



Helensburgh and Cardross Urban Capacity Study

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Argyll & Bute Council
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Revision Record

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose & Context

Stantec UK Ltd. were commissioned by Argyll & Bute Council ('the Council') in early 2025 to undertake an Urban Capacity Study of Helensburgh and Cardross as part of the wider Helensburgh Strategic Development Framework (HSDF).

The Urban Capacity Study considers the deliverability of existing allocated housing and employment sites, as well as vacant and derelict land within the settlement boundaries of Helensburgh and Cardross. The purpose of the study is to determine the potential development capacity within Helensburgh and Cardross.

In addition to the Urban Capacity Study, Stantec also prepared a Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment covering areas of designated Green Belt Land surrounding the Helensburgh and Cardross settlements to examine the extent to which these areas could be impacted upon as a result of new development.

Together, these assessments will inform the Council of the capability of the existing settlement areas of Helensburgh and Cardross to support new development. This information will guide decisions regarding the release of land for sustainable growth as part of the HSDF and next Local Development Plan (LDP).

1.2 Methodology

This section provides an overview of the methodology used to prepare the Urban Capacity Study. The key stages of the methodology are as follows:

- **Defining the Study Area:** to ensure consistency with the HSDF, it was agreed that the existing settlement boundaries for Helensburgh and Cardross would be used as the study area for the purposes of this exercise.
- **Identifying Sites:** sites to be included in the Urban Capacity Study include:
 - » Existing housing land allocations in Helensburgh and Cardross;
 - » Existing employment land allocations in Helensburgh and Cardross; and
 - » Vacant and derelict land (VDL) within Helensburgh and Cardross.
- **Data Collection:** to assess urban capacity within both settlement boundaries, the following information was gathered from various sources¹ in relation to each of the identified sites:
 - » Status of the land (e.g., allocated or VDL);
 - » Capacity of the identified sites; and
 - » Deliverability of identified sites.
- **Consideration of Sites:** in addition to the above criteria, the following environmental and planning considerations were also reviewed to determine the deliverability of each site:
 - » Physical constraints (e.g. flood risk, soil and ground conditions, topography, presence of trees and woodland and access constraints);

¹ Sources used to collect data on the status and capacity of allocated sites and VDL in Helensburgh and Cardross include Argyll & Bute Local Development Plan 2 (2024) and Argyll & Bute Planning Portal. Sources used to consider the deliverability of sites includes: SEPA Flood Maps; NatureScot SiteLink; Pastmap; Scotland's Soils; and Scotland's Environment Map.

- » Cultural designations (historic and environmental); and
- » Planning and land use history.

1.2.1 Conclusions and Recommendations

Following the conclusion of the above urban capacity study, recommendations will then be provided regarding the extent to which future development can be contained within the existing settlement boundaries of Helensburgh and Cardross, and to what extent Green Belt Land may require to be released to support sustainable development in Argyll & Bute.

2 Development Baseline

This section presents an overview of the current residential baseline in Helensburgh and Cardross, including data on allocated housing and employment completions over the course of the last LDP, as well as sites that have obtained planning permission and likely to be delivered in the near term. Whilst this baseline primarily considers completions on allocated housing and employment land, it is important to acknowledge that a number of (smaller scale) windfall sites have also been delivered over the course of the planning period². These sites have not been captured in the baseline data, however.

2.1 Helensburgh Baseline

Helensburgh is a coastal town located on the northern shore of the Firth of Clyde, with a population of around 15,160 in 2020³. The area is located approximately 25 miles northwest of Glasgow, with good transport links making Helensburgh an attractive commuter town. HMNB Clyde is located approximately 6 miles northwest of Helensburgh and, as this is to become the UK's single submarine base by late 2025, it is expected that the population will grow significantly in the coming years owing to an increase in naval staff and their families. Further employment opportunities are also expected as a result of this growth, associated with the wider Royal Navy supply chain, servicing and support businesses.

