
NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

24th March 2021

Planning Committee

Title:	Policy Guidance Note: Housing in the Countryside
Purpose:	To inform Members of the preparation of a Draft Policy Guidance Note on Housing in the Countryside and seek approval to consult on guidance.
Recommendation:	<p>It is recommended that the Planning Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Notes the detail of the proposed guidance relating to Housing in the Countryside, and2. Approves the Draft Housing in the Countryside policy guidance note, provided in Appendix 1, for consultation

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The need for up-to-date planning guidance on matters relating to new housing in the countryside has been identified. It is intended that this Policy Guidance Note will be a public facing document made available through the Council's website.
- 1.2 The document provides guidance to developers and applicants on the relevant Local Development Plan policies and matters that should be considered when approaching an application for the development of one or more houses in the countryside. The guidance note may be referenced by Planning Officers when assessing the merit of an application for housing in the countryside and will be a material consideration in decision making.
- 1.3 Reference is made to new Permitted Development Rights for agricultural and forestry buildings which come into force on 1st April 2021. These rights permit buildings which were in agricultural or forestry use on 4th November 2019 to be converted into a dwelling house under permitted development rights, under specific circumstances.
- 1.4 Subject to Member approval, consultation on the Draft Policy Guidance Note will be undertaken to inform the final guidance.

2. Background

- 2.1 The need to produce guidance on Housing in the Countryside has been identified as part of a wider review of the Council's existing Planning Guidance following to ensure all policies and decision-making is in line with Local Development Plan (LDP) following adoption in November 2019.
- 2.2 Existing planning guidance 'Rural Design Guidance' and 'Design Guidance for Single Houses in Rural Areas', is not referred to within LDP and as such its weight and relevance as a material consideration has been reduced as we move forwards with utilising the Placemaking Policy within decision making.
- 2.3 The importance of applicants and developers engaging with planning officers in pre-application discussions is emphasised throughout the new guidance note. These discussions will aid in determining both the viability of the proposed housing development and the correct application route that should be taken. It is noted that Planning Applications in Principle (PPP) will not be supported as they do not provide the level of detail or information required to assess the appropriateness of the proposal.
- 2.4 The policy guidance note is in alignment with national and local planning context, namely; Scottish Planning Policy, Planning Advice Note (PAN72): Housing in the Countryside and Local Development Plan 2 (LDP 2).
- 2.5 Key LDP policies; Strategic Policy 1: Spatial Strategy – The Countryside Objective, Strategic Policy 2: Placemaking and Detailed Policies 15, 16, 17, 18, 22 and 19, are expanded on in detail within the guidance note to define how these policies should be applied to Housing in the Countryside applications.
- 2.6 Should applications accord with the policy context set out within the guidance note, core design principles are provided. These principles outline how proposed Housing in the Countryside developments should respond to their setting, siting and layout and the general approach to take when considering housing in the countryside developments. A checklist of criteria, which proposals are expected to meet is provided:
 - Thorough site analysis should be undertaken and evidenced.
 - The proposal should have a positive impact on the setting.
 - The character of the local area is not compromised.
 - The proposal does not negatively impact the existing landscape.
 - The proposed palette of materials and colours should relate to the character of the landscape.
- 2.7 Definitions for key terminology throughout the guidance note are provided alongside scenarios and clarifications depicted by diagrams. Elements that are defined include:
 - Gap Sites
 - Expansion of Groupings
 - Clusters and Settlements
 - Defensible Boundary
 - Houses of Exceptional Design Quality

- Proximity
- Visually Identifiable Group
- Common Feature

2.8 Links to all the policy documents referred to within the guidance note are provided as further reading for the applicant or developer.

2.9 It should be noted that subject to approval by Members, the formatting of the guidance note, and illustrations may change once an agreed graphic style for all updated Planning Guidance has been determined.

3. Proposals

3.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes the detail of the proposed guidance relating to Housing in the Countryside and approves the Housing in the Countryside policy guidance note, provided in Appendix 1, for consultation.

