

# New Futures: Former Places of Worship

## Planning and your church

## With Planning Aid Scotland



# Community Ownership Support Service

The Community Ownership Support Service (COSS) is a Scottish Government funded programme, set up to:

- Help community groups in Scotland take on assets for their community, giving them greater control of land and buildings, and helping to ensure local service delivery in the future
- Support local authorities, other public bodies and members of Community Planning Partnerships to transfer a building or land asset, recognising the benefits of partnership working with the community to meet future goals
- See the animated guide on the [COSS website](#)



**Community  
Ownership  
Support Service**

Development Trusts Association Scotland



# 'New Futures: Former Places of Worship' programme

- A three-year programme (January 2025 – December 2027)
- Funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and Development Trusts Association Scotland (DTAS)
- To provide enhanced support to community groups considering taking on a church across Scotland
- In direct response to the significant and unprecedented number of former places of worship that are due to for disposal over the next several years
- Staffing: Three Churches Advisors and a Churches Programme Officer



HISTORIC  
ENVIRONMENT  
SCOTLAND

ÀRAINNEACHD  
EACHDRAIDHEIL  
ALBA



Development  
Trusts Association  
Scotland

A Thriving Community-led Network



# Who delivers the programme, and what does it offer?

The Community Ownership Support Service, within the Development Trusts Association Scotland



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Churches Advisor for  
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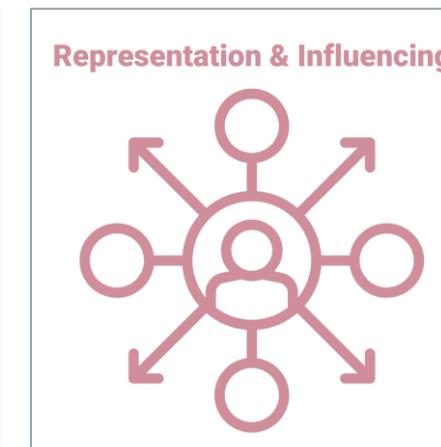
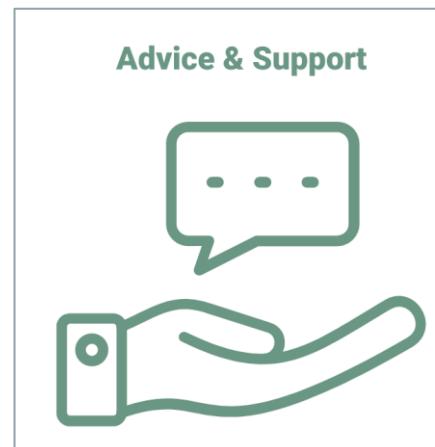
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**Louise Paterson**

Churches Programme  
Officer

[louise@dtascot.org.uk](mailto:louise@dtascot.org.uk)





# Today's workshop: Planning and your church

- Hosting: Claire Martin, and Harry Whitmore, COSS Churches Advisors
- Presenter: Anne Krippler, Planning & Projects Officer, [Planning Aid Scotland](#)
- Plenty of time for questions (at the end of the presentation)
- Housekeeping:
  - Please keep yourselves on mute, to avoid background noise
  - Feel free to introduce yourselves in the chat; and if possible, put your name and church building in your profile
  - Please also put any questions in the chat – we will pick these up at the end of the presentation
  - This session is being recorded, so turn off your camera if you want, and please be alert to that when sharing information in the questions and discussion part
- Follow up:
  - We will send the slides out by email
  - Feedback forms – this week and in three months' time
  - Get in touch! With us – and each other (via us if you'd prefer)



Kirk Covenant, Kirkmaiden Photo: COSS



# Our current online workshop programme

- We are running a series of workshops taking place online on Zoom
- There will be eight in total; the first one has already happened, and for an overview of the rest, see the website [here](#)
- Dates and topics for those before the end of the year are available for booking:
  - [Involving Your Community](#) Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2025, 13:00-14:30
  - [Finance and Fundraising 1: Mainstream Funders](#) Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December, 12:00-14:00
- Future topics (dates tba):
  - Finance and Fundraising 2: Other Funding Methods
  - Your Building: A Guide
  - Business Planning
  - Financial Planning
  - Community Right to Buy



Dreel Halls, Anstruther

Photo: COSS



# Contact details

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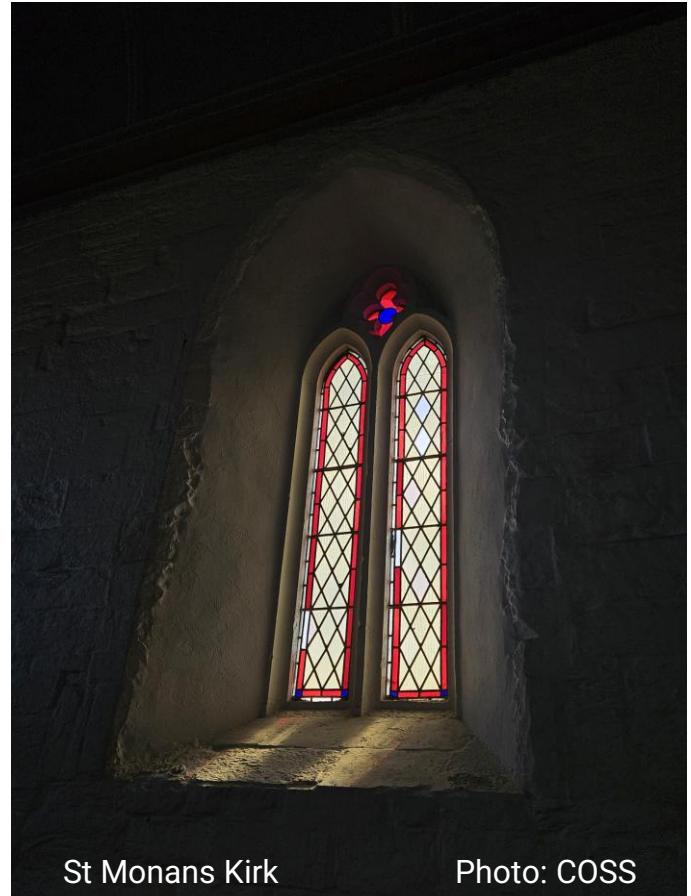
- [clairem@dtascot.org.uk](mailto:clairem@dtascot.org.uk) (note the 'm')! 07903 059822