Within LDP2, there are 6 large scale allocations for housing and employment within the settlement. However, if the local population and employment opportunities within Helensburgh are to increase as anticipated, it is important to consider how Helensburgh can develop and expand over the long term to support and accommodate these opportunities.

2.1.1 Allocated Sites Completions

All except for one site allocated within Argyll & Bute LDP2 have obtained planning permission and have been delivered. These completed sites, listed below, have therefore been excluded from the capacity study:

Sawmill Field, Cardross Road (H2005)

This site was allocated in LDP2 for housing with an indicative capacity of 145 units. The site obtained detailed planning permission in September 2020 (Ref: [19/02604/PP](#)) for *“residential development comprising 123 dwellinghouses and 20 flatted properties, including roads, infrastructure, open space, amenity and affordable housing”* and has since been delivered by the market, by private developer Bellway Homes.

The Hermitage (H2007)

The site was allocated in LDP2 for housing with an indicative capacity of 87 units. The site obtained detailed planning permission in November 2016 (Ref: [15/03204/PP](#)) for the *“erection of residential development comprising 95 dwellinghouses and associated works”*, followed by a non-material

² Windfall completions in Argyll & Bute are estimated in LDP2 as being 25% of the Local Housing Land Requirement based on previous windfall completions. However, the Helensburgh and Lomond area historically has a lower percentage of windfall than Argyll and Bute as a whole. Expected windfall figures within the LDP3 will be re-assessed subsequent to completion of the Evidence Report stage.

³ National Records of Scotland (2020) *Settlements and Localities 2020*. Available at: [Settlements and Localities 2020](#). (Accessed: 5 November 2025)

amendment to the layout, facing brick and landscape plan (Ref: [17/03099](#)) which was approved in December 2018, and has since been delivered by the market, by private developer Taylor Wimpey.

Ardencaple (H2008)

The site was allocated in LDP2 for housing with an indicative capacity of 76 units. The site obtained detailed planning permission in December 2017 (Ref: [17/00837/PP](#)) for *“proposed residential development comprising 76 dwellings including access road, parking areas, open space and landscaping”*, followed by non-material amendment approval (Ref: [18/01680/NMA](#)) in August 2018 and a further detailed planning permission (Ref: [19/00031/PP](#)) in May 2019, increasing the overall number of dwellinghouses from 76 to 83 and has since been delivered by the market, by private developer Persimmon Homes.

Helensburgh Pierhead (C2001)

The site was allocated in LDP2 for new community facilities including a swimming pool, leisure facility, open space, town centre parking and commercial/retail use. The site obtained detailed planning permission in January 2019 for the *“erection of a new leisure building including swimming pool, improved flood defences, new car park including public realm works and demolition of existing swimming pool”* (Ref: [18/01614/PP](#)), followed by non-material amendment approval (Ref: [22/00855/NMA](#)) in June 2022, and has since been delivered by Argyll and Bute Council. However, the commercial portion of the proposed development has not yet been developed.

2.1.2 Allocated Sites with Planning Permission

Blairvadach House, Shandon (H2006)

Whilst not located within the Helensburgh settlement boundary, this site has been included as part of the capacity study due to the proximity of Shandon to Helensburgh. Planning Permission for the *“Demolition of extensions, change of use of office (class 4) to 8 no residential apartments (sui-generis), formation of car parking and refurbishment of terrace and garden areas”* was approved in April 2022 (Ref: [21/02628/PP](#)) and Planning Permission for the *“Erection of 34 dwellinghouses and proposed trees works and associated infrastructure and roads”* (Ref: [22/01730/PP](#)) was approved in August 2023. Since, 8 flats have been delivered and 34 dwellinghouses are under construction. Both developments are being delivered by the market, through private developer Callum Williamson Ltd.

