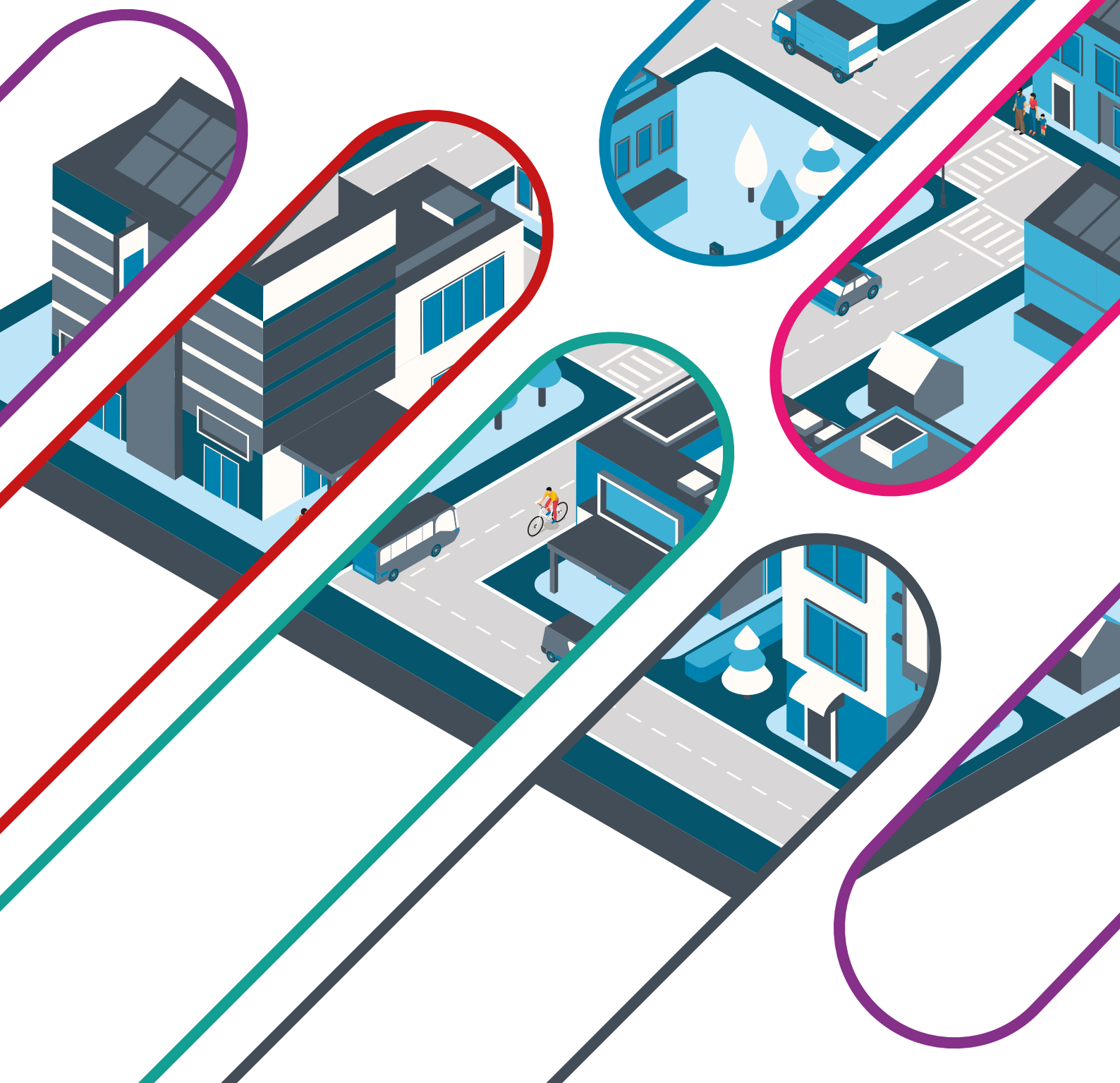




**CITY
REGION
DEAL**

Edinburgh
& South East
Scotland

**Blindwells New
Settlement Prospectus**
January 2026





Contents

1. What is Blindwells?	4
2. Where is Blindwells?	6
3. Why Support Blindwells?	10
4. Who needs to collaborate to deliver Blindwells?	13
5. How can Blindwells be Delivered?	15
6. When do we need to act?	20
7. Further Information & Contacts	28



1. What is Blindwells?

Blindwells is Scotland's first new settlement opportunity at scale since Irvine in 1966.