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St Monans Kirk

Photo: COSS



**Community  
Ownership  
Support Service**  
Development Trusts Association Scotland



## Planning and your church

**Workshop for the New Futures: Former Places of Worship programme**

*Anne Krippler (MRTPI) – Planning & Projects Officer, Planning Aid Scotland*



# What you'll learn



In 60  
minutes

- Introduction to Planning Aid Scotland**
- What is Planning?**
- Permitted Development**
- Change in Use**
- Listed Buildings**
- Ecclesiastical Exemption**
- How are planning applications assessed?**
- The planning application process**



**Helping Scotland navigate the  
planning system for over 30 years**

**Advice**

**Training**

**Community Engagement**

**Volunteering**



# What We Do: Planning Advice



**Our original and flagship service.  
Funded by Scottish Government.**

- Free advice on any planning matter
- For Community Councils, community groups, business start-ups and individuals

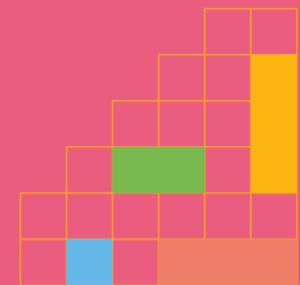
- ✓ **Independent and impartial**
- ✓ **Confidential**
- ✓ **Advice from chartered planners**
- ✓ **Facilitating approach**

“

*“I am so glad I contacted you and did not expect such a personal service.”*

*“You are running a wonderful and much needed service – thank you.”*

# What is Planning?





# 'Local Planning Authority'

We use the term 'the Council'

Accurate term:  
'Local Planning Authority'

The Local Planning Authority  
determines planning applications,  
and carries out other planning  
functions

&  
=

32 Councils  
2 National Park Authorities\*  
34 Local Planning Authorities

\*Loch Lomond NPA: determines planning  
applications in its area  
Cairngorms NPA: Applications are submitted to  
relevant council and called in if needed

# What is Planning?



The purpose of planning is to manage the **development and use of land** in the long term public interest.

Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997

# What is development?



“development” means the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land,

or the making of any **material change in the use** of any buildings or other land”

Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997

# Church Conversion



Therefore, converting a church to a community building may be a change in use and may require planning permission

# Think about



- What changes are you making to the building?
- What are you using the church for?

Answers to these questions will inform what type of planning application you may require and whether you need to apply for a building warrant.

- Is the building or area under historic protection?
- Are there environment protections?

Answers to these questions will inform whether you will need to take further action/research: Listed Building Consent, heritage and environmental assessments, tree surveys and other specific design considerations to minimise negative impact on the surrounding.

# Example- Cockenzie Old Parish Church



- Listed Building – Grade C
- 140 years old
- £225,000 grant to buy building
- Purchased by Cockenzie House and Gardens
- Changes to windows and doors
- 7 business units
- Assembly hall
- Access ramp & handrails



Source: [https://live.staticflickr.com/65535/51961080314\\_8bfea03381\\_b.jpg](https://live.staticflickr.com/65535/51961080314_8bfea03381_b.jpg)

# Example- Cockenzie Old Parish Church



Planning Application:

**25/00225/P**

Listed Building Consent:

**24/01019/LBC**

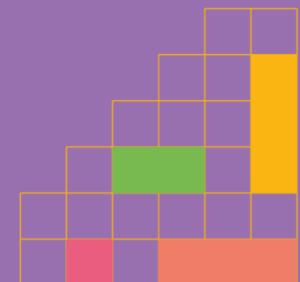
Alterations, part change of use of Church and Church Hall to Shops, financial, professional and other services (Class 1A), business (Class 4), assembly and leisure (Class 11), erection of fencing and formation of ramps



Source: [https://live.staticflickr.com/65535/51961080314\\_8bfea03381\\_b.jpg](https://live.staticflickr.com/65535/51961080314_8bfea03381_b.jpg)

# Permitted Development

*When does development **not** need permission?*



# Permitted Development



## Sometimes you do not need to ask for permission\*

- Set out in Permitted Development Order
- The Order is amended a lot – see guidance instead

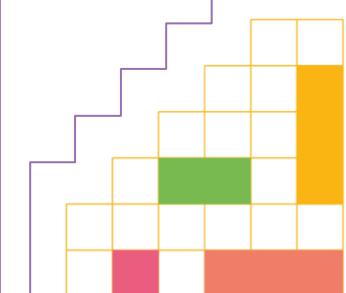
\* Criteria and exceptions apply, please seek planning advice

## Non-domestic guidance

### **Circular 2/2024: Non-Domestic Permitted Development Rights**

May 2024

 Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba



# Permitted Development Examples



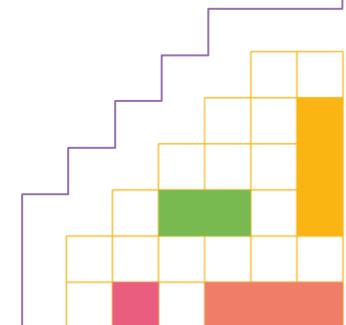
## Examples\*

- Gates and fences
- Solar panels, air source heat pumps
- Changes in Use\*

\* Criteria and exceptions apply, please seek planning advice

## Key exemptions/considerations:

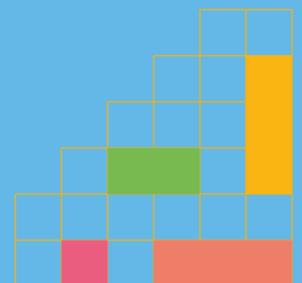
- Listed Building
- Conservation Area
- Front v back of building
- Size
- Statutory Undertakers