2.2 Cardross Baseline

Cardross is a village located approximately 3 miles east of Helensburgh, on the northern shore of the River Clyde, with a population of around 2,070 people in 2020⁴. Cardross has good transport links to/from the Naval Base via the A814 and is serviced by the North Clyde Railway Line into Glasgow, making it an attractive commuter town. As with Helensburgh, it is important to consider how Cardross can play an effective role in supporting future population growth in the local area over the coming decades.

There was only one large-scale housing allocation in Cardross in LDP2 on land at Kirkton Farm, which obtained Approval of Matters Specified in Conditions (AMSC) on 10 October 2025 (Ref: [25/00814/AMSC](#)) (see Section 2.2.1 below).

⁴ National Records of Scotland (2020) *Settlements and Localities 2020*. Available at: [Settlements and Localities 2020](#). (Accessed: 5 November 2025)

2.2.1 Allocated Sites with Planning Permission

Kirkton Farm (H2002)

The site was allocated in LDP2 for housing with an indicative capacity of 158 units. The site obtained Planning Permission in Principle (PPiP) in January 2017 for a residential development of approximately 140 units and associated works (Ref: [15/01794/PPP](#)). Following a refused AMSC application in October 2024 (Ref: [23/00144/AMSC](#)), which was then approved at appeal, a subsequent AMSC application (Ref: [25/00814/AMSC](#)) was submitted by private developer CALA Management Ltd. in May 2025 for the development of 118 homes and associated works and was approved on 10 October 2025.

3 Urban Capacity Assessment

The following section provides an assessment of development capacity within the two settlement boundary areas. This has been based on undeveloped allocated land in the LDP, as well as VDL sites within the study area. The deliverability of each site is based on the assessment criteria set out in the methodology (see Section 1.2). A map of the allocated land and VDL can be found in Appendix A.

3.1 Helensburgh

3.1.1 Allocated Housing Sites

Helensburgh Golf Club (H2004)

The site at Helensburgh Golf Club was allocated for housing in LDP2 with an indicative capacity of 300 units. The allocation is constrained by the presence of Ancient Woodland along the eastern and western boundaries of the site and is minimally constrained by the risk of surface water flooding owing to drainage throughout the site.

The allocation formed part of a previous planning application for the development of 309 residential units including affordable housing; demolition of the existing clubhouse and ancillary buildings; the erection of a new clubhouse and supporting facilities; full revision and upgrade of new and retained golf holes; and the creation of a new par 3 course (Ref: [21/01879/PP](#)).

Land outwith the allocated site was included within the development area associated with the above planning application. This land was subject to significant site constraints, including the presence of peat and was located within a Local Nature Conservation Site. As such, the application received objections from SEPA, NatureScot and Helensburgh Community Council. The application was subsequently withdrawn, and no development has taken place on the allocated site.

Blairvadach, Shandon (H2013)

As noted in the baseline section, the site at Blairvadach in Shandon has been included in the study due to its close proximity to Helensburgh. The site is allocated in LDP2 for housing with an indicative capacity of 64 units. An application for the felling of 8 trees and removal of ivy from 3 trees over sites H2006 and H2013 was approved in March 2021, however no application for development has been submitted.

The allocation appears to be constrained with a risk of surface water flooding; an existing children's home to the west; and a Tree Preservation Order (Ref: TP 01/18) spanning the site boundaries. In addition, the site is adjacent to the Category B Listed Blairvadach House with Terrace, Laundry Block and Outbuildings (Ref: LB18789). Given the proximity of the site to this building, it is possible that elements of the listing are contained within the allocated site. The allocation is also potentially constrained by the existing access from the A814, which may not be sufficient for development at the site, with existing topography and water courses having the potential to impact road layout and acceptable gradients.

3.1.2 Allocated Employment Sites

Craigendoran (B2001)

The site is 3.8ha in area and allocated in LDP2 for Business (Use Class 4), Hotel (Use Class 7) and ancillary employment related uses. The site obtained PPIp for *“the erection of office development (Class 4) and public house (Sui Generis)/food and drink (Class 3) with access and associated works”* in July 2021 (Ref: [20/00911/PPP](#)) however no subsequent detailed planning application has since been submitted, and no development has taken place.

