



Development Plan Scheme 2026



CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction	page 2
2.0	Local Development Plan 2	page 4
3.0	Local Development Plan 3	page 5
4.0	Participation Statement	page 10
5.0	Regional Spatial Strategy	page 13

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Every planning authority must prepare a Development Plan Scheme on at least an annual basis. This sets out the authority's timetable for preparing and reviewing their Local Development Plan and outlines how this will be done. The Development Plan Scheme must also contain a Participation Statement which sets out how people can get involved in the plan preparation process.

1.2 On 8 April 2024, East Ayrshire Council adopted the East Ayrshire Local Development Plan 2 (2024). This replaced the East Ayrshire Local Development Plan (2017) and the Minerals Local Development Plan (2020). The Plan is supported by 11 pieces of statutory Supplementary Guidance and a suite of non-statutory planning guidance documents.

1.3 The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 brought forward a new system for development plans, which meant for the first time, the National Planning Framework would have statutory status and form part of the Development Plan, sitting alongside Local Development Plans. National Planning Framework 4 was adopted by the Scottish Government on 13 February 2023. It is therefore now part of the Development Plan in East Ayrshire and is being used in the determination of planning applications alongside LDP2.

1.5 The East Ayrshire LDP2 covers the whole of the East Ayrshire area as shown on the map below:

East Ayrshire



2. IMPLEMENTATION OF EAST AYRSHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2 (2024)

2.1 As set out in paragraph 1.2, LDP2 was adopted on 8 April 2024. Since then 11 pieces of statutory supplementary guidance have been prepared, consulted on, submitted to Scottish Ministers and ultimately adopted. Table 1 below sets out the statutory guidance documents that have been adopted to support LDP2 implementation. The right to adopt statutory SG has been repealed by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, and a cut off date of 31 March 2025 was set by Scottish Government. No further statutory SG will therefore be produced.

Table 1: LDP2 Supplementary Guidance

Title	Status
Affordable Housing	Adopted 2024
Dark Sky Park Lighting	
Financial Guarantees	
Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas	
Energy and EV Charging	
Local Landscape Areas	
Housing in the Countryside	
Developer Contributions	
Design and Placemaking	Adopted 2025
Loudoun Castle and Estate	
Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy	

2.2 Since the DPS 2025 was published, several additional pieces of non-statutory planning guidance have been adopted. Although these documents do not hold the same weight as the statutory SG, they nevertheless remain valuable documents that help inform developments and decision making. Several pieces of LDP1 guidance that remained relevant have been re-adopted to support LDP2, whilst table 2 below outlines the new non-statutory planning guidance that has been prepared specifically to aid implementation of LDP2. For clarity, the March 2025 cut-off date does not apply to non-statutory guidance and additional non-statutory planning guidance documents can continue to be produced and adopted, as necessary, over the lifetime of the Plan.

Table 2: LDP2 non-statutory planning guidance

Planning guidance	Status
Local Nature Conservation Sites	Adopted 2024
Skills and Employment Plans	
Strategic Woodland Creation	
Community Benefits	
Gardens and Designed Landscapes	Adopted 2025
Peatlands and carbon rich soils	
Tree and Development	
Stewarton Conservation Area Appraisal	
Green Infrastructure Strategy	Adopted 2026

3. EAST AYRSHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 3 (LDP3)

3.1 LDP 3 is being prepared in accord with the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 and the related Development Planning Regulations and guidance, published in May 2023. With particular regard to the DPS, there are some notable requirements that this DPS has sought to address:

- The DPS must set out a proposed timescale for four key stages of the plan-making process:
 - Publication of evidence report
 - Publication of proposed plan
 - Submission of proposed plan to Scottish Ministers
 - Expected adoption of the LDP
- The DPS must set out its timetabling using anticipated quarters, specifically Quarter 1 April-June, Quarter 2 July-Sep, Quarter 3 Oct-Dec, Quarter 4 Jan-Mar.
- There is a requirement to show any differences in the timetable from the previous DPS i.e. changes to the timetable should be identified and the reasons for the changes explained
- The guidance sets out an expectation that plan-making should take around 3 – 4 years. Cognisance has been taken of this in the timetabling set out below.

3.2 LDP3 will be a new style local development plan with a 10-year plan period. The plan preparation process will be very different to how previous local development plans have been prepared. Some of the key requirements are described below:

Requirement for an Evidence Report

3.3 The first stage of preparing LDP3 will be to prepare an Evidence Report. This is a new stage, replacing the previous requirement to prepare and consult on a Main Issues Report.

3.4 The preparation of the Evidence Report is a mechanism to ensure that sufficient research, monitoring and engagement is carried out to underpin the subsequent Plan. This stage of the process will not focus on site specific matters, instead it should provide a summary of baseline data and information relevant to the preparation of a deliverable, place-based and people-focused LDP.