# Change in Use

*What uses are there?*

*What changes in use are permitted development?*



# The Use Class Order



- Each building has a use defined in planning law
- 11 use classes
- Changing the use of property **may** require planning permission

## Use Classes

**Class 1A - Shops and financial, professional & other services**

**Class 3 – Restaurants and cafés**

**Class 4 – Business**

**Class 5 – General industry**

**Class 6 – Storage or distribution**

**Class 7 – Hotels and hostels**

**Class 8 – Residential institutions**

**Class 9 – Houses**

**Class 10 – Non-residential institutions**

**Class 11 – Assembly and leisure**

**Sui generis' - anything which does not fall under a use class, e.g. betting shop, hot food take away**



# Relevant Uses

## Use Clase 10: Non-residential institution

- Churches and public halls

Change in use



## Use Class 11: Assembly

- Indoor and outdoor sport recreation

Change in use



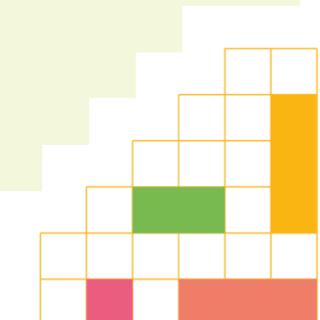
## Use Class 3: Restaurants and cafés

- Community Cafe



Use Class*	Use	Permitted Change
<b>10</b> Non-residential institutions	Use (not including residential use) a. as a crèche, day nursery or day centre; b. for the provision of education; c. for the display of works of art (otherwise than for sale or hire); d. as a museum; e. as a public library or public reading room; f. as a public hall or exhibition hall; or g. for, or in connection with, public worship or religious instruction, or the social or recreational activities of a religious body; h. as a law court.	No permitted change.  You will need to apply for permission if you deviate to uses outside this listing

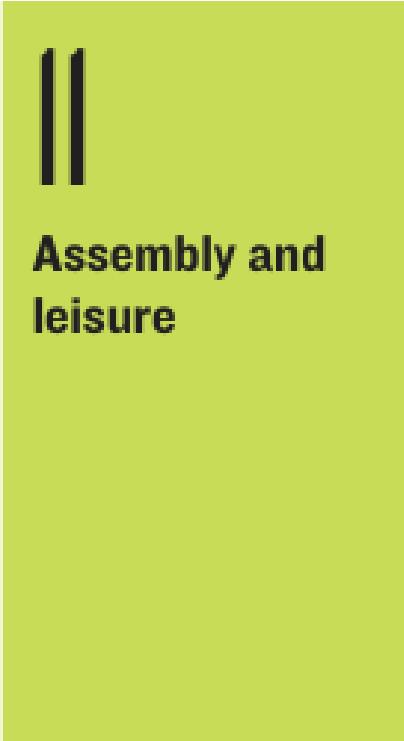
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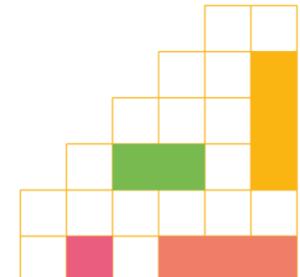
# Changing the use of a church



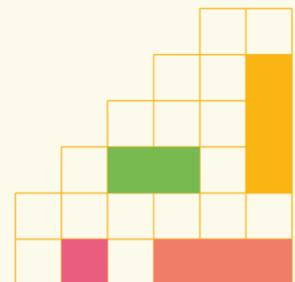
- You may introduce a mixed use
  - Community hall with café, sports & office space
- You will need to apply for permission
  - Example 'change in use from place of worship to mixed use for community purposes'



- a. cinema;
- b. concert hall;
- c. bingo hall or casino;
- d. dance hall or discotheque;
- e. swimming bath, skating rink, gymnasium or area for other indoor or outdoor sports or recreation, not involving motorised vehicles or firearms.



# Listed Buildings



# Our church is a listed building



A way to protect historic buildings.

It's a criminal offence to demolish, alter materially or extend a listed building without **listed building consent**.