The Blindwells Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) shows that Blindwells can deliver more than 10,000 warm, energy efficient new homes in a wide range of house types, sizes and tenures. It can also deliver a new strategic town centre and employment opportunities, plus net zero, education, community, transport and other infrastructure as part of a high quality new mixed community where people want to live, work and play.

Blindwells has been planned since the 1990s to meet major and rapid changes in the region's economic, population and demographic profile, which can no longer be absorbed at significant pace and scale by existing communities and their infrastructure and services. Southeast Scotland's economy continues to grow, and Blindwells is a major opportunity to facilitate this over the long term in a sustainable way while delivering regeneration and significant benefits and prosperity locally, as well as wider regional, national and UK level positive impacts.



Whilst the first 1,600 home phase of Blindwells is underway, investment and support from both Governments is requested to deliver the step change in strategic public infrastructure and services that is needed to enable ongoing delivery and to allow Blindwells to reach its full potential. We want to explore with both Governments if there is a shared ambition to support this strategic expansion of Blindwells, with the requested public investment kept to the minimum required to enable such an expansion, which could not otherwise be achieved.



Key message: The emerging vision for Blindwells is to create an 'influential, innovative, healthy and net zero place that is a vibrant destination and attractor'. This reflects the strong ambition to deliver Blindwells in a way that maximises strategic impacts and benefits, while addressing the key issues, opportunities and challenges facing communities in this area.

Blindwells is one of seven strategic sites in the region that drives the Scottish Economy Edinburgh and southeast Scotland is the powerhouse of the Scottish economy, contributing 30% of total economic output (c. £44bn annually) with only 26% of Scotland's population.

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Housing Emergency Action Plan, Scottish Government (September 2025)

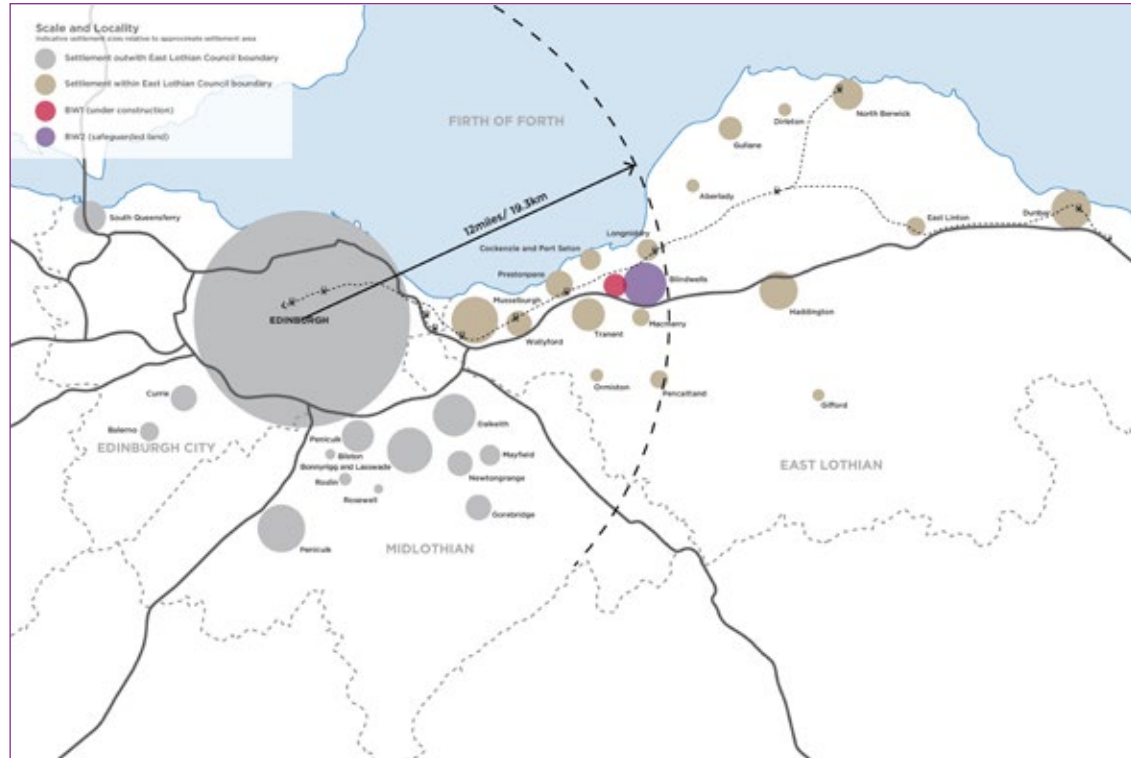
"The Scottish Government will work with East Lothian Council and private sector partners to unlock investment and growth of the new town of Blindwells."