3.5 Work is currently underway on producing the Evidence Report, with two key workstreams having been progressed since the previous DPS; (i) public engagement to find out how people feel about their communities and (ii) the production and publication of topic papers to sense check whether evidence gathered across a range of topics is accurate and relevant.

3.6 In order to ensure the views of our community are fully embedded in the plan making process, a combination of online and in-person engagement has been taken forward around the theme of *'tell us about your place'* aligned to the Place Standard tool. An online survey ran from March 2025 until February 2026, generating over 300 responses. To compliment this, the Development Planning team attended a series of community events, such as gala days and local festivals, to speak to people, ask their views and encourage more surveys to be completed. Specific engagement with young people has also taken place through in-person school sessions, the Youth Cabinet and making use of the school Glow app to promote the online survey. Taken together, the online and in-person surveys generated over 500 responses, which provides a strong evidence base in terms of understanding how our communities feel about their place. This information will be invaluable for the Evidence report, in particularly for pulling together place profiles, and beyond as part of the plan making process, especially when taken in tandem with information gathered through Local Place Plan.

3.7 A series of topic papers are being prepared, in line with the NPF4 policy headings. The topic papers are published online for consultation, with views sought on the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the evidence gathered. These topic papers will be revised through consultation and will then form a key element of the Evidence report. The first tranche of topic papers was published in December 2025, comprising (i) historic environment; (ii) energy; (iii) heating and cooling; (iv) tourism and (iv) nature conservation. The second tranche, which will include town centres and retail, health and wellbeing, population change and forestry and trees, is anticipated to be published by the end of March.

3.8 Collaboration with key stakeholders has also commenced, to ensure that all relevant data and evidence is captured. The Council does not hold all the evidence; it is important that it works with its partners to pull together data from a wide range of sources. The LDP Member-Officer Working Group (MOWG), comprising both elected members and officers from a range of Council departments, has already met several times in relation to LDP3 and this will continue throughout the duration of the plan-making process. In addition, a developers roundtable was held in November 2025, to explore how housing delivery can be accelerated on a range of sites. Further similar meetings will be held during 2026.

3.9 A Play Sufficiency Assessment is being prepared and will be submitted as part of the Evidence Report. The assessment looks at the quantity, quality and accessibility of play spaces throughout the authority, with the purpose of informing LDP3 policy on play provision. As part of this work, an online survey has gathered over 900 responses, providing excellent insight into the feelings and needs of communities and young people.

3.10 As per table 5 below, it is anticipated that the LDP3 Evidence Report will be published and submitted to Scottish Government in **quarter 3 of 2026/27**.

Gate Check process

3.11 The Gate Check exercise will provide an independent assessment of whether a planning authority has sufficient information to prepare an LDP. Scottish Ministers will be responsible for appointing a person to assess the evidence report, normally a Reporter from the Directorate for Planning and Environmental Appeals. The intention of the exercise is to ensure Plans are evidence based and reduce the level of debate arising at Examination at the end of the plan process.

3.12 After assessing the evidence report, where the appointed person deems it sufficient, the planning authority can proceed to prepare and publish its Proposed Plan. Should the information contained in the report be deemed insufficient, the planning authority will be asked to revise its report and then resubmit.

3.13 The Development Planning team continues to monitor gatecheck reports being published by the DPEA, as other planning authorities progress through gatecheck. It is anticipated that learning from other authorities, will increase the chances of positive gatecheck outcome.

Local Place Plans

3.14 The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 for the first time introduced new legal requirements around Local Place Plans (LPPs). There is now a legal requirement for planning authorities to invite communities to prepare LPPs. If these meet the criteria set out within the Circular 1/2022 Local Place Plans, then the planning authority must register the LPP and consider it in the preparation of its Local Development Plan. The invitation to local communities to prepare an LPP must be published early in the Plan preparation process, to allow communities adequate time to prepare a Plan.

3.15 The invitation to prepare Local Place Plans was published on **17 March 2025**. An LPP specific online hub has been set up, which gives information on what an LPP should address and who can prepare one. Existing guidance is signposted and a series of 'Frequently asked questions' has been prepared by officers.

3.16 East Ayrshire Council has a strong history of working alongside communities to prepare both Community Action Plans and, related to LDP2, placemaking plans. Through the Vibrant Communities Team of East Ayrshire Leisure Trust, all communities throughout East Ayrshire have been supported to take forward LPPs, with the approach taken dependent on whether an

up-to-date Community Action Plans is already in place. The Galston Local Place Plan, produced by Galston Community Development Trust, was submitted in September 2025; it is currently the only registered LPP, however, a considerable number are expected to be registered around March and April 2026.