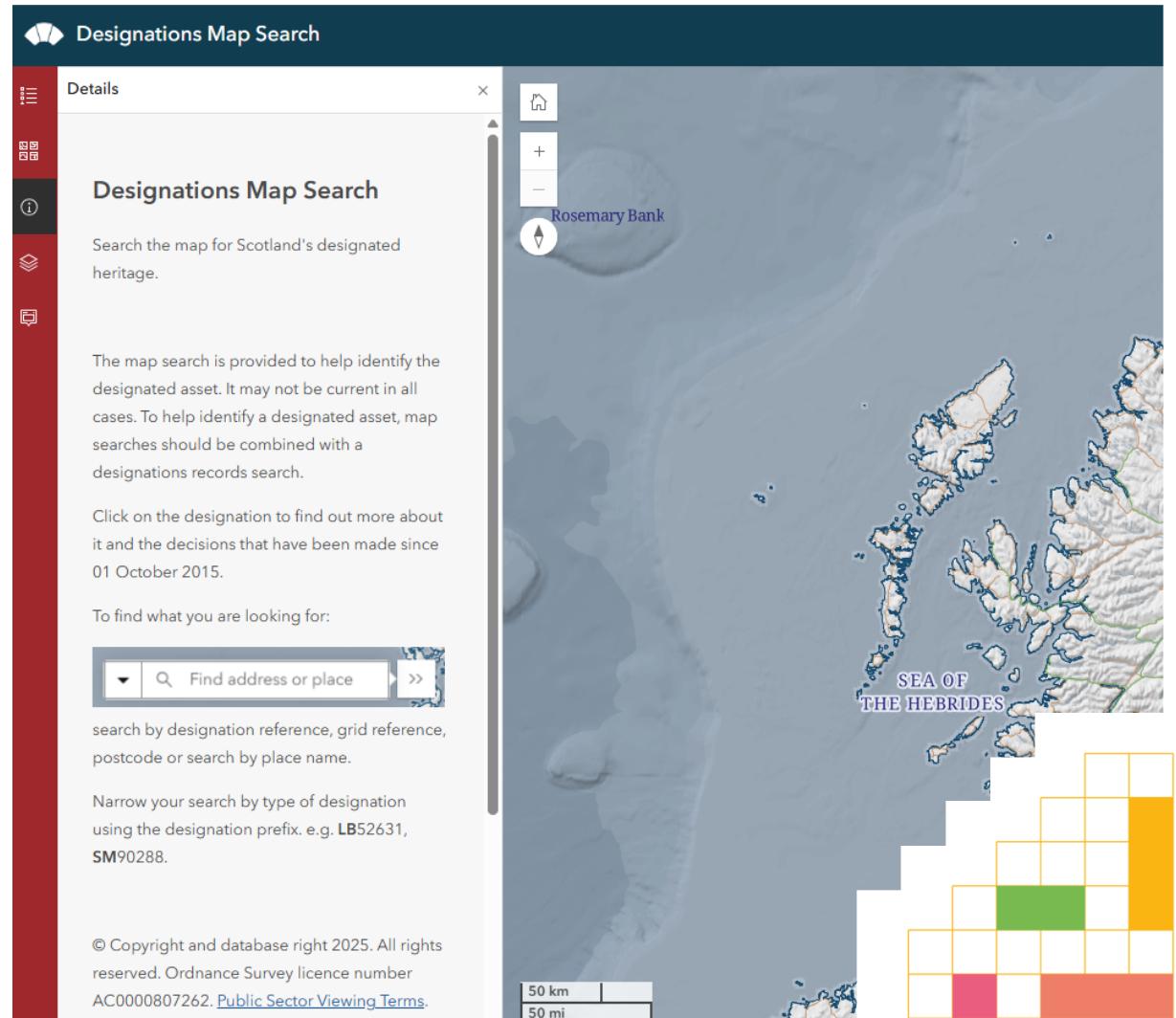
## Listed Building Consent

- Makes sure changes to the building are appropriate.
- Similar process to a planning application but considers internal AND external changes.



# Protections under a listing

- The whole building or structure
- The interior and exterior
- Other structures at address referred to as 'curtilage'  
e.g. Garden walls, gates, lodges, stables etc.
- Historic Environment Scotland holds information



# Categories of listing

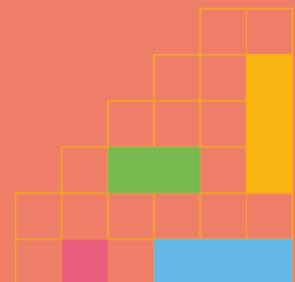


- Grade A  
‘Outstanding example’..
- Grade B  
‘Major example’...
- Grade C  
‘Representative example’...

‘... of a period, style or building type.’



# Ecclesiastical Exemption



# Ecclesiastical Exemption



IF

ecclesiastical buildings are being used for ecclesiastical purposes

THEN

they can be altered **without** the need for Listed Building Consent.

**Once you have acquired a church for community purpose, any changes may need Listed Building Consent.**

# Ecclesiastical Exemption Implications



**Some change may have been done to the building under the exemption which would normally not be acceptable.**

- You may be asked to revert those changes
- You need understand what are fixtures and what are fittings
- You need to find out what fixtures may be protected

## ECCLESIASTICAL EXEMPTION

A GUIDE TO HOW LISTED BUILDING CONTROLS ARE APPLIED TO PLACES OF WORSHIP



HISTORIC  
ENVIRONMENT  
SCOTLAND

ÀRANNNEACHD  
EACHDRAIDHEIL  
ALBA

NOVEMBER 2019

# Fittings v Fixtures



## Fittings

Loose furniture &  
Portable objects

**You don't need Listed  
Building Consent to  
remove fittings.**

## Fixtures

Items fixed to the building

- Doors, windows, panelling, fireplaces and memorials.

Items that are large and heavy may be considered to be 'fixed' by their own weight.

- Pews, communion tables, altars, fonts, pulpits and organs are normally considered to be fixtures.



# Ecclesiastical Fixtures

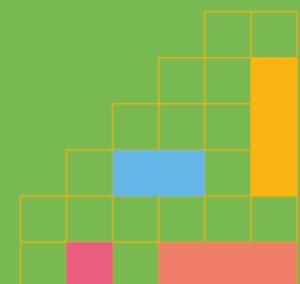
## ➤ Retention may be necessary

- 1) Where fixtures contribute to the character of a building
- 2) Built-in furniture that contribute to the interest and understanding of the building.

- If retention of such fixtures makes reuse of the building impractical, moving or consolidating the items within the building, or retaining exemplars of multiple units
- If removal is appropriate, you may be asked to donate items to the museum