2. Where is Blindwells?

The Blindwells Development Area is located in East Lothian, between Tranent and Prestonpans, just 12 miles east of Edinburgh city centre in the core of the region's labour and housing market areas, adjacent to the strategic transport network. At 540 hectares this former open cast coal mine is the largest previously developed site in Scotland for which there are ambitious redevelopment proposals emerging for a significant new settlement.



The Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal (ESES Deal) identifies Blindwells as a key part of the economic ambition for the region that is shared with both Governments. In future, these ambitions will see this region continue as the driver of the Scottish economy and ensure it remains a significant contributor to the wider UK economy and prosperity.

A Region that Drives UK Productivity

Edinburgh is Scotland's largest economy, which has grown by 57% since 2000. The latest data from the **Office for National Statistics** shows it had a higher GDP per head of population than London, driving high levels of productivity across the region.

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Blindwells is a major opportunity. It can support wider economic ambitions because it can deliver new homes at significant pace and scale to accommodate the region's rapidly growing workforce, while also improving regional travel patterns, sustainability, equality, prosperity and productivity. The Blindwells Development Area is also adjacent to the East Lothian Council-owned former Cockenzie Power Station site, which is being prepared for a range of strategic economic uses with UK Government support. Nearby, the Edinburgh Innovation Hub is also being progressed through the ESES Deal with both Governments and is due to open in 2025, with the wider Edinburgh Innovation Park the next major phase.



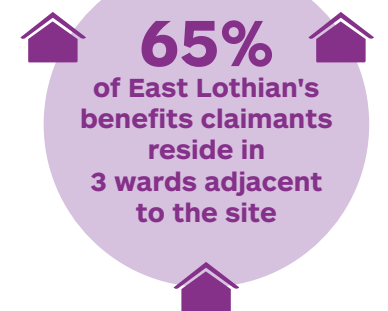
As well as supporting these shared strategic economic ambitions, the ongoing delivery of Blindwells will provide key services, amenities and infrastructure, and a significant number of new jobs and homes, including affordable homes, to support the ongoing transformation of the former East Lothian coalfield. This will stimulate the regeneration of communities, the economy and the environment in one of Scotland's most deprived places.

Blindwells Development Area: Preferred Development & Infrastructure Strategy



A Region with Widening Inequality

At July 2025, 65% of East Lothian's benefits claimants reside in the three wards immediately surrounding the Blindwells Development Area, which also have several of the most deprived Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation data zones nationally.



Key message: With investment and support from both Governments, Blindwells can unlock significant private investment, public benefits and preventative action in one of Scotland's most deprived places, in the rapidly growing capital city region. The reuse of this land can support strategic economic ambitions and the transformation of the local area from 'coal to carbon neutral' to ensure these regenerating places and communities are not left behind.

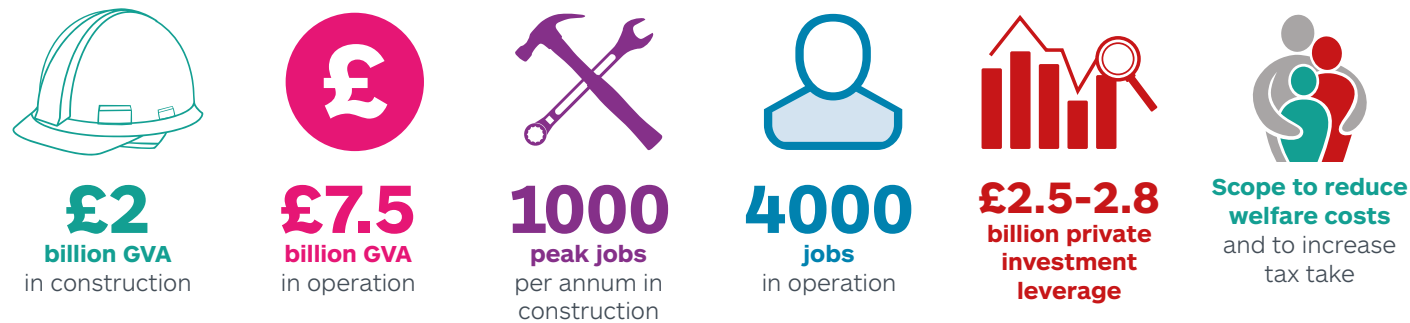


3. Why support Blindwells?

Blindwells new settlement is an Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal project, and a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) for the project has been submitted to both Scottish and UK Governments.