4. Implications / Socio-economic Duty

Financial

4.1 None

Human Resources

4.2 The consultation and the implementation of the Guidance will be addressed within existing staff resources.

Legal

4.3 The Policy Guidance Note will be material consideration in decisions on planning applications for Housing in the Countryside. The policy guidance note expands on existing policies outlined within Scottish Planning Policy, Planning Advice Note (PAN72): Housing in the Countryside and North Ayrshire's Local Development Plan 2.

Equality/Socio-economic

4.4 None

Environmental and Sustainability

4.5 The guidance note aligns with the Council's net zero carbon policy, encouraging applicants/developers to utilise innovative and sustainable technologies that deliver low carbon homes.

4.6 Preference will be placed on renovation of existing structures rather than replacement.

4.7 The guidance note acknowledges that due to the nature of Housing in the Countryside, there are more significant challenges linking in with sustainable transport as these locations typically have poorer public transport links. Notwithstanding this, utilising available funding to install Electric Vehicle charging points for electric or hybrid cars is encouraged.

Key Priorities

- 4.8 The guidance note aligns with many the Council's key priorities as set out in the Council Plan, including a sustainable environment; affordable, modern and well-designed homes; vibrant, welcoming and attractive places; and new homes constructed.

Community Wealth Building

- 4.9 New Housing in the Countryside can provide rural housing solutions and support rural communities, including through the creation of local employment opportunities in support of Community Wealth Building aspirations. The guidance will assist applicants, developers and the Local Authority in facilitating pre-application discussions on potential Housing in the Countryside.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Subject to Member approval, the draft Policy Guidance Note will be made available on the Council's website and consultation undertaken with Elected Members and planning stakeholders, including Community Councils before finalising the guidance.

RUSSELL McCUTCHEON
Executive Director – Place

For further information please contact **Rowan Carmichael, Assistant Planning Officer** on rowancarmichael@north-ayrshire.gov.uk.

Background Papers

None

Appendix 1

Housing in the Countryside – Policy Guidance Note
North Ayrshire Council

Housing in the Countryside

Policy Guidance Note

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- 5.8 Common Feature

6.0 Further Reading

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. This document provides guidance to developers and applicants on matters that should be considered when approaching an application for the development of one or more houses in the countryside.
- 1.2. North Ayrshire Council supports the sustainable development of rural housing, in accordance with the Local Development Plan, which empowers the local economy and communities while protecting our countryside. This guidance will inform decision making when assessing applications for dwelling houses in the countryside against the Local Development Plan (LDP2) and specifically the Countryside Objective.

2.0 Application Advice

2.1 Pre-application advice

- 2.1. It is recommended that in the first instance, developers/applicants engage in pre-application discussions to establish suitability prior to submitting an application. All applications must be supported by the criteria outlined within [Section 3](#) of this guidance document however every application will be determined on its own merit.
- 2.2. The difference between different application routes are listed below;
 - i. **Full Planning Permission:** a decision is granted based on the detailed proposal of how the site would be developed. Planning permission can be granted in full or subject to conditions set out by Planning Officers.
 - ii. **Planning Permission in Principle:** an alternative way of obtaining planning permission which separates the consideration of matters of principle for proposed development from the technical detail of the development.
 - iii. **Prior Notification:** Where a proposal falls under Permitted Development Rights. the applicant/developer must notify the Planning Authority before works can proceed. Approval for specified elements of the development may be required.

Please Note: Planning Permission in Principle (PPP) applications will not be supported. This is because PPP does not provide the level of detail or information required to assess the appropriateness of the proposal.

- 2.3. Should the developer/applicant believe their development falls under Permitted Development Rights, this should be clarified with Planning Officers prior to commencing works.
- 2.4. Agriculture or forestry buildings which have been in use since 4th November 2019 may be converted to a dwelling house under permitted development rights providing;
 - the building footprint does not extend beyond the existing external dimensions
 - the building is not listed
 - the residential floor space does not exceed 150 sqm
 - the number of separate residential units developed does not exceed 5 units

The developer must not commence with works until the relevant criteria of any permitted development, including the grant of any necessary prior approval has been met. Detailed information on Permitted Development Rights can be accessed in [Section 6.0](#) of this guidance note.

