

ABER DEEN SHIRE

Local Development Plan
2029-2039



Development Plan Scheme 2025

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Introduction

This Development Plan Scheme presents information on the preparation of the next Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan, which is programmed to be adopted in 2029. A local development plan is used in the determination of planning applications, and it zones land for development (known as allocations) or protects it for specific uses.

Aberdeenshire Council is required to prepare and publish a Development Plan Scheme at least once a year.

This Development Plan Scheme is divided into three sections: Firstly, it makes clear what the Development Plan is in Aberdeenshire.

Secondly, it sets out the draft programme for preparation of the Local Development Plan 2029, including key stages that will be met.

Finally, in a formal “Participation Statement”, it explains how we will engage and consult with individuals, communities and other stakeholders in the production of the plan.

The Current Development Plan

In Aberdeenshire, the current development plan is made up of three documents. These are the “National Planning Framework”, the “Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan” and “Supplementary Guidance”.

National Planning Framework 4

On the 13 February 2023, the Scottish Government published National Planning Framework 4, and it is now part of the development plan for Aberdeenshire. It provides a national perspective on development, and sets out national planning policies, which are used in the determination of planning applications. The national spatial strategy supports the delivery of sustainable places, liveable places and productive places.

The Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023

On 13 January 2023 Aberdeenshire Council adopted the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023, following a public examination conducted by the Scottish Government.

This was the third Local Development Plan to be produced by Aberdeenshire Council and it replaced the previous plan, published in 2017.

The Local Development Plan covers the whole of Aberdeenshire, except that part within the Cairngorms National Park. They have their own Local Development Plan.



Figure 1 Area of effect of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan

One piece of Supplementary Guidance, “Developer Obligations and Affordable Housing”, supports the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023. This was adopted as part of the Local Development Plan by Aberdeenshire Council in January 2024.

Planning Advice has also been prepared, providing additional detail to help people understand specific policies within the Local Development Plan. This sets out the information that may be required to demonstrate that the terms of the policies have been met for the benefit of developers and communities.

[The Delivery Programme](#)¹ was updated in Quarters 3 and 4 of 2024-5 and approved for publication by Aberdeenshire Council's Infrastructure Services Committee on 13 March 2025. The Delivery Programme forms part of the project management toolkit which helps the Local Development Plan process focus on delivery and achieving its intended outcomes. It sets out a clear pathway for the delivery of homes, specifying the sequencing of actions and timescales, whilst considering constraints, and infrastructure requirements including infrastructure costs, lead responsibility, timescales/phasing and funding source.

¹ <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/plans-and-policies/delivering-development/>

Stages of Plan Development

There are four elements required to prepare the next Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan:

1. **Data Collection**

Before preparing a local development plan, we will have to prepare an **Evidence Report** to collect information and set out Aberdeenshire Council's views on a wide range of related land use and planning matters. Following a **Gate Check** process, we will conclude a **Call for Ideas** to gain feedback from communities and stakeholders on how we should address the issues identified in a local context. This also provides opportunity for sites to be identified for development and/or protection in the next plan.

2. **Preparation of the Local Development Plan and Delivery Programme**

We will seek instruction from the Area Committees of Aberdeenshire Council on the proposals that should be included in the **Proposed Local Development Plan**, prepare that Plan for approval by Aberdeenshire Council and publish it for public consultation. This will be accompanied by a Proposed Delivery Programme We will assess all comments made and seek to introduce modifications to the Plan to address issues raised, where appropriate, as identified in a **Modification Report**.

