

Planning Democracy

We are a charity that campaigns for a fairer more inclusive planning system in Scotland. We describe ourselves as the Voice of People in Planning. Our aim is to strengthen democracy by promoting a stronger public voice in the way our land is used.

Planning Democracy also provide support for those with planning issues through our peer mentor network. We collect case studies to inform and develop our work and keep it relevant. We have a strong network of community groups and individuals with whom we work to campaign for change.

Planning Democracy is the only organisation in Scotland representing the community perspective and promoting cultural and structural changes in Scotland's planning system.

www.planningdemocracy.org.uk or Facebook Planning Democracy

Research Themes:

1. Developer appeals impacting on sustainability of housing development

What are the reasons given to overturn planning decisions on major housing proposals?

- is there a perceivable pattern and what are the causes and consequences of this?
- what are the impacts of the decisions for resident campaign groups, local authority officers, councillors etc
- how does this impact on the housing strategy and demonstrate housing need for the area and what measures have been factored in to provide appropriate infrastructure: roads, shops, health and education services?
- how does this impact on open space strategy, green infrastructure and climate adaptation?

There is evidence that a number of planning appeals on housing issues are won by appellants on the basis that there is a short fall in the housing land supply in the Local Development Plan. The SPP states that "Where a shortfall in the 5-year effective housing land supply emerges, development plan policies for the supply of housing land will not be considered up-to date, then the presumption in favour of development that contributes to sustainable development will be a significant material consideration. It appears that this over rides other policy considerations such as greenbelt and greenfield policies, flooding and wildlife concerns. We want to know if this has implications for the sustainability of major housing projects and the integrity of the Local Development Plan.

2. Environmental Impact Assessments:

We have evidence that a lot of major developments are not having EIA's carried out following a screening opinion which state that it is unnecessary. How many major developments have not had EIA's and what are the reasons given for not conducting the assessments? We would like to know if this is having any impact on the environment, however the impact of the lack of EIA is hard to measure, because what has not happened is difficult to assess. However, any commentary is welcome!

3. Quality of development:

How do SPP and LDPs address issues of housing quality (e.g. in relation to design of houses and neighbourhoods, or in relation to the climate emergency)? How effective is the planning system in delivering the type and quality of housing that policy makers recognise we need?

Scandinavia, Germany and the Netherlands are often cited as examples of planning and land systems that deliver high quality, socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable housing. In what ways do they differ from equivalent arrangements in Scotland, and can Scotland learn from them?

The planning system has become a major vehicle for getting provision of social housing. How does this operate and is it effective in delivering the amount and type of social housing needed, and in the locations where need is greatest?

4. Public Involvement in Development Plans

What have been the experiences of members of the public who sought to engage in the formative stages of LDPs?

How have reporters at LDP examinations viewed inputs from members of the public? What weight has been given to their representations, and why?

5. Process of planning bill:

The Scottish Planning Bill was the most amended bill since Holyrood began and has had the lengthiest of parliamentary time given to it. Yet there is criticism that it will not be an effective piece of legislation and will not deliver on the original aims of the planning review. How fair and rigorous was the process of developing this legislation? How much evidence was used to inform the process? For example, how much was the debate on appeals, short term lets, hilltracks, cultural zones/ agents of change and the infrastructure levy informed by research? How was evidence used to inform the debate, for example how was the barriers to engagement research used? What other influences affected how the legislation was drawn up?

6. Barriers to public participation in development control:

What are the current barriers to participation that prevent the public from having meaningful involvement in planning decisions? What might be done to address these barriers?

7. Neoliberalism in Planning

Is the market driven model of planning the best model in terms of outcomes for delivering good quality housing and development?