The site is constrained by river, coastal and surface water flood risk and environmental designations from the adjacent Inner Clyde Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Ramsar Site. It is understood that this site remains of interest to the Council, who are currently exploring development options with the land owner.

3.1.3 Vacant & Derelict Land

Craigendoran Pier

The site is approximately 0.5ha in area and constrained by its high likelihood of coastal flooding and its location adjacent to the Craigendoran Pier Sewage Pumping Station and Craigendoran Railway Line and Station.

The site had planning permission approved in 2019 for the *“erection of B&B offering kayaking experiences, siting of steel containers for kayak storage and equipment, landscaping works to stabilise erosion, formation of vehicular access and parking”* (Ref: [18/02170/PP](#)) and a subsequent Non-Material Amendment Application to the above Planning Permission approved in 2023 (Ref: [22/02548/NMA](#)). A further application for planning permission was approved on 10 July 2025 for the *‘Erection of restaurant/cafe and kayaking business’* (Ref: [24/01960/PP](#)).

Whilst work on the site does not appear to have commenced, it is anticipated that the commercial development associated with the above application will be delivered by the market, through a private developer.

West Abercromby Street

The site is located on West Abercromby Street, to the south of Helensburgh Upper Railway Station. The site is c.0.15ha in area and is sits within the Helensburgh Upper Conservation Area.

In January 2025, a planning application was submitted for the erection of a single dwellinghouse (Ref: [25/00072/PP](#)) on the site, however, however this was withdrawn on 16 September 2025. Due to the size and location of the site, within the Helensburgh Upper Conservation Area, development is likely to be limited to a single home, consistent with the application above.

Churchill Square

The site is c.0.2ha in size and located to the north of Nelson Place, and south of Drumfork Community Centre. The site was previously residential, accommodating homes at 9-20 Churchill Square. These houses were demolished in recent years as they were in a state of disrepair (Ref: [22/02258/PNDEM](#)).

Whilst the site does not appear to have any environmental constraints preventing redevelopment, development opportunities are considered to be limited due to the size of the site and surrounding residential setting.

3.1.4 Summary of Urban Capacity in Helensburgh

As presented in Table 3.1 below, there is capacity for additional residential and employment related development within the existing Helensburgh settlement boundary. This includes land capable of accommodating in the region of 311 housing units, and 4.3ha of employment land. There is also land in neighbouring Shandon with capacity to deliver approximately 64 units to the immediate west of the settlement boundary. There is limited capacity to deliver development on VDL within the town, due to the size of the sites.

Table 3.1: Helensburgh Urban Capacity Summary Table

Site	LDP2 Reference	Status (Allocated/VDL)	LDP2/Indicative Capacity	Deliverability
Helensburgh Golf Club	H2004	Allocated (Housing)	300 units (Housing)	Constrained
Craigendoran	B2001	Allocated (Employment)	3.8ha (Employment)	Constrained
Craigendoran Pier	N/A	VDL	0.5ha (Employment)	Constrained
West Abercromby Street	N/A	VDL	1 unit (Housing)	Deliverable
Churchill Square	N/A	VDL	10 units (Housing)	Deliverable
Other Nearby Sites				
Blairvadach (Shandon)	H2013	Allocated (Housing)	64 units (Housing)	Deliverable (with constraints)

3.2 Cardross

3.2.1 Allocated Housing Sites

Kirkton Farm (H2002)

The only site allocated in LDP2 for residential development in Cardross at Kirkton Farm (H2002) has been granted PPiP (Ref: [15/01794/PPP](#)) and obtained AMSC on 10 October 2025 (Ref: [25/00814/AMSC](#)) for the development of 118 residential units. A map of the allocated land and VDL can be found in Appendix B.

