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Ariane Burgess MSP
Convener
Local Government, Housing & Planning Committee
Scottish Parliament

4 March 2022

Dear Convener,

Thank you for your letter of 23 February regarding the Draft National Planning Framework 4.

May I also take this opportunity to sincerely thank you for inviting me to give evidence to the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. I very much welcomed the extremely informative and positive discussion.

During the current consultation process on NPF4, I have valued hearing from a range of stakeholders including Heads of Planning Scotland, Engender, Planning Democracy and Scottish Environment Link and I have meetings coming up in the next few weeks including with the CBI. I also recently joined a meeting of the Cross Party Group on Sport to discuss NPF4. I will continue to accept as many invitations as my diary allows to enable me to hear a wide range of views.

In addition to my own meetings, my officials have also met with a broad range of planning stakeholders, including Heads of Planning Scotland, the Key Agency Group, Environment LINK, Planning Democracy, the Law Society of Scotland, Homes for Scotland, Shelter Scotland and Scottish Renewables. You are aware that officials are also working with facilitators to deliver a range of roundtable discussions with particular sector interests and open invitation events. We have asked our facilitators to provide blog style overviews of the events. We expect to receive these later in March and will publish them on our dedicated Transforming Planning website. I will ask officials to ensure that clerks are notified when we publish those articles.

In relation to a hierarchy of priorities, NPF4 like any development plan, is a package to be read as a whole. Legally it is for the decision maker to determine what weight to give relevant parts of the development plan on a case by case basis. But to signify our expectations, we have specifically set out that all plans and decisions should give significant

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weight to the global climate emergency. That gives strong and clear direction as to our aspirations for achieving change. We also need to have trust in the skills of our planners. Balancing priorities is an everyday part of their job and a professional skill which they are well placed to do. As I have intimated however, we are listening to what people are saying through this parliamentary scrutiny and public consultation, and will consider very carefully what may need to change in the draft NPF4 to ensure the policies can be readily and consistently applied in practice.

As I mentioned during the Committee meeting on 22 February, I am more than happy to provide any further clarifications and look forward to continued positive collaboration as we refine NPF4.

TOM ARTHUR

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