# How are planning applications assessed?



# The Development Plan

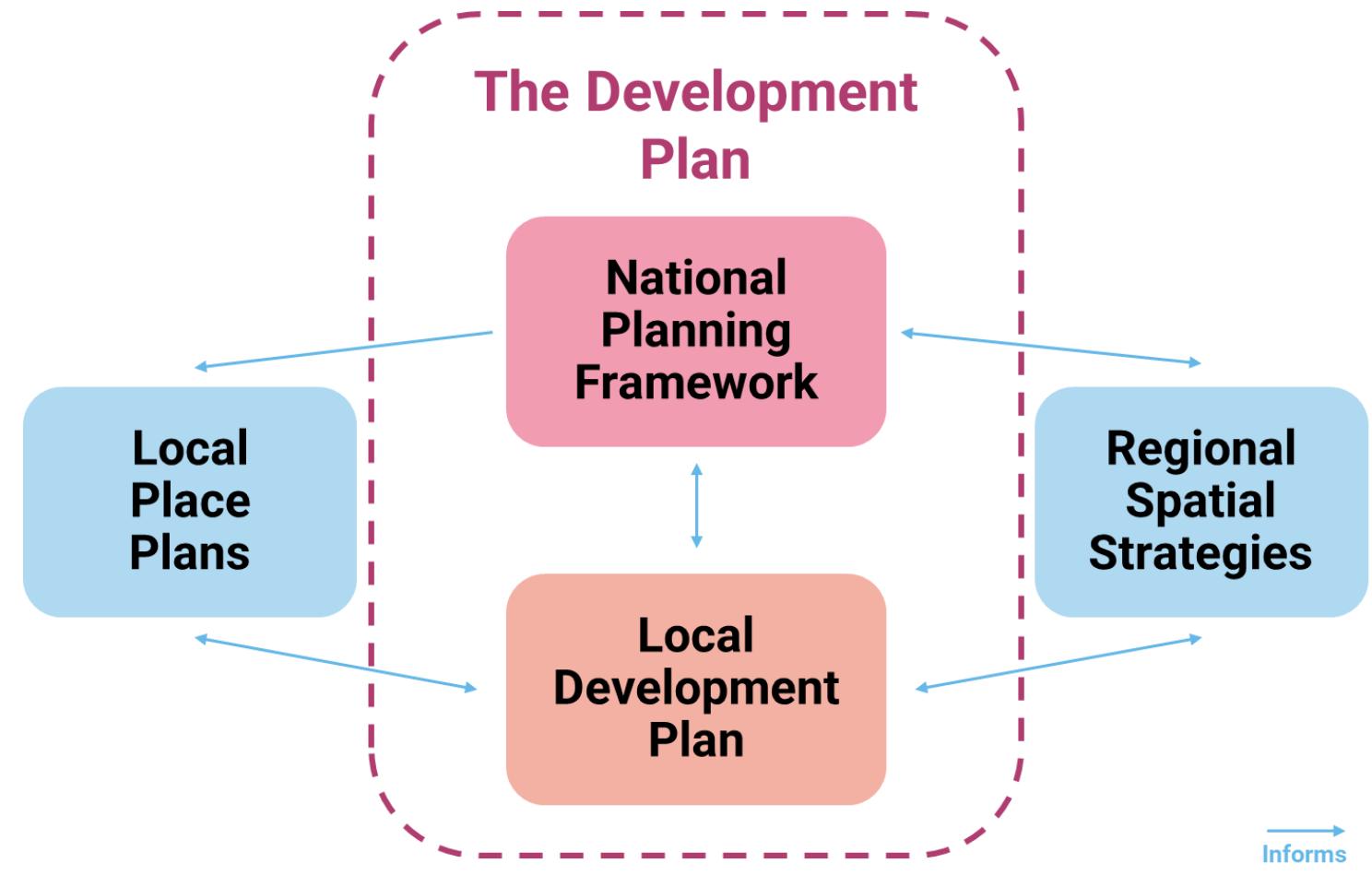


Development Plan is  
**statutory document**

Planning Officers are  
**required** to consider the  
Development Plan

Other plans are 'material  
consideration'

The 'Report of Handling'  
explains how policies were  
considered



# National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)



Scotland-wide planning document with planning policies which are used to determine all planning applications

**Includes:**

- **Spatial strategies and national outcomes**
- **33 planning policies**

**&**



# NPF4 – Key policies



## Policy 7: Historic assets and places

## Policy 9: Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings

## Policy 14: Design, quality and place

## Policy 15: Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods

### Historic assets and places

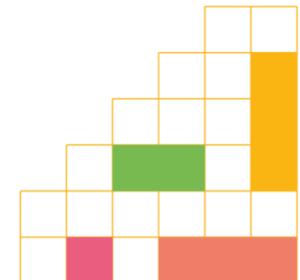
#### Policy Principles

##### Policy Intent:

To protect and enhance historic environment assets and places, and to enable positive change as a catalyst for the regeneration of places.

##### Policy Outcomes:

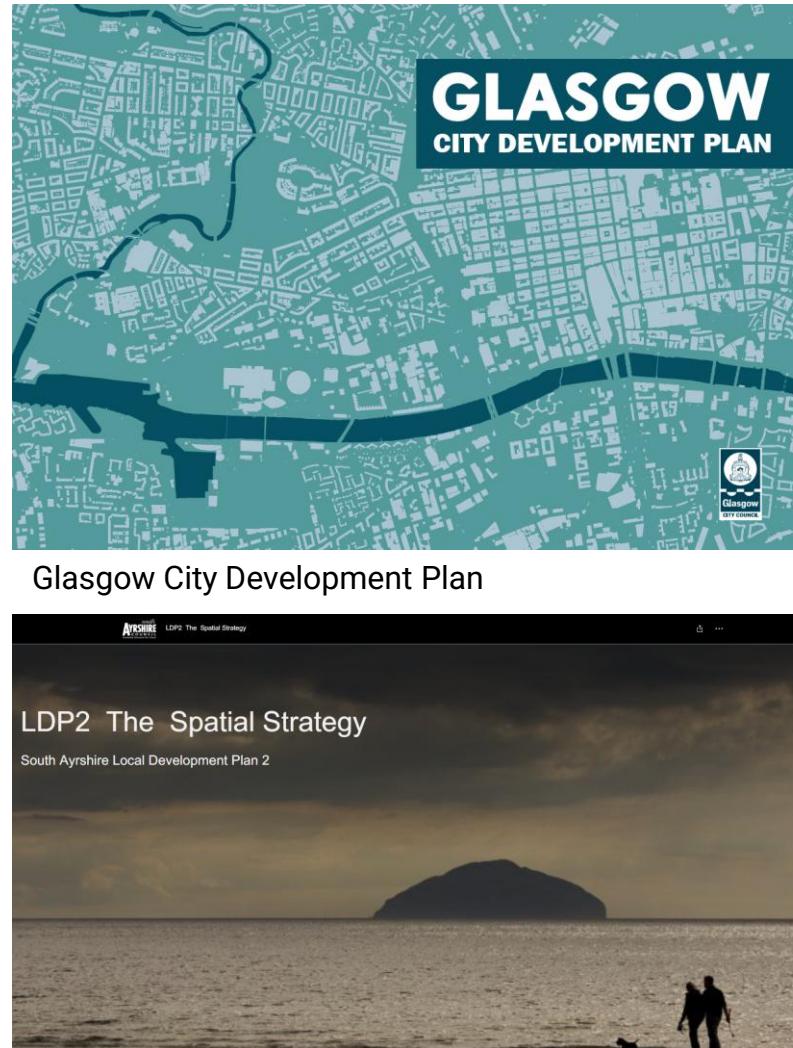
- The historic environment is valued, protected, and enhanced, supporting the transition to net zero and ensuring assets are resilient to current and future impacts of climate change.
- Redundant or neglected historic buildings are brought back into sustainable and productive uses.
- Recognise the social, environmental and economic value of the historic environment, to our economy and cultural identity.



