

2. Proposals should be accompanied by the following information:

- Information sufficient to allow assessment of the impacts outlined in (1) above;
 - For coal bed methane and shale gas extraction proposals, this information should include a risk assessment of the proposal and details of an appropriate buffer zone, as specified in Scottish Planning Policy 2014;
 - Information on need, estimates of annual production, levels of employment, timescale for extraction and the total resource on the site including other minerals present;
 - Information on onshore oil and gas extraction should include the extent of operations for each relevant phase of development including exploration, appraisal and production;
 - A fully developed method statement including information on drainage and water treatment, phasing, topsoil/overburden stripping and storage, access and maximisation of sustainable transport and working hours; and
 - A fully costed, appropriately phased scheme for restoration and aftercare, which secures benefits for the green network in terms of Policy GN01, and will be secured through appropriate financial guarantees.
3. For onshore oil and gas development, applicants should engage with the local community and other relevant stakeholders in advance of any application and at each stage of operations on site, from exploration through to production.
4. The Council will liaise with adjacent local authorities where proposals for extraction cross local authority boundaries, to ensure a consistent approach.

Agricultural Land and Soils

5.129 The SPP recognises that prime quality agricultural land is a finite national resource and indicates that development on it should not be permitted unless it is an essential component of the settlement strategy or is necessary to meet an established need. Prime quality agricultural land (defined by Classes 1, 2 and 3.1 in the Macaulay Institute 'Land Capability for Agriculture' classification) occupies about 17% of the Council area. This is focussed in two distinct areas: in the western part of the area, between Larbert, Bonnybridge and Denny; and in the eastern part of the area to the east of the Braes villages and to the south of Bo'ness.

5.130 The disturbance of carbon rich soils may lead to the release of stored carbon, contributing to greenhouse gas emissions. Carbon rich soils occur mainly in the Upper Braes and Slamannan Plateau. Areas in the vicinity of Banknock, Slamannan, Limerigg and Standburn all contain some carbon rich soils. It is important that the effect of disturbing carbon rich soils is understood properly in the determination of any planning application for development. There are also some rare soil types including podzols, humus iron podzols and saltings of potential national interest within the Falkirk area which are worthy of protection. Saltings occur along the Forth Estuary and the tidal extent of the River Carron from the north of Grangemouth to South Alloa.

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Policy RW04 Agricultural Land, Carbon Rich Soils and Rare Soils

1. Development involving the significant permanent loss of prime quality agricultural land (Classes 1, 2 and 3.1), carbon rich soils (basin peat, blanket bog, peat alluvium complex, peaty podzols and peaty gleys) and rare soils (podzols, humus iron podzols and saltings) will not be permitted unless:

- The site is specifically allocated for development in the LDP; or
- Development of the site is necessary to meet an overriding local or national need where no other suitable site is available.

2. Planning applications for development which is likely to disturb areas of carbon rich or rare soil will be required to submit a soil or peat management plan which demonstrates that:

- The areas of highest quality soil or deepest peat have been avoided;
- Any disturbance, degradation or erosion has been minimised through mitigation; and
- Any likely release of greenhouse gas emissions caused by disturbance is offset

Vacant, Derelict and Contaminated Land

5.147 Previously developed land can offer potential opportunities for new development and reduce the need to release greenfield sites as well as bringing about substantial environmental improvement. The SPP supports proposals to bring vacant and derelict land back into productive use or to enhance its value as part of the wider green network. Contaminated land can be a significant obstacle to development as well as presenting risks to the environment and public health.

5.148 Policy RW10 Vacant, Derelict, Unstable and Contaminated Land

Proposals that reduce the incidence of vacant, derelict, unstable and contaminated land will be supported, subject to compliance with other LDP policies, particularly those relating to development in the countryside. Where proposals involve the development of unstable or contaminated land, they will only be permitted where appropriate remediation or mitigation measures have been undertaken.

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