This SOBC shows that the new settlement itself can generate strategic positive impacts at UK and national level, as well as regionally and locally.

This initial appraisal indicates that Blindwells could deliver:



The Scottish Government's Housing Emergency Action Plan points to the importance of working with East Lothian Council and private sector partners to unlock investment in and growth of Blindwells new settlement to help address the National Housing Emergency. The UK Government's response to the New Towns Task Force also points to the need for ambitious thinking on how large-scale new communities should be comprehensively delivered to address the housing crisis.

The Region at the Heart of the National Housing Emergency and wider housing crisis

Southeast Scotland has the greatest need and demand for housing in Scotland with a projection of between 74,000 and 105,000 new homes needed over the next 20 years. Addressing this will be a key pillar of tackling the National Housing Emergency and wider housing crisis.

UK Government Response to New Towns Task Force (September 2025)

“Delivering the next generation of new towns will be a cross-government effort and central to government's agenda, not just in terms of building homes but to drive economic growth and spread economic opportunity across the country. This will be a priority across all government departments to ensure that new towns are built with the infrastructure and amenities required to create successful new places, with the long-term certainty of funding.”

Key message: The Council wants to work with both Governments, landowners and developers to identify a comprehensive place making solution for Blindwells via business case development. This will influence the level of ambition the Council can pursue for Blindwells via its planning, public consultation and other aligned processes and decisions.

This strategic joint working between the public and private sectors needs to focus on finding appropriate technical, infrastructure, public service, financial innovation and delivery vehicle solutions for Blindwells expansion.

The aim is to devise an acceptable and affordable development and infrastructure

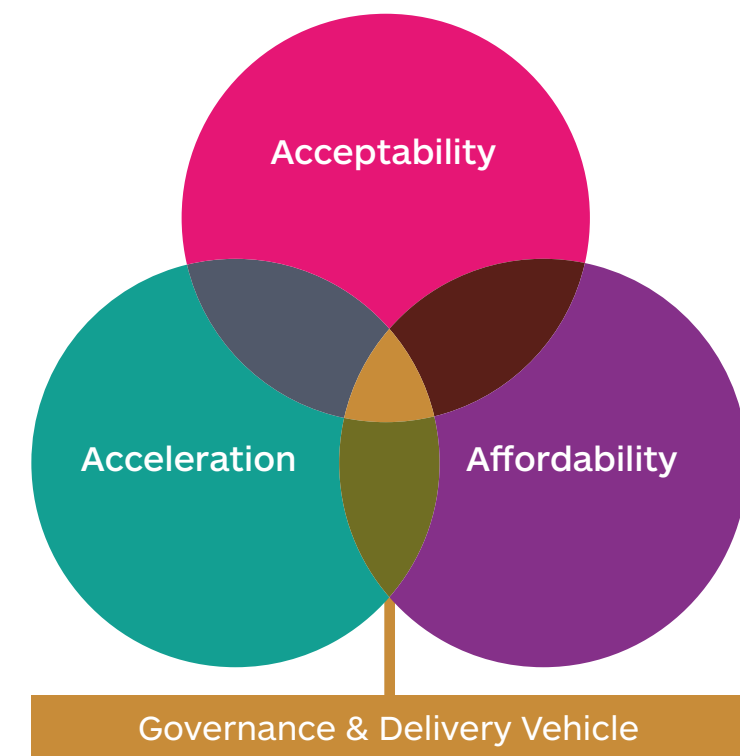
strategy which, with the support of a Government approved business case, can enable, de-risk and accelerate the project. A strategic collaborative approach across both Governments and Key Agencies as well as the other technical stakeholders will be needed to find this comprehensive solution.

The outputs of this joint working will be:

- a draft Blindwells Area Design Framework (BADF) that will be used to consult communities and other stakeholders, and then settle on a development and infrastructure strategy solution, from which designs, costs and a cost plan can be produced; and

- an Outline Business Case for Blindwells, which will be prepared in parallel with the Blindwells Area Design Framework, to seek support from Government in capital and revenue terms to deliver the proposal through Full Business Case approvals.

