS can put you in touch with one if you want further advice.

Always make a note of the reference given to an application by the LA and quote it in any correspondence.

### **What can you say in responses to planning applications?**

Everyone has a right to respond to LDP consultations or planning applications. It can be helpful to get the support of community councils or other local groups, though individual responses are also valuable. When responding to an application, remember that if a proposal accords with the development plan and there are no material considerations indicating that it should be refused, permission should be granted. If the proposal does not accord with the development plan, it should be refused unless there are material considerations indicating that it should be granted. Material considerations have to be relevant to the development and use of land and to the particular application. The term is defined in the Scottish Planning [Circular 3/2022 Annex A](#).

Whether you are supporting or objecting to a proposal your argument will be stronger if you can refer to policies in NPF4 or the relevant LDP. You can mention any factors of the development that are not consistent with Policy 8 of NPF4, which focuses on green belts and is set out in full below, but other NPF4 policies may also support your case and some are briefly highlighted. You may also want to refer to other parts of NPF4 such as spatial principles if they seem relevant. For further information Planning Democracy have published a Community [Guide to Responding to Planning Applications](#).

### **National policies on green belts - what sort of development might be acceptable?**

NPF4 Policy 8a) i) details the types of development that may be considered appropriate for Green Belt locations<sup>11</sup> if the requirements at 8a)ii) are met. For proposed developments not included in that list, there is normally a presumption against their approval.

### **Policy 8**

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<sup>11</sup> If there is an incompatibility between a policy in NPF4 and a policy in an adopted LDP the document that is later in date has precedence. In most instances at present that will be NPF4 but in the future new LDPs could (at least in theory) introduce policies that are stronger or weaker on Green Belt protection if local circumstances dictate it.

a) Development proposals within a Green Belt designated within the LDP will only be supported if:

i) they are for:

- development associated with agriculture, woodland creation, forestry, and existing woodland (including community woodlands);
- residential accommodation required and designed for a key worker in a primary industry within the immediate vicinity of their place of employment where the presence of a worker is essential to the operation of the enterprise, or retired workers where there is no suitable alternative accommodation available;
- horticulture, including market gardening and directly connected retailing, as well as community growing;
- outdoor recreation, play and sport or leisure and tourism uses; and developments that provide opportunities for access to the open countryside (including routes for active travel and core paths);
- flood risk (such as development of blue and green infrastructure within a “drainage catchment” to manage/mitigate flood risk and/or drainage issues);
- essential infrastructure<sup>12</sup> or new cemetery provision;
- minerals operation and renewable energy developments;
- intensification of established uses, including extensions to existing buildings where that is ancillary to the main use;
- the reuse, rehabilitation and conversion of historic environmental assets; or
- one-for-one replacements of existing permanent homes.

**and**

ii) the following requirements are met:

- reasons are provided as to why a green belt location is essential and why it cannot be located on an alternative site outwith the green belt;
- the purpose of the green belt at that location is not undermined;
- the proposal is compatible with the surrounding countryside and landscape character;
- the proposal has been designed to ensure it is of an appropriate scale, massing and external appearance, and uses materials that minimise the visual impact on the green belt as far as possible; and

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<sup>12</sup> Glossary definition of Essential Infrastructure from NPF4: Essential infrastructure includes digital communications infrastructure; telecommunications infrastructure; all forms of renewable, low-carbon and zero emission technologies for electricity generation and distribution and transmission electricity grid networks and primary sub stations; water and waste water infrastructure; and transport proposals and travel networks identified in the local development plan.

- there will be no significant long-term effects on the environmental quality of the green belt.

### **Some other potentially relevant NPF4 policies**

Other policies in NPF4 which are likely to be relevant to some areas of Green Belt and some development proposals are listed below with a few details, but the [full policies](#) should be considered in the context of each case:

#### **Policy 1 - Tackling the climate and nature crises**

(Significant weight will be given to the global climate and nature crises)

#### **Policy 2 - Climate mitigation and adaptation**

(Development proposals to be sited and designed to minimise lifetime greenhouse emissions as far as possible. Site and design development to adapt to current and future risks from Climate change. Support for retrofitting existing development)

#### **Policy 3 - Biodiversity**

(All development proposals to contribute to biodiversity enhancement and proposals for major developments will only be supported where it can be demonstrated they can conserve, restore, and enhance biodiversity, and that potential negative effects should be fully mitigated. To strengthen nature networks). See also NatureScot's [Developing with Nature guidance](#) and Scottish Government's [draft Planning Guidance: Biodiversity](#)

#### **Policy 4 - Natural places**

(Protect natural places from unacceptable impacts arising from development, by virtue of type, location, or scale. This includes sites with international, national or local conservation sites or landscape areas designated in the LDP, as well as protected or priority species, the full list of which can be found on the NatureScot website. Impacts on local designated sites can be outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits).