- 2.5. To establish whether either Prior Approval (for a development under Permitted Development) or Planning Permission in full is required, early discussions should be undertaken with North Ayrshire Council to determine the appropriate application route.

- 2.6. The relevant bodies within North Ayrshire Council to contact for application advice are listed below;

Development Planning | For policy advice

Planning Services | Economic Development & Regeneration | Place
North Ayrshire Council, Cunninghame House, Irvine, KA12 8EE

Email | ldp@north-ayrshire.gov.uk

Development Management | For pre-application enquiries

Planning Services | Economic Development & Regeneration | Place
North Ayrshire Council, Cunninghame House, Irvine, KA12 8EE

Email | eplanning@north-ayrshire.gov.uk

2.2 Supporting Information

- 2.7. Where applicable, applications should be accompanied by the relevant supporting information. Pre-application discussions with Planning Officers will establish the range of information required.
- 2.8. The below table sets out by development type what supporting information may be requested by North Ayrshire Council. The list is not exhaustive and supporting information will be determined on a case by case basis.

	Design Statement	Structural Condition Report	Ecological Survey	Site Condition and History Report
Retention, Renovation or Replacement of Existing house	✓	✓	✓	
Conversion of existing structure	✓	✓	✓	
Redevelopment of Brownfield Site	✓		✓	✓

3.0 Policy Context

- 3.1. Links to all policies referenced can be found in [Section 6.0](#) of this guidance note.

3.1 National planning context

- 3.2. National policy for rural development is set out in the [Scottish Planning Policy](#) with additional guidance provided in the [Planning Advice Note \(PAN72\): Housing in the Countryside](#).
- 3.3. Housing in the Countryside requires a multifaceted approach. The quality of the development will be influenced by numerous factors, namely; location, siting, design and infrastructure. To achieve quality rural development, dwellings should be design-led and respond sensitively to both landscape considerations and the wider context that the house sits within to avoid looking like it has been 'placed down' on a plot rather than carefully incorporated into its setting. The appearance of the dwelling should be at an appropriate scale for its location and details should be well proportioned with careful consideration given to materials. In addition to this, services required for the dwelling should not impact on resources for the area and renewable technologies should be used where possible.

3.1.1 Scottish Planning Policy

- 3.4. The Scottish Government have a clear stance on the need to deliver quality housing within the countryside with importance placed on setting and sustainable development. Rural development should promote a pattern of development that is appropriate to the character of the area, ensure rural communities are sustained and growth is supported while protecting the existing natural environmental quality.
- 3.5. Accommodation which supports rural businesses and/or repopulates and sustains rural areas to stimulate rural economic growth and sustainability will be encouraged. Support will be provided to developments that proactively rebuild the resilience of rural communities and economies by enabling well designed, sustainable development.
- 3.5. Proposed developments that enable the development of essential infrastructure for rural areas including affordable housing will be supported.

3.1.2 PAN72 Housing in the Countryside 2005

- 3.6. The advice note cites six key design principles; incorporation within the landscape, well considered site layout, appropriate site access, the scale of the proposed building, materials used and detailing. These key considerations should be carefully thought through when approaching housing in the countryside.
- 3.7. Planning Officers will assess applications against the principles outlined within PAN72. Developers / applicants are encouraged to review this guidance prior to contacting North Ayrshire Council for pre-application advice.

3.2 Local planning context

3.2.1 Key LDP Policies

3.8. **Strategic Policy 1: Spatial Strategy - The Countryside Objective**

The Spatial Strategy is based on the principle that we want to direct the right development to the right place. To ensure rural communities can grow and thrive, the Countryside Objective sets out principles for development which promote a sustainable pattern of development that empowers the rural economy and communities to develop while protecting our countryside areas as a valuable asset. In principle, the LDP supports proposals (including new dwelling houses) outwith identified towns and villages for:

3.9. **b) ancillary development for existing rural businesses and uses, including housing for workers engaged in agriculture or forestry.**

- i. The applicant should provide a robust business case or justification that highlights the need for the housing and the benefit it will serve.
- ii. The dwelling must be solely occupied by workers.
- iii. The ancillary development should support the rural economy and support local employment.
- iv. The proposed development should not cause loss of prime agricultural or forestry land nor should the development impact on any land or features of environmental or ecological interest.