3. **Examination**

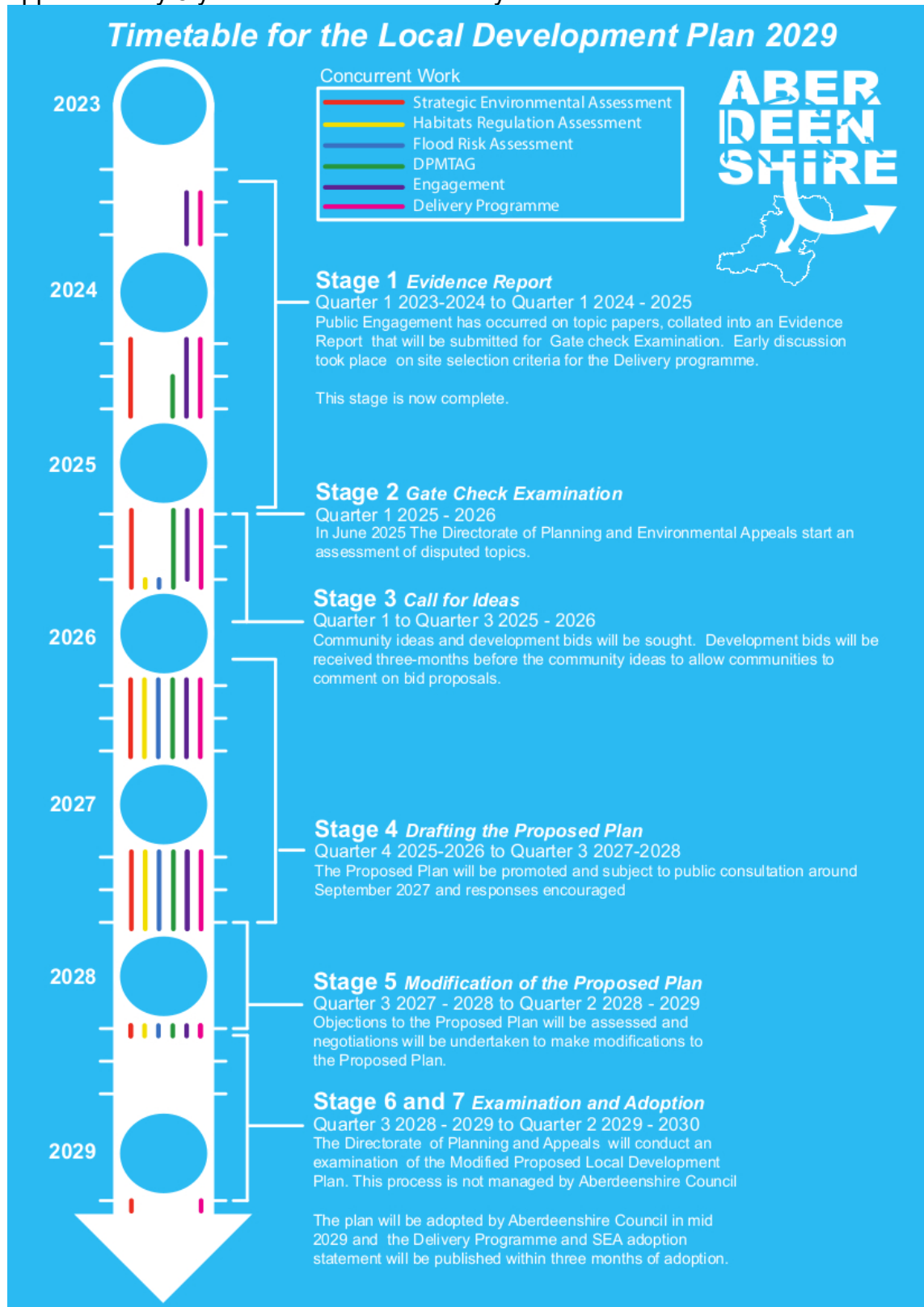
We will submit the Modified Plan for **Examination** by Scottish Ministers and, following the conclusion of that process, adopt the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2029.

4. **Adoption of the Local Development Plan and Delivery Programme**

Following the guidance provided by Scottish Ministers, the 2029 Local Development Plan will be adopted within three months of the conclusion of the Examination and will be accompanied by a finalised Delivery Programme. The Delivery Programme will set out how Aberdeenshire Council proposes to implement its Local Development Plan.