Purpose of Blindwells Area Design Framework & Blindwells Outline Business Case



An appropriate approach to project governance and delivery will ensure public and private investment can be joined up to enable Blindwells, and to ensure that benefits can be delivered where and when they are needed most. This strategic partnership can maximise Blindwells' national and UK level impact over the next 30 years.



Golden Thread

Key Opportunities

- **Strategic benefits and impact align with both Governments' ambitions** including housing delivery as economic infrastructure;
- **Over 10,000 homes including 2,500 affordable homes** to address Housing Emergency and crisis, and to support wider ambition;
- **Create a new regional destination and attractor** that is an influential, innovative, healthy and net zero place;
- **Rebalance regional and local opportunity** to enable sustainability, transformation, equality, prosperity and enhance productivity;
- **Enable ongoing west to east phasing and accelerate major scheme to ensure it can be properly planned, managed, funded and can deliver positive outcomes and impact;**
- **New strategic shared infrastructure in the west of the site can de-risk and enable delivery** with connections across the whole site and to the wider area also needed to accelerate the entire scheme and its wider benefits;
- **Consolidates BW1 development and placemaking, and allows BW2 to support viable shared services and facilities;**
- **Scope to support place and service transformation** – e.g. on-site shared services and facilities catering for a wider area and to support ambitions for other assets, incl. Cockenzie site;
- **Accelerated delivery supports benefits and positive impact** and economic and financial dimensions of the business case;
- Targeted scope of interventions means **specific time limited focus for public sector involvement;**
- **Long term solution** to manage growth challenges and opportunities, so positive outcomes, benefits and strategic impact can be unlocked;
- **Urgent critical path** so collective action can be sharply focused on the need for early action and delivery solutions to help address the housing emergency.

Goals/Spending Objectives

1. Deliver a new regional destination and attractor that will deliver significant job creation to help drive national, regional and local prosperity via co-ordinated public / private sector investment for a strategic infrastructure first approach;

3. Complete Blindwells new settlement to deliver c. 10,000+ new high-quality homes, including 2,500+ affordable homes, a scale that will support place regeneration and inclusive economic growth at regional and national levels;

5. Remediate and re-use previously developed land aligned with environmental aspirations for a low-carbon net zero future and by supporting biodiversity and restoring / protecting the natural environment.

7. Support the development of adjacent local/ regional opportunities, incl. Cockenzie and the Edinburgh Innovation Park.

2. Deliver a new settlement based on high quality placemaking principles to include education / skills/ training, culture/ leisure/ recreation, travel/ transport/ connectivity, and health/ wellbeing, that is well connected to surrounding communities;

4. Deliver high quality homes across different types and tenures in a way that supports climate change mitigation and adaptation, including restoring / protecting the natural environment;

6. Deliver improved travel, mobility and connectivity around the ESES region, and onward to north / south / west, to support modal shift to public and active travel patterns in a way that also delivers for surrounding communities; and

Key Challenges

- **Capital investment in shared public infrastructure up front** needed to overcome regulatory weakness and delivery gaps, using financial innovation (funding and finance) to spread cost over the long term;
- **The Council needs additional revenue funding support** to deliver additional capacity in services to accommodate growth, without compromising such provision more widely;
- **Long term commitment to investment and delivery is needed**, to ensure the scheme is deliverable and affordable over the long term, noting earlier delivery could have cost and operational benefits, and enable earlier preventative action;
- **Land assembled in the development area but wider land may be required** - e.g. for shared infrastructure at and around the site where landowners may collaborate, or statutory powers may be used in the public interest;
- **The form of partnership and delivery vehicle needs to be established** with input from delivery partners;
- **Planning policy, strategy and decisions must allow opportunity to be realised while managing strategic risks**, given anticipated LDP and Business Case timelines;
- **Personnel and wider resource capacity constraints need to be overcome** to co-ordinate comprehensive solution, investment and delivery;
- **Critical path is time sensitive** as prolonged timeline could compromise business case opportunity and lead to risk, uncertainty and a missed opportunity.



Importantly, Blindwells can help accommodate the rapidly growing workforce that is attracted to this highly performing capital city region, where housing need and demand are at the highest level nationally. Strategic investment from both Governments is planned to further stimulate this region's economy, including plans for a Green Freeport, and to lead wider data innovation and Artificial Intelligence. Blindwells is of a scale that can support this, while simultaneously providing a focused strategic solution at a pace and scale that can help:

- alleviate the region's overheating housing and labour markets;
- address inequality, child poverty, homelessness, and regeneration issues;
- increase the supply of affordable homes and meet need and demand for new homes;
- overcome strategic infrastructure and service capacity constraints with targeted capital and revenue investment;
- coordinate the action of multiple infrastructure and service providers, with separate funding and delivery models, to unlock major place-based transformation and leverage substantial private sector investment;
- work within fiscal parameters, as this multi-year project can deliver outcomes efficiently and effectively, providing a value for money investment.