3.2.2 Allocated Employment Sites

There are no sites allocated for employment in Cardross within LDP2.

3.2.3 Vacant & Derelict Land

St Peter's Seminary

St Peter's Seminary is located to the northeast of Cardross, beyond Cardross Golf Club. The site is designated as an Area for Action in the Argyll & Bute LDP2 (Ref: A2004) for environmental improvements, consideration of reuse and regeneration options. This includes the consideration of development potential for housing, tourist accommodation, business, educational and industry, leisure and recreation and institutional components; ensure opportunities and potential for the area to be used and accessed by the general public; and to consider opportunities to effectively manage the Kilmahew woodland policies.

The site is constrained by its Category A listed building status, the presence of ancient woodland, and surrounding risk of surface water flooding will likely restrict its potential for redevelopment.

3.2.4 Summary of Urban Capacity in Cardross

As presented in Table 3.2 below, there is existing capacity for residential development within the Cardross settlement boundary area on allocated land at Kirkton Farm, which obtained planning permission for the development of 118 units on 10 October 2025. Any development at the former St Peter's Seminary site would be limited by its A listed building status, its setting and the protection afforded to Ancient Woodland and will require carefully considered (sensitive) design solutions. There is however no current provision for employment land within the settlement.

Table 3.2: Cardross Urban Capacity Summary Table

Site	LDP2 Reference	Status (Allocated/VDL)	LDP2/Indicative Capacity	Deliverability
Kirkton Farm	H2002	Allocated (Housing)	118 units (Housing)	Deliverable (AMSC approved 10/10/2025)
St Peter’s Seminary	N/A	VDL	N/A	Constrained

4 Conclusions and Recommendations

The Urban Capacity Study considers the deliverability of sites which have been allocated within Argyll & Bute Council's adopted LDP2 but not yet delivered, as well as VDL, within the settlements of Helensburgh and Cardross. The purpose of the Urban Capacity Study is to determine the development capacity within the existing settlement boundaries to support the preparation of the HSDF.

There are three significant, deliverable and allocated sites within the study area – Helensburgh Golf Club (H2004), Kirkton Farm, Cardross (H2002) and Blairvadach, Shandon (H2013) just outside of Helensburgh for 300, 118 and 64 units respectively. As mentioned previously, a planning application for residential development on the allocated site at Kirkton Farm obtained consent in October 2025.

Whilst two of the VDL sites in Helensburgh identified through the study were considered deliverable (West Abercromby Street and Churchill Square), both were small in size, suitable for approximately 1 and 10 units respectively, and therefore would not significantly contribute towards the housing land supply. In addition, West Abercromby Street is located within the Helensburgh Upper conservation area, which brings additional constraints to any prospective development.

Overall, existing capacity for new development (residential and employment) within both settlement boundary areas is limited, particularly when considering the anticipated population growth as a result of investment at HMNB Clyde over the coming decades. Argyll & Bute Council previously established the need for a review of the Helensburgh and Lomond Green Belt to be carried out in LDP2 which was adopted in 2024 (see Proposal B). This review would provide a framework for the provision of infrastructure and future development, whilst recognising and safeguarding the key environmental features of the Green Belt, the landscape setting, and the contribution of the green network around these communities.

It is therefore recommended that the release of designated green belt land should be considered and assessed through the HSDF and forthcoming LDP3 process to enable the delivery of new housing and employment land within Helensburgh and Cardross. As well as supporting local and regional growth, this will also assist in addressing the local housing emergency declared by Argyll & Bute Council in June 2023.

To inform this exercise, Stantec have prepared an independent Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment for Helensburgh and Cardross which has identified land suitable for development in the surrounding area from a landscape and visual perspective.

Appendix A Map of Allocated Sites and Vacant and Derelict Land in Helensburgh



Appendix B Map of Allocated Sites and Vacant and Derelict Land in Cardross