The Timetable for The Local Development Plan 2029

The programme for the Local Development Plan 2029 spans a period of approximately 5 years with a number of key milestones.



Engagement processes

In 2024 the Scottish Government published guidance on effective community engagement intended to be used by planning authorities when planning their engagement and importantly sets out what those engaging can expect from their participation in the process. This document identifies levels of engagement and a spectrum of participation that usefully informs different levels of engagement that are appropriate to policy preparation activity. This spectrum identifies 5 levels of engagement: **Informing; Consulting, Involving, Collaborating and Empowering**. Details of the activity appropriate to each of these levels is set out in an extract from “Effective Community Engagement in Local Development Planning Guidance” in **Appendix 1**. This is intended to be used by planning authorities as a sense check when planning their engagement.

Table 1 shows an outline of engagement activities for each stage of the plan making process. (Please note that the indicative timescales for later years may be subject to review and this table will be updated as part of annual reporting of the Development Plan Scheme). Key to note within this table are the delays that have occurred since publication of the Development Plan Scheme 2024. These are associated with additional stakeholder engagement that has taken place with stakeholders on the “Infrastructure First” topic paper and the site selection and distribution methodology proposed by Aberdeenshire Council.

Table 1 Stages of the Development Plan. (active work is being undertaken is shown in the highlighted cells of this table)

Stage	Year (Quarter 1 starts in April of each year)	Engagement proposed	Outcome
Stage 1 Evidence Report	Quarter 1 2023-2024 to Quarter 1 2025- 2026	<p>Inform, Consult and Involve.</p> <p>Public Engagement on evidence prepared on topic papers and audited by a reference group.</p> <p>Evidence Report prepared and approved by Aberdeenshire Council on 24 April 2025 for submission to the Gate Check Assessment (see Section 6 Preparing the Evidence Report).</p>	<p>Partially completed.</p> <p>This process has been extended due to the scale of the work required, the review of other Authorities Evidence Reports and to make it a better, more usable and clear document, and the time that has had to be devoted to engagement on the Infrastructure First Topic Paper and the Spatial Strategy and Site selection section</p>

		<p>Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping completed.</p> <p>Draft Transport Appraisal Scoping completed.</p> <p>Health Impact Assessment Scoping Complete</p>	of the Evidence Report
Stage 2 Gate Check	Starts in Quarter 1 2025-2026. There is no prescribed length of time for the Gate Check examination.	<p>Consult.</p> <p>Before the end of June 2025, the Directorate of Planning and Environmental Appeals will have been asked to conduct an assessment of disputes relating to the evidence that we have used to inform the topic papers and will invite parties to engage with them directly.</p> <p><i>This process is not managed by Aberdeenshire Council.</i></p>	<p>The start date for the Gate Check process has been extended to accommodate the revised timetable for the Evidence Report.</p> <p>If required, the Evidence Report will be modified until it is acceptable by the Gate check process. In such a case the modified Evidence Report will be used as the foundation for future work.</p>
Stage 3 Call for Ideas	Quarter 1 to Quarter 3 2025-2026	<p>Inform, Involve and Collaborate.</p> <p>Ideas will be sought from all stakeholders to resolve the issues identified in the Evidence Report. These ideas will be sought before, during, and after, the Gate Check. Target dates of 30 October 2025 for development bids and 31 December 2025 for ideas are set for formal submission. This will allow the findings of the Gate Check process to be taken into account in any bids or community ideas submitted. Support will be provided to communities and community groups to</p>	<p>The Call for Ideas start date has been changed to accommodate the revised timetable for the Evidence Report.</p> <p>Aberdeenshire Council will subsequently evaluate and consider, in detail, the ideas presented and use this information as the basis for preparing the Proposed Local Development Plan.</p> <p>This deadline has been extended.</p>

