

## **PE1748/D**

Heads of Planning Scotland submission of 8 November 2019

Heads of Planning Scotland (HOPS) is the representative organisation for senior planning officers from Scotland's local authorities, national park authorities and strategic development planning authorities.

HOPS welcomes the opportunity to comment on Petition 1748, as set out below:

*Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to provide specific provision within the National Planning Framework 3 (NPF 3) and the Scottish Planning Policy for small communities which:*

- *Provides for a pre-development community asset and infrastructure audit when an area is identified as being able to accommodate large-scale, urban growth and;*
- *Protects areas considered by its community to be high value scenic assets and at risk of the coalescence of communities*

### **Heads of Planning Scotland response**

Heads of Planning Scotland do not agree that a specific reference to small communities is necessary in National Planning Framework 3 or within Scottish Planning Policy (SPP). The issues the petition raises can be addressed through the existing local and national planning policy framework.

There is an opportunity for the issues raised in the petition to be considered in the preparation of NPF 4 (which will now incorporate Scottish Planning Policy) and the new Local Development Plan processes set out in the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019.

### **Reasoning for response**

The petition derives from the specific circumstances of development proposals at Gartcosh and in particular, the implications of large scale housing development on the small communities in its orbit in terms of impact on services and facilities, loss of green space, community cohesion and coalescence.

It is understood that the relevant planning authority, North Lanarkshire Council, has been invited to comment on the petition and will no doubt respond to the local specifics of this case. Heads of Planning Scotland has focussed on the wider implications of the issues raised in the petition.

Whilst there may be parallels with similar small communities around Scotland, this does not require a specific statement of national planning policy to address the issues raised. There are already a range of policy drivers to protect the landscape and environmental qualities of communities and consider the implications of development on local infrastructure and assets. These are set out in NPF3, SPP and the suite of other planning policy documents published by Scottish Government and also in Development Plans and planning guidance prepared by local authorities.

The Planning (Scotland) 2019 Act sets out key measures to enhance participation, involvement and the influence of communities in the planning process. This reflects the need to re-establish trust in the planning system and for communities to feel that they have an active role in the planning for their locality.

The Planning Act makes provision for Scottish Planning Policy to be incorporated into the next National Planning Framework (NPF4) and for it to become part of the Development Plan. There will be opportunities for communities to influence national planning policy during the consultation on the NPF4, which is due for publication in summer 2020.

Heads of Planning Scotland is a strong advocate of the pro-active early community engagement implicit in the Act and are working with Scottish Government to develop secondary legislation and guidance in this regard. As well as setting out provisions for effective and early community engagement in Local Development Plans, the Planning Act requires local authorities to assist communities in preparing Local Place Plans for their locality and to take account of them in producing the statutory Development Plan. This is a powerful mechanism for the issues highlighted in the petition to be discussed, debated and examined locally and for communities to influence the Local Development Plan.

The Planning Act also places great emphasis on ensuring local authorities have sufficient information on a range of issues to prepare the local development plan. Local authorities will have to produce evidence reports to support the spatial strategy of the plan to show that they have considered a range of issues including population change, the cultural, economic, social, built heritage and environmental characteristics of the area as well as taking account of the infrastructure of the area (including communications, transport and drainage systems, systems for the supply of water and energy, and health care and education facilities). This requirement reinforces the good practice already undertaken by planning authorities and ensures that assessment of infrastructure and community assets is a key component of the Local Development Plan process.