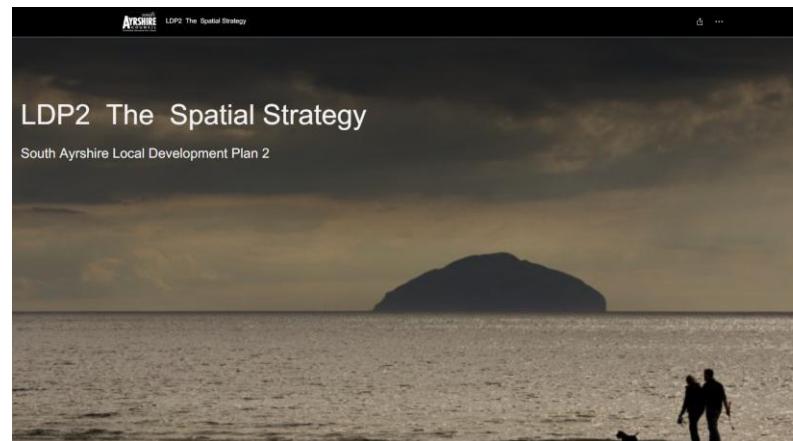
# Local Development Plan (LDP)



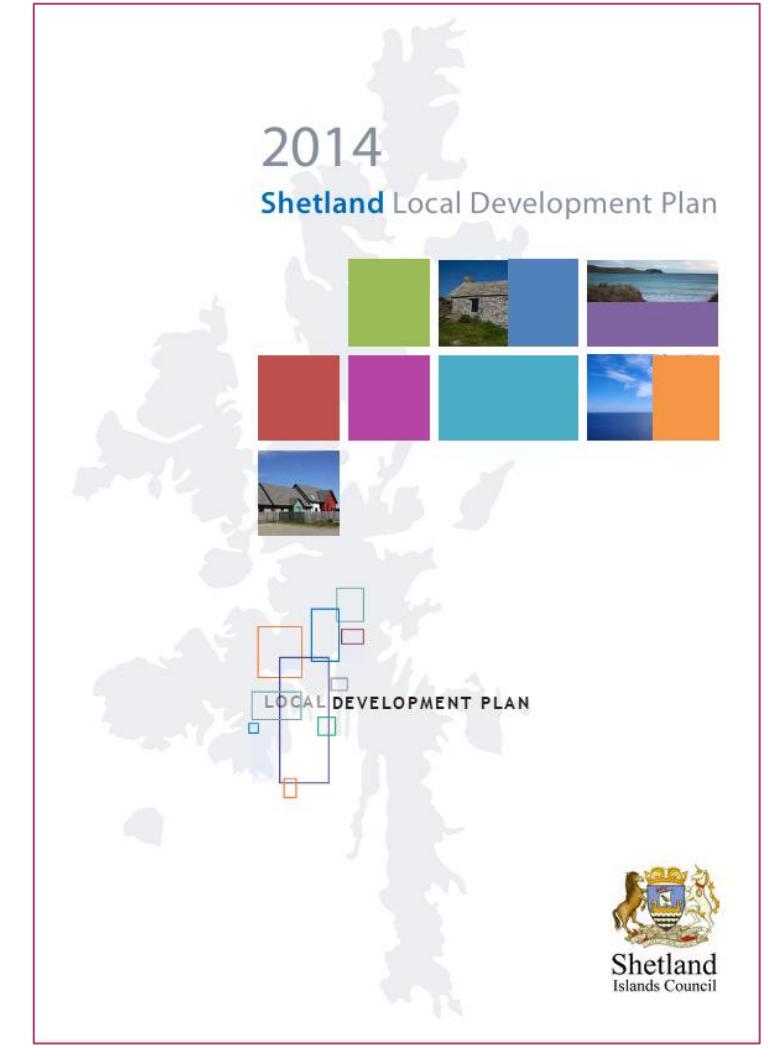
Highland-wide Local Development Plan



Glasgow City Development Plan



South Ayrshire Local Development Plan 2



Shetland Local Development Plan

# Local Development Plan



- Find your relevant LDP online

xxx Council Local Development Plan

Look at

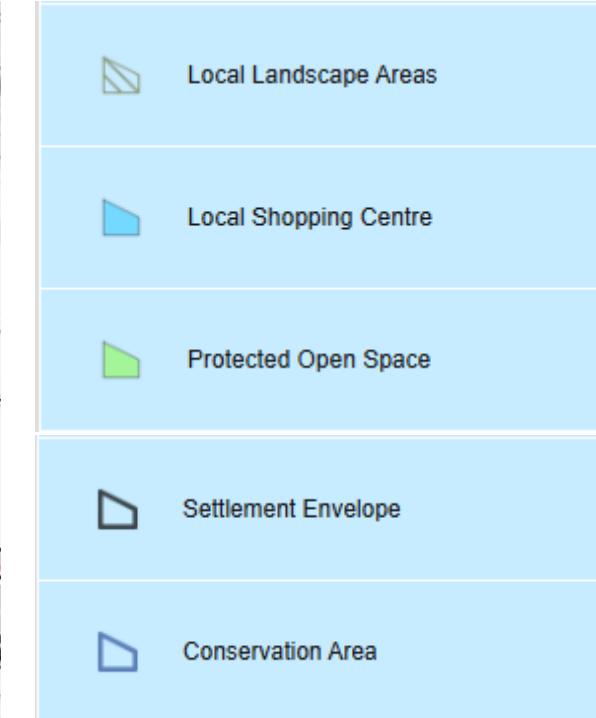
- General design policies
- Specific policies on community services & reuse of buildings
- Proposal maps

Council may also have additional guidance on historic buildings

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# Proposal maps



# Think about...

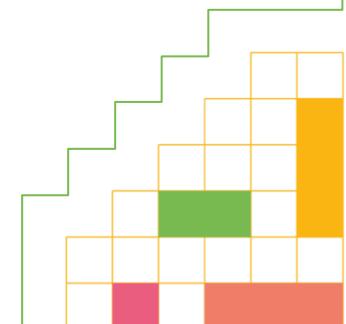


## Other factors

- Access and parking
- Design and fit with local area
- Natural landscape setting
- Impact on neighbours
- Trees / Tree Preservation Orders

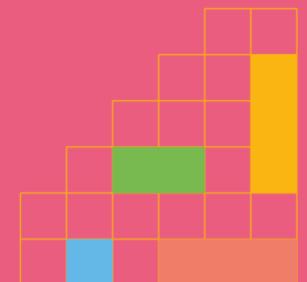
## Cost implications

- Site Services – water/gas/electricity/waste
- Supplier charges
- Finances - costs can add up e.g. specialist reports, services
- Business charges



# Application Process

*Pre-application, documents to be submitted, neighbours, validation, assessment, decision*





# Journey of a planning application

- Pre-Application Advice (optional)
- Pre-Application Notice (major only)

## Validation

- Submission, fee & validation
- Allocation of case officer
- Neighbour Notification

## Assessment

- Site Visit
- Policy Assessment
- Assessment of public and consultees comments

## Decision

Delegated Decision & Report of Handling  
OR  
Committee & Recommendation

## Decision Letter

- Granted  
OR
- Granted with condition  
OR
- Refused

# Pre-Application Advice



- paid service provided by council
- will identify relevant policy & guidance
- informal view - does not guarantee planning permission
- may help identify key issues
- find out what you need to submit with the application
- get into positive early dialogue with the Council





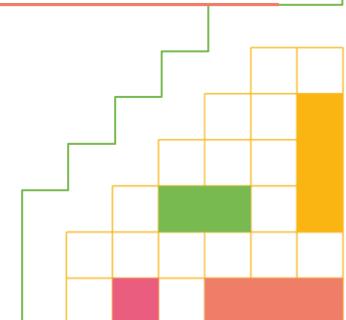
# Documents to be submitted

- Some documents are key for validation of application
- Pre-application can help identify these and reduce delays