		<p>understand and respond to the issues presented. The development industry will be encouraged to engage with communities on prospective development sites “bids” that they would wish to see allocated in the plan.</p>	
<p>Stage 4 Drafting the Proposed Development Plan and Proposed Delivery Programme</p>	<p>Quarter 4 2025-2026 to Quarter 3 2027-2028</p>	<p>Inform, Consult and Collaborate.</p> <p>The Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan and Proposed Delivery Programme will be drafted, published and subject to public consultation. The Plan will be promoted and responses encouraged.</p> <p>The proposed plan will be published in September 2027</p>	<p>The start date for Drafting of the Proposed Plan has been changed to accommodate the revised timetable for the Call for Ideas.</p> <p>A set of formal objections to the Proposed Local Development Plan will be collated. The Delivery Programme will be amended on the basis of comments received.</p> <p>This deadline has been extended.</p>
<p>Stage 5 Modification of the Proposed Development Plan</p>	<p>Quarter 3 2027-2028 to Quarter 2 2028-2029</p>	<p>Involve and Collaborate.</p> <p>Objections to the Proposed Development Plan will be assessed and negotiation will take place with objectors (and other affected parties) to make modifications to the Proposed Local Development Plan</p>	<p>The start date for modifying the Proposed Plan has been changed to accommodate the revised timetable for the Evidence Report</p> <p>Aberdeenshire Council will be asked to approve a modified Proposed Local Development Plan. All unresolved objections will be collated for submission for public examination.</p> <p>This deadline has been extended.</p>

<p>Stage 6 Examination and Stage 7 Adoption</p>	<p>Quarter 3 2028-2029 to Quarter 2 2029 to 2030</p>	<p>Inform, Involve and Collaborate.</p> <p>In October 2028 the Directorate of Planning and Environmental Appeals will be asked to conduct an examination of the Modified Proposed Local Development Plan. They may invite parties to engage with them directly.</p> <p><i>This process is not managed by Aberdeenshire Council.</i></p> <p>The Delivery Programme will be published within three months of adoption.</p>	<p>The start date for the examination of the Proposed Plan has been changed to accommodate the revised timetable for the Evidence Report</p> <p>A Report of Examination containing conclusions and recommendations of the Directorate of Planning and Environmental Appeals will be considered by Aberdeenshire Council. If these modifications are acceptable this will be followed by adoption of the plan</p> <p>The Delivery Programme will be amended, as appropriate, prior to its final publication following adoption of the Local Development Plan.</p> <p>This deadline has been extended.</p>
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We will continue to advise on progress against this timetable, including where we have been able to complete tasks ahead of the deadlines set, in future development plan schemes.

Stage 1 Preparing the Evidence Report and Stage 2 the Gate check process

Since Early 2023 Aberdeenshire Council has been **Informing, Consulting** and **Involving** partners and stakeholders on preparing the Evidence Report. This has been done through the preparation and engagement with stakeholders on a series of topic papers

The Evidence Report which is based on our analysis of these topic papers, will be considered by Aberdeenshire Council on 24 April 2025. At this meeting it will be proposed that the Evidence Report should be submitted for its gate check by the Directorate of Planning and Environmental appeals.

Stage 3: The Call for Ideas

The Evidence Report will identify a range of high-level land use planning issues that Aberdeenshire must address. The Call for Ideas is the point in the Plan preparation process where we involve you by asking you for your ideas as to what actions we should take to address these high-level land use planning issues .

We will **Inform** you of the objectives agreed through the Evidence Report, and **Consult, Involve** and **Collaborate** with you to help you present your ideas to us.

There are two main parts of the Call for Ideas process that we will conclude this year:

- Collection and evaluation of development proposals from the development industry. This is also known as the “call for bids”
- Collection and evaluation of place- based “community ideas” expressed by all parties on the actions that should be taken in the Local Development Plan to achieve desired outcomes.

Evaluation of the Call for Ideas submissions will be based on the conclusions from the Evidence Report approved during the Gate Check process. Further detail on this process comes later in this document.