Proposed Plan

3.17 Whilst the statutory requirement to prepare a Proposed Plan is maintained through the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, the new style plans should differ in content and structure; they are intended to be more place based, with emphasis on maps and site briefs, rather than detailed thematic policies that are instead now set out within National Planning Framework. As per table 4 below, it is anticipated that the LDP3 Proposed Plan will be published in **quarter 4 of 2027/28**.

Examination and Adoption

3.18 The process for examination and adoption is relatively unchanged within the new system of development planning. The Examination will be carried out by a Reporter appointed by Scottish Ministers, who will examine all elements of the Plan to which unresolved objections relate. Further procedures, such as hearing sessions or request for written submissions, will be undertaken should the reporter require more information to assess the Plan.

3.19 As per table 4 below, it is anticipated that the LDP3 Proposed Plan will be submitted to Ministers by **quarter 2 of 2028/29** for Examination, subject to the extent of issues raised through consultation. Thereafter adoption is anticipated in **quarter 2 of 2029/30**, however, this will be dictated by the length of examination, which will in turn depend on the complexities of objections raised and the workload of the DPEA at that particular point in time.

Table 3: Timetable for LDP3

Year	LDP3 Milestones
2024/25	Early work on Evidence Report Invitation to prepare Local Place Plans published – Quarter 4 Online LDP3 hub launched – Quarter 4
2025/26	Preparation of Evidence Report Public and stakeholder engagement to inform Evidence Report
2026/27	Preparation of Evidence Report Submit Evidence report to the Scottish Government for Gate check – Quarter 3
2027/28	Preparation of Proposed Plan Proposed Plan published for consultation – Quarter 4
2028/29	Analysis of objections and prepare for Examination Submission of proposed plan to Scottish Ministers for Examination – Quarter 2 Examination ongoing
2029/30	Consideration of outcome of Examination Expected adoption of the Plan – Quarter 2

3.19 In terms of difference in timetabling between the 2025 DPS and this 2026 DPS, it is noted that the programming has been rolled backwards by approximately 9 months. Specifically,

- The timetabling for publishing the evidence report has been moved back nine months. Whilst good progress has been made over 2025/26, as summarised in paragraphs 3.7 to 3.8 above, the scope and extent of work required to produce a robust evidence report is considerable, in terms of research, analysis and engagement. Given that an ‘insufficient’ outcome at Gatecheck can add at least 6 months to the process, it is considered prudent to take some extra time pre-gatecheck to ensure the first submission is as comprehensive and robust as it can be. It is further noted that the Development Planning team has been operating well below full staffing capacity during 2025/26, which has impacted on the ability of the team to produce and finalise the Evidence Report. Staffing levels are expected to improve through 2026/27, which will help accelerate work on the Evidence Report.
- As a consequence of the change to the evidence report date, the updated 2026 DPS timetabling, moves the date of the proposed plan publication and its submission to Ministers back nine months.
- The anticipated adoption of LDP3 was set at Quarter 3 of 2028/29. This has now been moved back to Quarter 2 of 2029/30 i.e July – September 2029. It is noted that this timetabling anticipates that the Plan will not be adopted by the end of Spring 2028, the target set by Scottish Ministers for all planning authorities to have in place a ‘new-style’ development plan. This target will be missed by around 14 months. Whilst this is not ideal, it is noted that EAC was late to commence work on a new-style Plan compared to most authorities, as it continue to progress LDP2 under ‘transitional arrangements’ when many authorities opted to hold off and wait for the new Act to be enacted. As a result, LDP2 will be just beyond its 5 year intended lifespan (April 2029), therefore, this slippage is not anticipated to be significantly problematic in terms of maintaining the primacy of the development plan.

4. PARTICIPATION STATEMENT FOR LDP3

Engagement on LDP3

4.1 As set out in table 4 above, the Council is currently in the early stages of the LDP3 process. The following points in the plan-making process represent the key opportunities to engage communities and the other stakeholders, to ensure the process is as inclusive as possible.

- Engagement to inform the Evidence Report

The preparation of the Evidence Report will be the first key phase for engaging communities and seeking their views on what is good about their places, what are the challenges and what are the opportunities for improvement, redevelopment and growth.

A range of mechanisms will be used, both face-to-face focussed sessions and online engagement tools, with the aim of reaching different groups and demographics that are more likely to respond to particular engagement methods.

Specific engagement activities undertaken have comprised:

- An online '*tell us about your place*' survey, based on the place standard tool, asking residents how they feel about what is good and what could be improved within their communities. The online survey has been widely publicised using social media, the Council's web pages, the Council's 'stayconnected' mailing list and posters and flyers within public/community buildings.
- Development Planning staff attended a range of community events between March 2025 and September 2025, with the aim of increasing awareness of the *tell us about your place* online survey, giving an opportunity for residents to complete paper surveys and to give in-person verbal feedback.
- Publication of a series of topic papers which will set out the evidence on range of themes, such as the natural environment, infrastructure and town centres. Respondents are being asked if they agree with the evidence, if any evidence has been missed or if they disagree with any of the evidence presented. The publication of topic papers commenced in December 2025 and will continue throughout the first half of 2026.
- With significant input from Vibrant Communities, and support from the Development Planning team, the submission of Local Place Plans will give additional insight into the aspirations and priorities of communities, valuable in informing the Evidence Report and the Proposed Plan beyond.