- Further information may be requested during the process
  - This can slow down decision making

## Key documents:

- Application form
- Proof of payment
- Location and Site Plans
- Floor and Elevation Plans

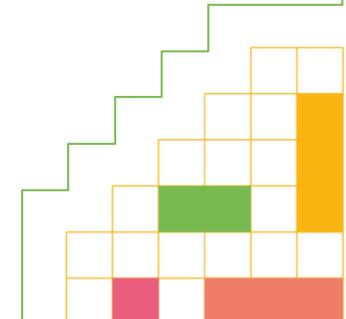
**Check out:** [Heads of Planning Guidance on Validation](#)



# Costs



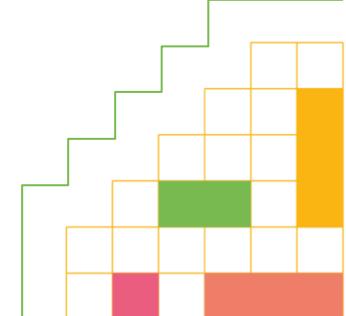
- Costs can vary a lot
- Fee for planning application depends on size of premises (in hectare)
  - Calculate fee using [Scottish Government Online Fee Calculator](#)
- Other costs
  - Agent
  - Pre-application (optional)
  - Drawings
  - Surveys and other assessments



# Timescales



- 6 months to get drawings and assessments done
- 2 months for pre-application discussion
- 2-4 months for planning decisions (if all goes to plan)
  - Double/triple time for contingency
- Other costs and timescales
  - Building Warrant
  - Fire legislation
  - Licensing





# Submitting a planning application



## Welcome to eDevelopment.scot



### What is the eDevelopment Service?

eDevelopment is the Scottish service that enables users to apply online for planning permission, building warrants, appeals, and a range of other forms, to their local and planning authority. It is managed by the Scottish Government in partnership with all Scottish local and planning authorities.

For more information, why not check out [What is eDevelopment?](#) designed to assist newcomers to the service and to Scotland's planning and building standards sectors.

[Download User Guide PDF](#) (355Kb, requires Adobe Reader)

[Login](#)

[Create an Account](#)

## LATEST NEWS:

### IMPORTANT - Issue identified if using the site and paying online with a MacOS Device

An issue has been reported for some users accessing the eDevelopment service with a Chrome browser on a MacBook. When paying by credit/debit card, you may encounter a "Comms Error" preventing payment. This appears to be a bug with the Chrome Browser on MacOS.

If this is affecting you, we would recommend that you use a different browser (e.g. Safari) or device (e.g. PC) to make your payment.