Details of our proposals to engage with Stakeholders are set out in Section 9 How you can get involved.

Stage 4 Drafting the Proposed Development Plan and Proposed Delivery Programme

Following the close of the period for submitting ideas, work will start on the preparation of the Proposed Local Development Plan. Analysis of ideas and evaluation of bids received will be undertaken for discussion with the Area Committees of Aberdeenshire Council to receive guidance from elected members as to the content of the proposed Local Development Plan. It is unlikely that this process will be concluded before October 2026. Preparation of the proposed Local Development Plan and proposed Delivery Programme is anticipated to be completed approximately a year thereafter.

How You Can Get Involved (the Participation Statement)

It is important that we engage with all those who may have an interest in the Local Development Plan during its preparation to allow you to help shape the future of your places and influence outcomes. Each Development Plan Scheme must contain a Participation Statement setting out how this will be achieved. In this way we hope to **Inform** and **Involve** you in the way in which we engage with you in the plan-making processes.

We aim to be open and honest in relation to engagement and consultation on the forthcoming Local Development Plan and its associated assessments. We will provide you with clear opportunities to be involved and have your voice heard.

This is your Local Development Plan, and we need to know what you want it to deliver.

In all our engagement on the Local Development Plan we will adopt the advice provided in the Scottish Government's "[Effective Community Engagement in Local Development Planning Guidance](#)".

The [National Standards for Community Engagement](#) are good-practice principles designed to improve and guide the process of community engagement to build and sustain relationships between public services and community groups – helping them both to understand and act on the needs or issues that communities experience². There are seven national standards, as illustrated in Figure 3. At all times we will make sure that help is provided for those with sight loss or other disabilities are assisted to understand and contribute to any engagement.

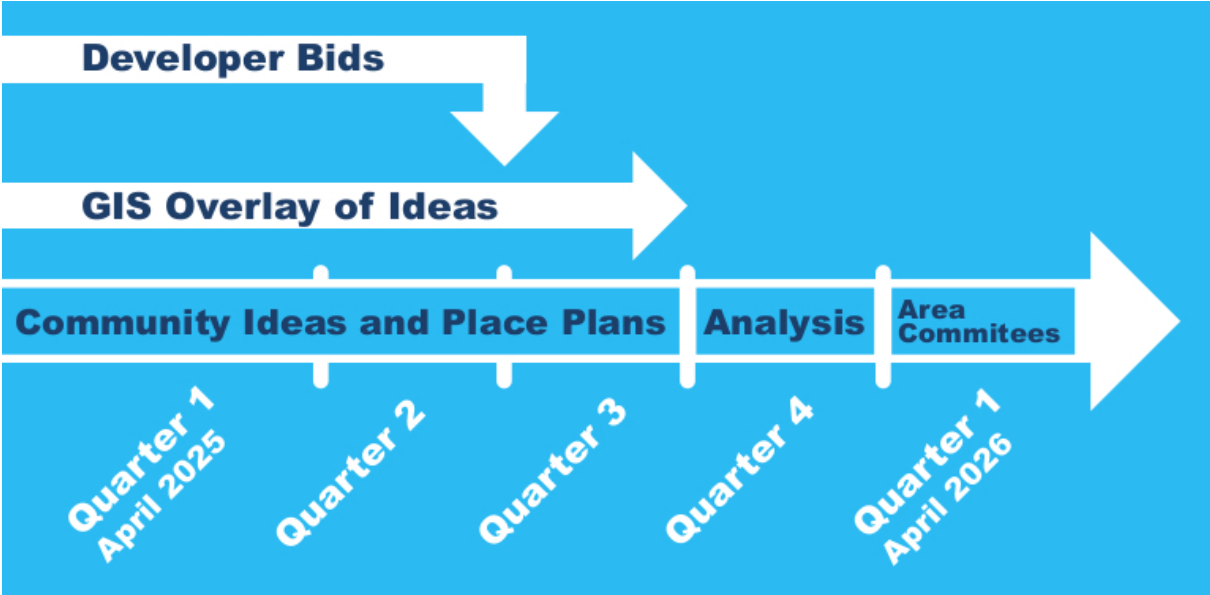
As a key stakeholder in the process, we will also ensure that Community Councils are kept informed and involved at all stages of the preparation of the plan.