3.10. **f) Sensitive infilling of gap sites consolidating existing developments where it would define/ provide a defensible boundary for further expansion.**

- i. **‘Gap site’** - a site within an established developed area, for example where a house/building once stood or where two houses or other permanent buildings of equivalent residential size, occupying separate and discrete plots, front a road or access lane. A gap site is not a site between a property and a settlement boundary. This is to protect the settlement boundary.
- ii. **‘Defensible Boundary’** - existing, well-established topographical, natural, or landscape features which provide a ‘stop’ and well-defined boundary help stop further expansion into sensitive areas or the wider countryside. A development which infills a gap and strengthens a defensible boundary may be acceptable subject to compliance with the Placemaking Policy; proposals that would protrude out with a natural building grouping or landscape feature should be discouraged to avoid encroachment into the countryside.

3.11. **g) Small scale expansion of settlements on Arran and Cumbrae for community led proposals for housing for people employed on the island, where a delivery plan is included and infrastructure capacity is sufficient or can be addressed by the development and where the proposal meets an identified deficiency in the housing stock and is required in that location. All proposals will be expected to demonstrate the identified housing need cannot be met from the existing housing land supply.**

- i. Affordable housing aimed at locals (developed, for example by the Council, a Registered Social Landlord or community body) or led by local businesses for employee accommodation.
- ii. Local housing supply will be assessed against the Housing Land Audit to ensure the proposal addresses a deficiency of housing within the proposed area.

3.12. h) New housing in the countryside where it is a replacement or converted building; or it is a house of exceptional design quality.

- i. In relation to **'replacement or converted building'** the main consideration is the impact of the proposed building both relative to the one being replaced / converted and as a building within the setting in its own right i.e. is it suitable for the location and local context and character. This is where assessment against the Placemaking Policy would be used at this point to help determine this.
- ii. The visual impact of the proposal must not be any more detrimental than what is currently on the site. When assessing proposed replacement building(s), scale and massing are key considerations. Building footprint and ridge height should not be dissimilar to existing conditions.
- iii. Preference will be placed on renovation of existing structures rather than replacement.
- iv. In relation to **'a house of exceptional design quality'** the development will be expected to demonstrate all six qualities of a successful place as set out within the placemaking policy. See [Section 5.5](#) for further detail.

3.13. Sympathetic additions to existing well-defined nucleated groups of four or more houses (including conversion) in close proximity to one another and visually identifiable as a group with some common feature e.g. shared access. Additions will be limited to 50% of dwellings in that group as of January 2005 up to a maximum of four new housing units (rounded down where applicable).

- i. **'well-defined nucleated groups'** – when exploring the expansion of groupings, the infill of gap-sites to consolidate groupings should always be considered in the first instance. Where this is not possible the council may consider the expansion of a grouping of four or more houses at the end of a cluster. Additions are limited to 50% of dwellings in that group.
- ii. **'close proximity'** – close to established rural settlement or group. Compact form as opposed to dispersed development.
- iii. **'visually identifiable group'**- proposed and existing buildings relate to one another visually not just in terms of proximity. For example, buildings that sit well together and relate to one another in terms of proportions, massing, orientation, architectural style, relationship to the road, materials or boundary treatments, settlement pattern and not separated by a clear defensible boundary
- iv. **'common feature'** – shared access, boundary, landscape features, courtyard

3.14. **Strategic Policy 2: Placemaking**

Where new housing could be supported in principle by criteria b) and f) to i) of the **Countryside Objective** the **Placemaking Policy** should be applied to assess whether the detailed design of the development is acceptable i.e. the right development in the right place.

To safeguard and enhance the environmental quality, proposals should achieve the six qualities of a successful place; Distinctive, Welcoming, Safe and Pleasant, Resource Efficient, Adaptable, Easy to Move Around and Beyond.