The scale of Blindwells means achieving the right outcome is beyond the powers, capacity and resources of the Council and landowners and developers acting together. A partnership with both Governments is needed to find strategic solutions and to co-ordinate strategic action and long term investment at pace and scale, working with others including National Wealth Fund, Scottish National Investment Bank, pension funds and others, in order to share risk and realise the opportunity. This joint working should be focused on the development of a Blindwells Area Design Framework and Outline Business Case, to confirm how the delivery of an acceptable and affordable development and infrastructure strategy can be accelerated via the implementation of associated Full Business Cases.

4. Who needs to collaborate to deliver Blindwells?

Blindwells is of such unique scale and significance that it merits investment and support from both Governments. A joint approach could co-ordinate reserved and devolved interests and align them around respective strategic solutions to maximise collective impact. This could be provided by both Governments for different reasons and in different ways, for example:

UK Government: focused on strategic economic ambitions, reducing welfare costs and increasing tax take, may support the delivery of strategic transport infrastructure that is needed to enable the scale and nature of development at Blindwells that can facilitate economic transformation and deliver national as well as UK level impacts;



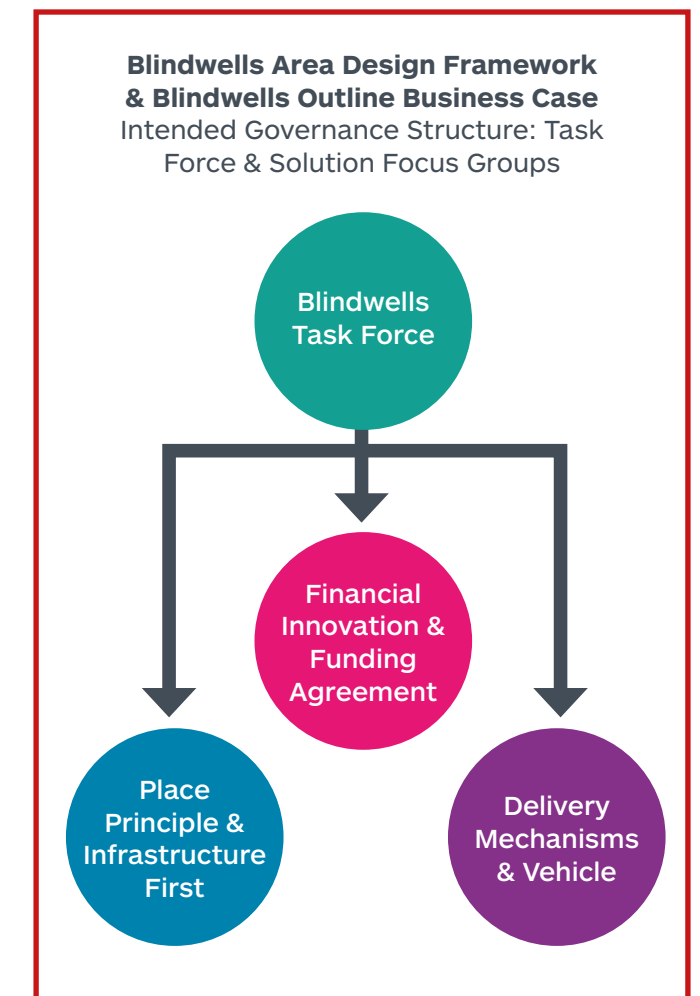
Scottish Government: focused on strategic delivery solutions that can enable and accelerate provision of housing, including affordable housing, education and net zero infrastructure as well as revenue support to increase capacity for growth.



Housing Emergency Action Plan, Scottish Government (September 2025)

“This plan comprises new, enhanced and accelerated actions, reflecting our determination to go further and faster in our commitment to tackling the housing emergency during the remainder of this Parliament and beyond. It sets out a bold and coordinated response — one that tackles immediate pressures while laying the foundations for lasting, systemic change.”