Figure 3 The National Standards for Community Engagement

² <https://www.voicescotland.org.uk/national-standards>

Figure 4 Flow diagram of Ideas process



Local Place Plans

Local Place Plans, introduced by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, are a way for communities to have how they would like to see their community develop, included in the Local Development Plan.

Local Place Plans are more than just a plan: they can help communities understand what they want their places to be like in the future and help to develop a positive community identity. They can help develop local connections, joint working, and develop community well-being. They are an opportunity for real, community-based change to be reflected in the Local Development Plan and through which communities should find it easier to make change happen.

An invitation to local communities to prepare and submit their Local Place Plans has been formally issued. In some areas Local Place Plans have been registered and will be used as evidence to inform the Call for Ideas and the Proposed Local Development Plan.

Not all communities or groups will wish to prepare a Local Place Plan and there is no requirement to do so. There are a number of ways detailed in this document as to how they can make their voice heard and engage with the preparation of the Local Development Plan throughout the preparation period. Officers will be able to offer advice and guidance on how to achieve the most meaningful/appropriate means of engagement and allow communities to best express their ambitions for their area.

There is lots of guidance and tools available to assist communities prepare a Local Place Plan. Community bodies are encouraged to contact us should they be

considering preparing a Local Place Plan to seek advice and support should they need it. An enquiry form is also available on the Aberdeenshire Council website.

We have strived to make the Local Place Plans process as simple as possible to allow communities to express what they think is important in their area, what needs to be protected, what needs to be enhanced and, if new development is to be promoted, what scale and where this should be.

For further information on Local Place Plans and to help communities decide whether a Local Place Plan is appropriate for their community please visit the [Aberdeenshire Council website](#)³. This includes guidance on preparing Local Place Plans alongside contact details for officers and external bodies such as Planning Aid Scotland (PAS) who will be able to assist with any queries or questions communities may have on this process.

LPPs can be submitted at any time in the [LDP process](#). To have the most influence and consideration we suggest they are submitted as early as possible, and ideally before the Call for Ideas stage. However, they can also be submitted during the Call for Ideas stage.

Community Action Plans are also developed by communities following a community engagement exercise. Community Action Plans detail a particular community's priorities for the years ahead. Many communities in Aberdeenshire have existing Community Action Plans and these may wish to be used as the basis for a Local Place Plan to avoid unnecessary duplication and effort. Where appropriate Community Action Plans will be considered when drafting the Local Development Plan.

As Local Place Plans are received and validated, they are placed on the [register](#) and can be viewed on council's website, the boundaries of each LPP will also be available through an interactive [GIS map](#) layer. This layer will be added to the overlay of ideas to allow anyone to see both LPPs/bids/ideas for their area. We would encourage anyone submitting a bid for the next LDP to familiarise themselves with any LPPs in the bid area.

The Call for Bids

The first part of the Call for ideas is a Call for bids, this will be used to identify those sites that the development industry would wish to see included in the next Local Development Plan. We will **consult** and **involve** developers and landowners to identify their aspirations they have to promote land for development during the plan period.

Significant assessment will have to be undertaken on these potential bid sites, as detailed in the Site Selection and Distribution of Development section of the Evidence Report. Consequently, the electronic form that we propose for this purpose is

³ <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/plans-and-policies/local-place-plans/>

comprehensive and seeks commitment from the developer to deliver detailed outcomes associated with National Planning Framework 4.