Specific engagement to capture the views of children and young people will comprise:

- Engaging with the East Ayrshire Young Persons cabinet.
- Sessions with local primary schools to explore, through survey and drawing activities, how pupils feel about their local place and the opportunities for play
- Sessions with local secondary schools to explore the young person's place standard tool and 'real life' planning challenges, how pupils feel about their local place.

The LDP Member-Officer Working Group (MOWG) will remain a critical vehicle for internal engagement, with elected member and cross-departmental officer representation. The MOWG will meet regularly at all stages of the plan-making process, to ensure that that officers and members have a clear opportunity to contribute to the Plan and influence both its strategic direction and more detailed policy provisions and site allocations. At evidence report stage, the MOWG are overseeing early engagement and evidence gathering.

• Engagement to inform the Proposed Plan

It is intended that a 'Call for Ideas' process will be undertaken to inform the preparation of the Proposed Plan. Similar to the Call for Priorities, Issues and Proposals that was

undertaken to inform LDP2, the intention of the Call for Ideas is for anyone to suggest matters that should be included within the Proposed Plan, including, but not limited to, site suggestions. The Call for Ideas will be publicised through the Council's website, local press, social media channels and targeted engagement with community bodies and interest groups. In addition, effort will be made to engage with local young people, through working with local schools and/or youth organisations. The Call for Ideas is anticipated to commence in Quarter 3 2026/27.

- Engagement on the Proposed Plan

The Proposed Plan and accompanying documentation will be formally consulted on for a minimum period of 12 weeks as per the requirement of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. The following steps will be taken after publication of the Proposed Plan to ensure that the maximum amount of people and organisations can put across their views.

- Press release in all local newspapers circulating within East Ayrshire and on the Council's website advising people of the consultation period. The extensive corporate 'stayconnected' mailing list will also be utilised to publicise the consultation.
- Social media will be fully utilised, with assistance from the Council's communications team, to increase reach and to ensure as many people as possible know about the consultation.
- All key agencies, expert industry groups, and other interested organisations and stakeholders, including Scottish Ministers, Forestry and Land Scotland and Transport Scotland will be consulted.
- Face to face sessions will be targeted, planned and timed to maximise attendance. In particular, officers will work with EALT's vibrant communities and the Member-Officer Working Group to identify particular communities, or groups of communities, where there may be a desire for a face-to-face event.
- Copies of the documentation will be made accessible in all local community libraries and in Council Offices for information and consultation purposes. The documents will be placed on the Council's website and arrangements will be made for representations on the documents to be submitted to the Council electronically via a dedicated local development plan email address.

In cases where a proposal for development of a specific site is likely to have a significant effect on the use or amenity of that site or of neighbouring land, formal notification of the preparation of the plan will also be given, in terms of Regulation 14(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2008, to the owner, lessee or occupier of any premises situated on that site or to the owner, lessee or occupier of any premises situated on the neighbouring land concerned.

Consultation on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

4.2 The Consultation Authorities (NatureScot, SEPA and Historic Environment Scotland) will be consulted via the SEA Gateway at every stage of the Environmental Report. The Report will also be available for public comment alongside the Proposed Plan. The MOWG has sight of the Environmental Report content to date at every meeting as the Plan is drafted and is invited to comment.

5. AYRSHIRE REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY

5.1 The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 introduced a requirement for planning authorities to prepare Regional Spatial Strategies. The Act indicates that strategies will be non-statutory (so will not form part of the Development Plan) but should inform both the NPF and Local Development Plans. It also indicates that they should focus on strategic development, defined as being development that will have an impact on more than one local planning authority.

5.2 An indicative Ayrshire RSS was approved by the Council's Cabinet in September 2020. It was also approved by North and South Ayrshire Council's as well as the Regional Economic Partnership Board. The interim strategy was intentionally 'light weight', without the full detail and engagement that would be expected of a full RSS, prepared to help inform the NPF4 but in advance of guidance being published.

5.3 The guidance on Regional Spatial Strategies has not yet been published by the Scottish Government. However, discussions are underway between officers of the three Ayrshire Authorities, to explore how RSS work can be taken forward in advance of guidance being produced, recognising the value of a regional approach to spatial planning, particular in terms of infrastructure matter and supporting the implementation of the Regional Economic Strategy.