Quality	Clarification	Example
Distinctive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposals must consider what is locally 'distinctive' ie. the scale and building typologies in the surrounding area; The proposed plot sizes must relate proportionally to neighbouring plots. 	Coldrach Farmhouse - Moxon Architects
Welcoming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposals must enhance their environments and not detract from the landscape or local landmarks in any way. 	Fir Chlis, Harris - Icosis
Safe and Pleasant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposals must create a positive sense of place that clearly distinguishes between public and private space. Where applicable, proposals must consider passive surveillance. 	Strone of Glenbancher – Loader Monteith
Resource Efficient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposals must not detrimentally impact on existing infrastructure. Providing resource solutions that have the potential to benefit the wider community and utilise renewable energy will be favoured. Proposals should align with the Council's net zero carbon policy, utilising innovative and sustainable technologies to deliver low carbon homes. 	Old Orchard Development, Kirkton of Craig – Garry Adam Architects
Adaptable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposals must be adaptable for alternative future use. The site must be capable of adapting changes of use, density, and typologies. 	House in Colbost, Skye - Dualchas
Easy to Move Around and Beyond	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposals should ensure that site layouts consider key desire lines, routes through. Due to the nature of Housing in the Countryside there are more significant challenges lining in with sustainable transport as these locations typically have poorer public transport links. Notwithstanding this, utilising available funding to install Electric Vehicle charging points for electric or hybrid cars is encouraged. Larger developments should improve active travel links to local amenities. Developments shouldn't impact on existing walking routes and where possible should seek to enhance core paths and rights of way. 	Nedd, Loch Nedd– Mary Arnold-Foster Architects

3.15. Other relevant LDP policies

Should proposals be supported by Strategic Policy 1 and Strategic Policy 2, proposals will need to accord with detailed policies within the Local Development Plan, namely but not limited to;

- Policy 15 – Landscape and Seascape
- Policy 16 – Protection of our Designated Sites
- Policy 17 – Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park
- Policy 18 – Forestry, Woodland, Trees and Hedges
- Policy 22 – Water Environment Quality
- Policy 29 – Energy Infrastructure Development

3.2.2 Rural Design Guidance & Design Guidance for Single Houses in Rural Areas

- 3.16. This guidance is not referred to within LDP2. As such the weight of this guidance, as a material consideration, has reduced from LDP 1 as we move towards utilising the Placemaking Policy within decision making.
- 3.17. Notwithstanding the above, much of the content within each document is still relevant and can be used for guidance to aid officers assessing developments against the Placemaking Policy and as a reference document when liaising with developers/applicants during design and pre-app discussions.
- 3.18. In particular, the Rural Design Guidance addresses the Distinctive and Welcoming criteria in terms of siting, infill, materials and issues around character and what is locally 'distinctive'. Design Guidance for Single Houses in Rural Areas cites examples of Houses of Exceptional Design Quality and outlines the key steps that should be followed to achieve a house of this standard.

4.0 Design Principles

4.1 Setting

- 4.1. The proposed location of the dwelling must be carefully considered and positioned strategically within the wider landscape. Initial things to consider are;
- How will the site be accessed? Will this have a negative impact on the setting?
 - Is the site in a sensitive area of the countryside?
 - How close is the proposed site to an existing building or group of buildings?
 - Would the proposed location have a negative impact on existing rural community infrastructure?

4.2 Sitting and Layout

- 4.2. The positioning of the new dwelling within the boundary of the proposed site is crucial. Proposals should;
- Be optimally located on site following careful site analysis assessing the best position for maximising shelter and solar gain
 - Responding to topography
 - Safeguard our landscapes
 - New developments should respect existing settlement patterns
 - The size and layout of the building should reflect surrounding typologies
 - Maximise the use of land on site and/or allowing for future development.