Bids submitted will be assessed against Excluded Areas, taking into account any mitigation proposed by the submission. Appraisal will be made on whether the bid assists in the delivery of the six priorities for the distribution of development identified in the Evidence Report of:

- Meeting housing need;
- what deficit there is in physical infrastructure;
- sustainable travel options;
- promoting living locally; consumer demand; and
- the Aberdeenshire Place Strategy.

Site specific assessment will be undertaken of matters such as impact on air quality and landscape quality informed by comment made by the developer.

A key consideration for us will be the deliverability of proposals and we will seek early information from developers on matters such as the anticipated timescale for the delivery of the proposal, ownership and legal burdens on the proposed land, indicative infrastructure costs and who is responsible for funding this infrastructure. Further participation on these matters may be required before a site can be confirmed for inclusion in the Local Development Plan.

Proposed bids should be submitted by 31 October 2025.

Bids received will be assessed by Officers and will be presented to at seminars to the Area Committees of Aberdeenshire Council in the first and second quarter of 2026-2027. From these meetings we would expect to identify preferred sites on which further collaboration would be required to ensure that they are appropriate for inclusion in the Proposed Local Development Plan.

All of the submissions made will be added to the public GIS overlay that shows proposed Ideas to allow stakeholders to comment on the proposals before the close of that part of the process on 31 December 2025.

The Call for Community Ideas

The Call for Community Ideas is the other stage of the call for ideas alongside the call for bids in terms of plan preparation and this will be the principal way in which we will collect information from communities and stakeholders on the content of the Local Development Plan. We will **inform, involve and collaborate** with communities of interest.

The Call for Community Ideas is an opportunity for participants to work with us to identify how the issues raised in the Evidence Report can be addressed at a local level.

The “Virtual Town Hall” process used in the engagement on the proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan in 2020 was seen as a success and received positive feedback from users. This process will be renewed, and online forms will be used to capture ideas from stakeholders. Support and guidance notes will be provided to assist in this process. The form will be place based with the opportunity

to present ideas for specific areas on an interactive map. During this process we will stress the need for ideas that are relevant to the Local Development Plan. They will not need to be detailed, as bids for development should be presented through that separate process.

For communities specifically, area forums are initially proposed to outline the process and means of engaging with the LDP process and, if requested, Community Councils or groups, will be able to meet with officers to assist in the submission of their ideas. Appropriate online support will be available for enquiries and a telephone contact service will be established. On request, we will directly assist those who are unable to complete an electronic form to make a submission.

Significant activity will also be undertaken to raise the profile of the Local Development Plan in this context, including dedicated web pages on the Local Development Plan website and a social media campaign through the Council's social media feed, to make sure that there is awareness of this important part of the plan making process. Particular attention will be paid to involving young people and seldom heard groups in this process. We will try and draw an audience to the LDP and look at new and innovative ways to increase engagement as opportunities including shared best practice arise.

Opportunities for comment on or ideas from communities in response to development bids will also be available at end of this process to ensure that communities and developers are informed as early in the process as to what is being proposed for the next LDP.

The closing date for submission of Ideas will be 31 December 2025.

Participants' ideas will be summarised by settlement where appropriate, alongside other themes/issues and will be presented, with recommendations developed by Officers, to seminars of the Area Committees of Aberdeenshire Council in the first quarter of 2026-2027. From these seminars we would expect to be provided with direction for the content of the Proposed Local Development Plan.

This Development Plan Scheme sets out a clear and fair assessment of our understanding of the new development plan process that the Scottish Government is requiring us to undertake, based on our assessment of the guidance, our early engagement with key stakeholders, discussions with other Planning Authorities, and our experience in preparing previous Development Plans.

We will conduct a review of this Development Plan Scheme at the end of 2025 to inform the following year's DPS.

Contact Us

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Previous Local Development Plan Schemes: [Process and Timescales - Development Plan Scheme - Aberdeenshire Council : /www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/plans-and-policies/process-and-timescales/](#)