### Need help using eDevelopment?

Just go to our [Support Tab](#) link in the top right hand corner of the site to find helpful information, user guides, guidance, and to request assistance from our Support Desk team.

You can also click on the "Need Help?" icons on pages across the site.

### Exciting Milestone for eDevelopment!

From January 2016 to May 2023

**1,500,000**

total submissions made using



[Home](#)

[Getting Started](#)

## How do I get started?

You will need an account to get started. To create your account click on the 'Create an Account' button in the top left of this page.

Once you are set up, just scroll down to find out how to get started on your application. If you need assistance you can download our [user guide](#), or visit our Support tab located in the top-right corner of the site.

## Will I need a Location / Block Plan for my application?

You will need a Location or Block Plan for many Planning and Building applications. For more information on minimum requirements for location plans for planning applications plans click [here](#).

If you do not yet have a plan, you can buy one through our approved suppliers.

We have chosen these suppliers because they:

- use Ordnance Survey data,
- offer a range of scales and plan types

**www.eplanning.scot/**

# Neighbour notification



- Neighbour = anyone within 20metres of application boundary
- Public to comment following notification
- Anyone can comment
- 21 days to comments
- 1 representation per household



# Material Considerations



**Section 25 of the Planning Acts states that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise**

**Material Considerations mean an element of discretion applies**

# Material Considerations



## Two test points

- It should serve or be related to the purpose of planning.
- It should fairly and reasonably relate to the planning application.

[Section 25 of the Town and Country Planning \(Scotland\) Act 1997](#)

### 3. MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

**pas** building active citizenship

This sheet covers a fundamental concept of the Scottish planning system.

**Update:** The Planning (Scotland) Act received Royal Assent in July 2019 and introduces many changes to the Scottish planning system. A programme for introducing reforms has been prepared by the Scottish Government. National Planning Framework 4 was adopted by Scottish Ministers on 13 February 2023 representing a very significant change to the Scottish planning system.

This information sheet provides impartial information about the Scottish planning system and was written by chartered planners.

#### THE SCOTTISH PLANNING SYSTEM

- Planning impacts on everyone in terms of the places we live in and how they may change, whether with regard to major development proposals or changes to our homes. The Scottish planning system is overseen by The Scottish Government, which prepare and implement planning legislation, policy and guidance. Overall, planning is seen as a key factor in meeting Scotland's National Outcomes, with these based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- The purpose of planning as set out in the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 is to manage the use and development of land in the long term public interest. Addressing climate change sits the forefront of current planning policy. This lies a desire for a system of governance with greater public participation and placemaking, with new opportunities under the 2019 National Planning Framework for communities to prepare Local Place Plans.

# Material Considerations Examples



Your property value

Moral, religious or political arguments

Likeliness of development going ahead

Property rights including boundary, access and ownership disputes

Change in personal view or dislike of proposal

Business conflict

Public objection\*

Site planning history

Additional guidance and policies

Comments from statutory and other consultees

Nuisances such as noise, smell, fumes, strong lights

Visual appearance and its relationship to its surroundings

Traffic/ vehicle parking



\*On relevant planning grounds

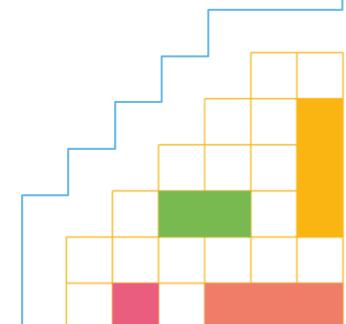
# Dealing with representations



- Inform your community as soon as possible – even if there is no statutory requirement
- Create meetings or surveys to gather the concerns of the neighbours
- Clarify common misconceptions
- Explain the process
- Try and create a sense of certainty

- No one likes change
- Listen more – think and consider concerns before responding
- Can feel very personal – remain factual



# Decision



## Planning Permission granted

- You can start your development

## Granted with conditions

- Make sure your plans fulfil the conditions before you start
- You may need to submit additional information to the planning authority before proceeding

## Refused

- You can appeal your decision. Your decision letter will explain who to appeal. Either Local Review Body or DPEA\*.

# Discharge of conditions



Planning Conditions to meet the tests within [Circular 4/1998](#)

Can be found at the end of your decision letter

Discharge at different stages

- Before
- During
- After/ lifetime



# Appeals – Planning Applications

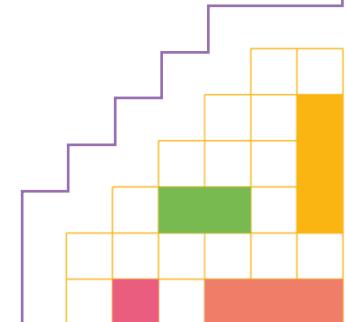


Only applicant has the right to appeal.

Appeal is dealt with by:

- The Council's **Local Review Body (LRB)** for local applications
- Scottish Government's **Directorate for Planning and Environmental Appeals (DPEA)** for local and major applications

Applicant must appeal within 3 months of application being refused.



# Next steps & Advice



Email to follow with presentation slides

**You can get free advice on our website**

[Planning Aid Scotland Advice](#)

- Advice Service
- [Information Sheets](#)

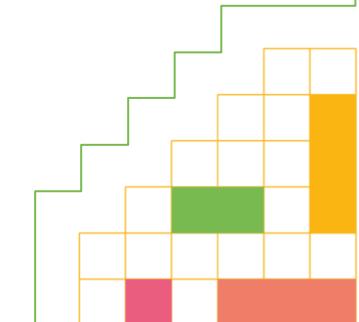
## Other guidance:

Historic Environment Scotland:

- [Ecclesiastical Exemption](#)
- Guidance on the [Principles of Listed Building Consent](#)
- [Use and Adaptation of Listed Buildings](#)

Scottish Government:

- [Development Management Circular 3/2022](#)





# Thank you!

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