4.3 Key Design Principles

- 4.3. Consideration should be given to the natural constraints of the site, including topography, shelter, and solar gain, as well as the proximity to local services and employment opportunities. Houses in the countryside are **expected** to meet the following criteria:

Design Principles Checklist	Achieved (✓)
Thorough site analysis should be undertaken and evidenced. The proposal must sensitively address and respond to key constraints eg. topography, natural and built heritage, trees and woodland. Developers / applicants should evidence this analysis within their Design Statement.	
The proposal should have a positive impact on the setting. Developers / applicants should evidence the impact the proposed dwelling will have on the surroundings.	
The character of the local area is not compromised. Developers / applicants should evidence how the size and shape of the proposed dwelling relates to surrounding traditional buildings.	
The proposal does not negatively impact the existing landscape. Developers / applicants should evidence how the design responds to the site's landform, climatic conditions, and existing access routes / infrastructure.	
The proposed palette of materials and colours should relate to the character of the landscape. Developers / applicants should evidence that quality, durable materials have been selected. Samples of proposed materials may be requested by Planning Officers.	

5.0 Definitions

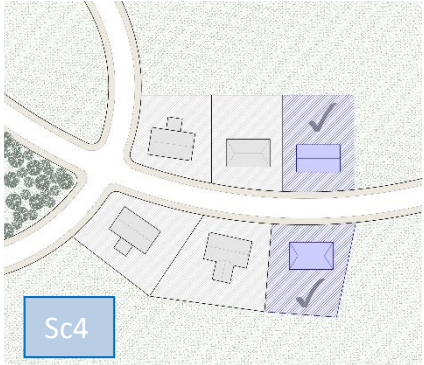
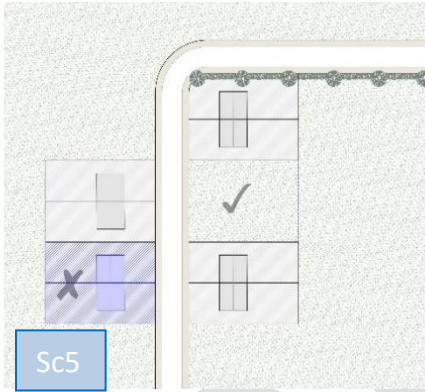
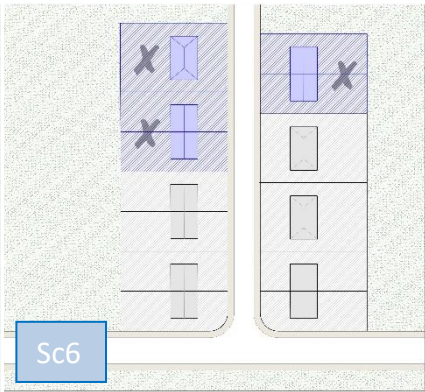
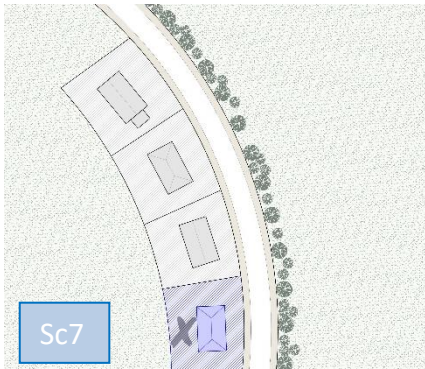
5.1 Gap sites

'Gap site' - a site within an established developed area, for example where a house/building once stood or where two houses or other permanent buildings of equivalent residential size, occupying separate and discrete plots, front a road or access lane.