#### **Policy 5 - Soils**

(Minimise damage to soils from development and unnecessary disturbance to undeveloped land. To limit development on prime agricultural land, and other land that is culturally or locally important for primary use (in LDP). Some protection for carbon-rich soils and support for restoring peatland) and development on peatland or carbon-rich soils. See NatureScot website for relevant land maps).

#### **Policy 6 - Forestry, woodland and trees**

(Developments that would result in the loss of ancient woodland or trees, native woodland, or hedgerows will not be supported. Developments should not fragment or split woodland).

#### **Policy 7 - Historic assets and places**

#### **Policy 9 - Brownfield, vacant, and derelict land**

(Promotes the reuse of previously developed land and empty buildings.

Proposals on greenfield sites will not be supported unless allocated in the LDP or explicitly supported by LDP policy. Demolition is the least preferred option).

**Policy 11 - Energy**

(Gives strong support for all forms of renewable, low-carbon and zero emissions technologies. Windfarms in National Parks and National Scenic Areas will not be supported, but elsewhere the design of energy projects should show how various impacts on the local community will be addressed, as well as impacts on landscape, woodland, and biodiversity and cumulative impacts).

**Policy 13 - Sustainable transport**

(promotes active and public transport whilst proposals which would generate significant travel and increase reliance on the private car are not supported)

**Policy - 14 Design quality and place**

(Supports proposals consistent with the 6 qualities of successful places: healthy; pleasant; connected; distinctive; sustainable; adaptable. Proposals should not be detrimental to the amenity of the surrounding area).

**Policy 15 - Local Living and 20-minute neighbourhoods**

(Promotes the Place Principle and creation of connected and compact neighbourhoods where the majority of daily needs can be met nearby via active or sustainable transport options).

**Policy 16 - Quality homes**

(Proposals for new homes on land not allocated for housing in the LDP will only be supported in limited circumstances including where planned housing is being delivered consistently faster than anticipated, rural homes policy applies, for small scale proposals within an existing settlement boundary or for less than 50 LA affordable homes).

**Policy 17 - Rural homes**

**Policy 18 - Infrastructure first**

(Impacts of proposals on infrastructure should be mitigated and provision should be made to address impacts - planning conditions, planning obligations or other legal agreements may be used with appropriate tests).

**Policy 20 - Blue and Green Infrastructure**

(Proposals that result in fragmentation of or a net loss of blue and green infrastructure will only be supported where they don't result in or exacerbate a deficit of blue or green infrastructure and maintain the integrity of the network; informed by LA's Open Space Strategy).

**Policy 21 - Play, recreation and sport**

(To promote and facilitate spaces and opportunities for play, recreation and sport. Temporary or informal play space on unused or underused land will be supported. Proposals that result in a loss of outdoor sports spaces or play or outdoor recreation facilities will only be supported in limited circumstances).

**Policy 22 - Flood risk and water management**

(Proposals in a flood risk area will only be supported in limited circumstances; proposals will not increase the risk of surface water flooding to others, or itself be at risk. Natural flood risk management developments will be supported.)



**Policy 24 - Digital infrastructure**

(Support for digital infrastructure proposals where the visual and amenity impacts have been minimised)

**Policy 26 - Business and industry**

(proposals for sites allocated in the LDP will be supported; support for unallocated only where there are not suitable alternatives in the LDP or employment land audit and the nature and scale of the activity will be compatible with the surrounding area).

**Policy 27 - City, town and commercial centres**

(proposals in town centres supported including in some circumstances residential uses, whereas outwith centres support given only in limited circumstances; consistent with a town centre first approach).

**Policy 28 - Retail**

Retail proposals at edge of centre sites will be supported if allocated in the LDP. Out of centre proposals will only be supported in limited circumstances)

**Policy 29 - Rural Development**

(Proposals in rural areas, should be suitably sited, scaled, and designed to maintain the character of the area. They should also take into account local living principles and current sustainable transport availability).

**Policy 30 - Tourism**

(Proposals for tourist facilities or accommodation in locations identified in the LDP supported. Various listed factors must be taken into account).

**Policy 33 - Minerals**

(Proposals for the sustainable extraction of minerals will only be supported where they meet various requirements including schemes for restoration).

**History of Green Belts in Scotland**

The previous version of this advice note contained a brief section on the history of Green Belts. This is being revised and will be posted on the APRS website separately in due course.

*'Green belts can benefit quality of life and the environment in our cities and towns.'*

(From Scottish Government Guidance on LDPs, 2023 in the section "Step by step guide – Proposed Plans – advice on taking account of NPF4 policies" )