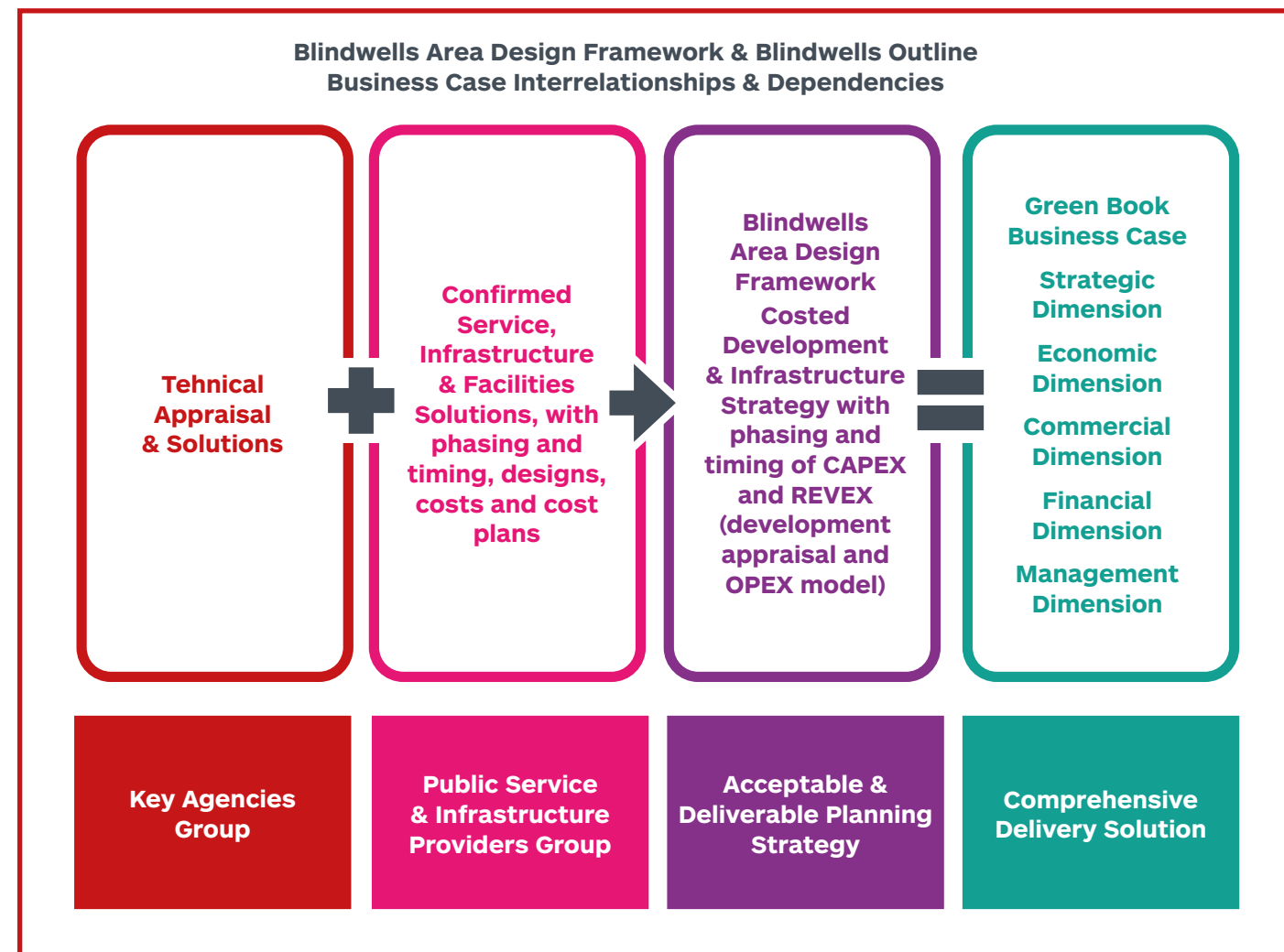
The formation of a Blindwells Task Force / Working Group is requested, with senior civil servant champions. This will provide Government oversight of the Infrastructure First, Financial Innovation and Delivery Vehicle solutions needed to underpin the business case and its place-based investment and delivery programme. The commercial context is also crystallising, and there is a need and willingness to ensure that it, and the public and private partnership approach, evolves symbiotically to facilitate Government involvement.