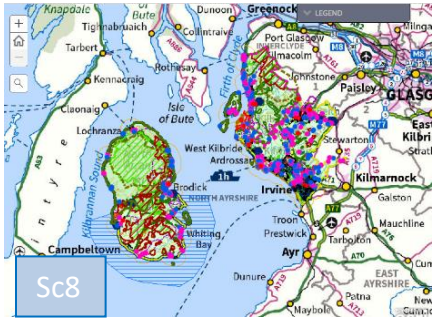


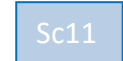

Scenario	Clarification
<p>Sc1</p>	Sc1. Presumption in Favour <p>A. Gap site between two existing dwelling houses. Development on this site would infill an existing gap and consolidate an existing small cluster.</p> <p>B. Corner plot bound by two existing dwellings.</p>
	Sc1. Presumption Against <p>C. Plot ignores the development opportunity presented by gap site A. Preference should always be to develop within a gap site situated between existing dwellings.</p> <p>D. Undeveloped greenfield site is not considered to be a gap site.</p>
	Sc2. Presumption in Favour <p>E. Development on both plots utilises a gap site located between two existing dwelling houses.</p> <p>F. The plot is bound by a defensible boundary preventing a sprawl of dwelling houses from occurring.</p>
	Sc2. Presumption Against <p>G. Plot is not bound by a defensible boundary or existing dwelling houses. Developing on this land sets precedent for sprawl to occur rather than filling in existing gaps.</p>
<p>Sc3</p>	Sc3. Presumption in Favour <p>H. Development on both plots utilises a gap site located between two existing dwelling houses.</p> <p>I. The plot is bound by a defensible boundary preventing a sprawl of dwelling houses from occurring.</p>
	Sc3. Presumption Against <p>J. Plots ignore the opportunities to develop presented by sites H and I. The sites are not bound by a defensible boundary or existing dwelling house preventing a sprawl of new dwellings from occurring.</p>

5.2 Expansion of Groupings

When exploring the ‘**expansion of groupings**’, the infill of gap-sites to consolidate groupings should always be considered in the first instance. Where this is not possible the council may consider the expansion of a grouping of four or more houses at the end of a cluster. Additions are limited to 50% of dwellings in that group.

Scenario	Clarification
	Sc4. Presumption in Favour Infill is not possible and existing grouping is of four or more houses. Proposal to expand grouping by two dwellings, increasing the grouping by 50% complies with policy.
	Sc5. Presumption Against Proposed expansion of grouping does not utilise an available gap site in the first instance. Only once all available gap sites are utilised can an expansion of grouping be considered.
	Sc6. Presumption Against Proposed expansion is increasing grouping by over 50% and would therefore not be deemed acceptable.
	Sc7. Presumption Against As there are less than four dwellings in the existing grouping, expansion would not be acceptable. Should there be available gap sites, these could be explored as viable alternatives.

5.3 Clusters and Settlements

Scenario	Clarification
	<p>Sc8. Settlements</p> <p>Settlements are defined within the Local Development Plan.</p> <p>More detailed mapping showing settlement boundaries is provided within our online proposals map. A link to this can be found at www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/ldp.</p>
	<p>Sc9. Well-defined Nucleated Groups</p> <p>Groups of four or more houses with shared and defining infrastructure are classed as well-defined nucleated groups. When considering an expansion of grouping, it should be a well-defined nucleated group.</p>
	<p>Sc10. Rural Clusters</p> <p>Random rural clusters can be found scattered across the rural landscape. Typically, these clusters are agricultural holdings.</p>
	<p>Sc11. Rural Villages</p> <p>Rural villages are more established than random clusters but are not defined as settlements within the LDP. They exist as well-defined nucleated groups.</p>
	<p>Sc12. Small Holding Cluster</p> <p>A dispersed group of rural clusters across a landscape does not constitute being classed as a rural grouping. This is due to two contributing factors;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. There is no shared and defining infrastructure as would be found in a rural village or settlement2. The group of clusters is not defined as a settlement within the LDP <p>These groups of rural clusters would be defined as small holding clusters not well-defined nucleated groups.</p>

5.4 Defensible Boundary

‘Defensible Boundary’ - existing, well-established topographical, natural, or landscape features which provide a ‘stop’ and well-defined boundary help stop further expansion into sensitive areas or the wider countryside. A development which infills a gap and strengthens a defensible boundary may be acceptable subject to compliance with the Placemaking Policy; proposals that would protrude out with a natural building grouping or landscape feature should be discouraged to avoid encroachment into the countryside.

Scenario	Clarification
Sc13	<p>Sc13. Natural and Landscape Boundaries</p> <p>The diagram highlights three situations which are classed as defensible boundaries; two natural and one landscape form. The small forest to the rear of the plot and the hedge acting as the boundary between the plot of land and the pavement are both natural defensible boundaries. The agricultural wall dividing the plot is a landscape defensible boundary.</p>
Sc14	<p>Sc14. Topographical Boundaries</p> <p>The hill illustrated in the diagram acts as a topographical defensible boundary between two housing plots.</p>
Sc15	<p>Sc15. Strengthening Boundaries : Favourable</p> <p>Developments that infill a gap and strengthen an existing defensible boundary may be deemed acceptable.</p>
Sc15	<p>Sc15. Strengthening Boundaries : Unfavourable</p> <p>Proposed boundaries that protrude out with a natural grouping or landscape feature will be discouraged to avoid encroachment into the countryside.</p>
Sc16	<p>Sc16. New boundaries</p> <p>Proposed boundary treatments should integrate the dwelling into the landscape. Designs should take cognisance of defensible boundaries in the surrounding area to determine the most appropriate approach for the site.</p>

5.5 House of Exceptional Design Quality

In relation to **'a house of exceptional design quality'** the development will be expected to demonstrate all six qualities of a successful place as set out within the placemaking policy. In addition to achieving SP2 Placemaking Policy outlined in [Section 3.2.1](#), Houses of Exceptional Design Quality should display the following criteria;

Scenario	Clarification
Sc17	Sc17. Presumption in Favour <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A design led approach that achieves bespoke, one-off homes which embrace contemporary architecture whilst being identifiable within an Ayrshire and Scottish context, potentially referencing the history and cultural setting of the site or its locality in the design. ○ High quality materials utilised throughout the proposal. ○ Site specific access, where possible formed from existing entrance points. ○ Sensitive boundary treatment which blends with existing landscape features. ○ Keep widow and door openings consistent.
	Sc17. Presumption Against <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Avoid contemporary design that 'could be anywhere' – the intention of the policy is to produce exceptional design quality that is appropriate for a North Ayrshire context, whether coastal, rural or island. ○ Avoid over complicated facades, avoid excess decoration.

5.6 Close Proximity

'close proximity' – close to established rural settlement or group. Compact form as opposed to dispersed development.

Scenario	Clarification
Sc18	Sc18. Presumption in Favour <p>Proposed development is compact in form and follows existing rural development patterns close to an established settlement or group.</p>
	Sc19. Presumption Against <p>Proposed development is dispersed and appears as a separate rural cluster – not an extension of the existing well-defined nucleated group.</p>
Sc19	

5.7 Visually Identifiable Group

'visually identifiable group' - proposed and existing buildings relate to one another visually not just in terms of proximity. For example, buildings that sit well together and relate to one another in terms of proportions, massing, orientation, architectural style, relationship to the road, materials or boundary treatments, settlement pattern and not separated by a clear defensible boundary

Scenario	Clarification
Sc20	Sc20. Presumption in Favour Proposed dwelling and existing buildings sit well together and relate to one another in terms of proportions, massing, orientation, architectural style, relationship to the road, materials or boundary treatments, settlement pattern.
Sc21	Sc21. Presumption Against Proposed dwelling and existing buildings are separated by a clear defensible boundary and do not relate to one another. The proposal is unsympathetic to the existing buildings.

5.8 Common Feature

'common feature' – shared access, boundary, landscape features, courtyard

Scenario	Clarification
Sc22	Sc22. Presumption in Favour Proposed development integrates features such as shared access, boundary, landscape features and a courtyard to coherently integrate the existing grouping and the proposal.
Sc23	Sc23. Presumption Against Proposed development does not share common features with existing grouping.

6.0 Further Reading

Links to all the policy documents referred to within this guidance note are listed below;

- [Permitted Development](#) – Amendment Order 2020
- [Scottish Planning Policy](#)
- [PAN 72](#) – Housing in the Countryside
- North Ayrshire Council [LDP2](#)
- [Rural Design Guidance](#)
- [Design Guidance for Single Houses in Rural Areas](#)

Ends.