Appendix 1



The project team also needs to work with Key Agencies to define what success looks like at Blindwells and how this should be measured. We need to agree the solutions, outputs, outcomes and impacts that will be expected by both Governments if they are to provide the key inputs, resources and investment that will be needed to enable, de-risk and accelerate the project and its benefits and impact. This engagement is needed in a strategic cross-cutting way, so efficient and effective multi-functional solutions can be found timeously.



Key message: Formation of a Blindwells Task Force is requested to agree strategic solutions for Infrastructure First, Financial Innovation, and a Delivery Vehicle, working to the 'Place Principle' with Key Agencies and others, and across the public and private sectors. This will enable collaboration and collective decisions and actions to enable public consultation on shared place-based delivery solutions and benefits at strategic scale.

5. How can Blindwells be Delivered?

The business case notes that Governments' support and investment in Blindwells can be justified to address strategic delivery gaps in capital and revenue terms. The key strategic issues that are linked to the redevelopment of this land for delivery of a new settlement at this scale can be summarised as:

Transport: shared strategic transport infrastructure is needed to enable this place to become a strategic destination and attractor, to facilitate economic development and wider regeneration, to effect modal shift to sustainable modes, to access the site in sustainable ways, and to de-risk, enable and accelerate the development as well as high quality place-making and viable public and commercial service delivery;



Public facilities: this scale of development needs a new public sector estate, with scope to integrate education, community, healthcare and emergency services and more, including the higher and further education and third sectors, in an exemplary way. This will provide an early anchor for the new settlement as a hub, and underpin its attractiveness for wider public and commercial investment that could go beyond what the development needs to include national, regional and sub-regional provision;



Net zero infrastructure: the scale of this new settlement, and the industrial legacy of the site, presents a unique opportunity to use mine water geothermal energy at scale, as well as other renewable energy and heat technologies, to ensure the highest quality net zero and sustainability credentials that can help to address wider issues including fuel and child poverty;



Revenue for services: the new settlement will generate a 25% increase in East Lothian's population and will place unsustainable demands on existing services that will need additional revenue support, above the local authority settlement, to address.







The project team requests collaborative working across both Governments, Key Agencies and others to find acceptable and deliverable technical, infrastructure and phasing solutions. We also request joint working to identify costs, funding and finance arrangements, as well as partnership and delivery vehicle solutions, working with the National Wealth Fund and Scottish National Investment Bank and others. The project needs long term commitment from both Governments to ensure that once the Blindwells expansion starts that it will finish and deliver the anticipated benefits and positive impact.

Blindwells Area Design Framework & Blindwells Outline Business Case

A Logical Flow of Co-ordinated Action to Deliver Benefits, Outcomes and Positive Impact

Need

Delivery of Blindwells can accelerate equality, regeneration, and prosperity at UK, national, regional and local levels. It is central to a range of approved strategic plans for sustainable growth. Blindwells presents a compelling case for change and strategic investment.

Resources

The ambition, alignment, resources and teamwork of both Governments, and the wider public, private and third sectors must be led, co-ordinated and harnessed to find strategic solutions that allow us to plan a place of great quality and value, so we can consult people on what can be achieved.

Activities

A sharp focus on addressing challenges and opportunities to allow this place to reach its full potential can be achieved by collaboration on a vision for delivering infrastructure first, increasing service capacity, and a joint financial, partnership and delivery solution. Communities can then be consulted on a draft Blindwells Area Design Framework, the final version of which will inform the Business Case process.

Outputs

The business case process will seek capital and revenue investment from Governments to focus on delivering shared land remediation, transport, education and net zero infrastructure, and revenue for services. This will overcome delivery gaps and regulatory issues, and enable, de-risk and accelerate completion of the entire Blindwells new town.

Outcomes

If Blindwells can be properly planned, managed and funded, it will deliver a wide range of strategic outcomes, benefits and positive impacts at UK, national, regional and local levels, which can not otherwise be achieved. The identified inputs, activities and outputs are needed to deliver these strategic objectives and ensure regenerating communities and places are not left behind.

Impacts

Significant progress on a wide range of long-term goals can be achieved through Blindwells – e.g. sustainable development; accelerating growth; well-being economy; education, skills and training; inequality and child poverty; housing emergency and crisis; health and wellbeing; nature recovery; renewable energy; climate mitigation and adaptation; increase tax take and reduce welfare costs.

Appendix 2

Key message: A partnership approach with investment and support from both Governments and wider partners across sectors is requested to help ensure that the delivery of shared public infrastructure, services and facilities is viable and affordable, so the strategic benefits from Blindwells can be unlocked.

Place Principle

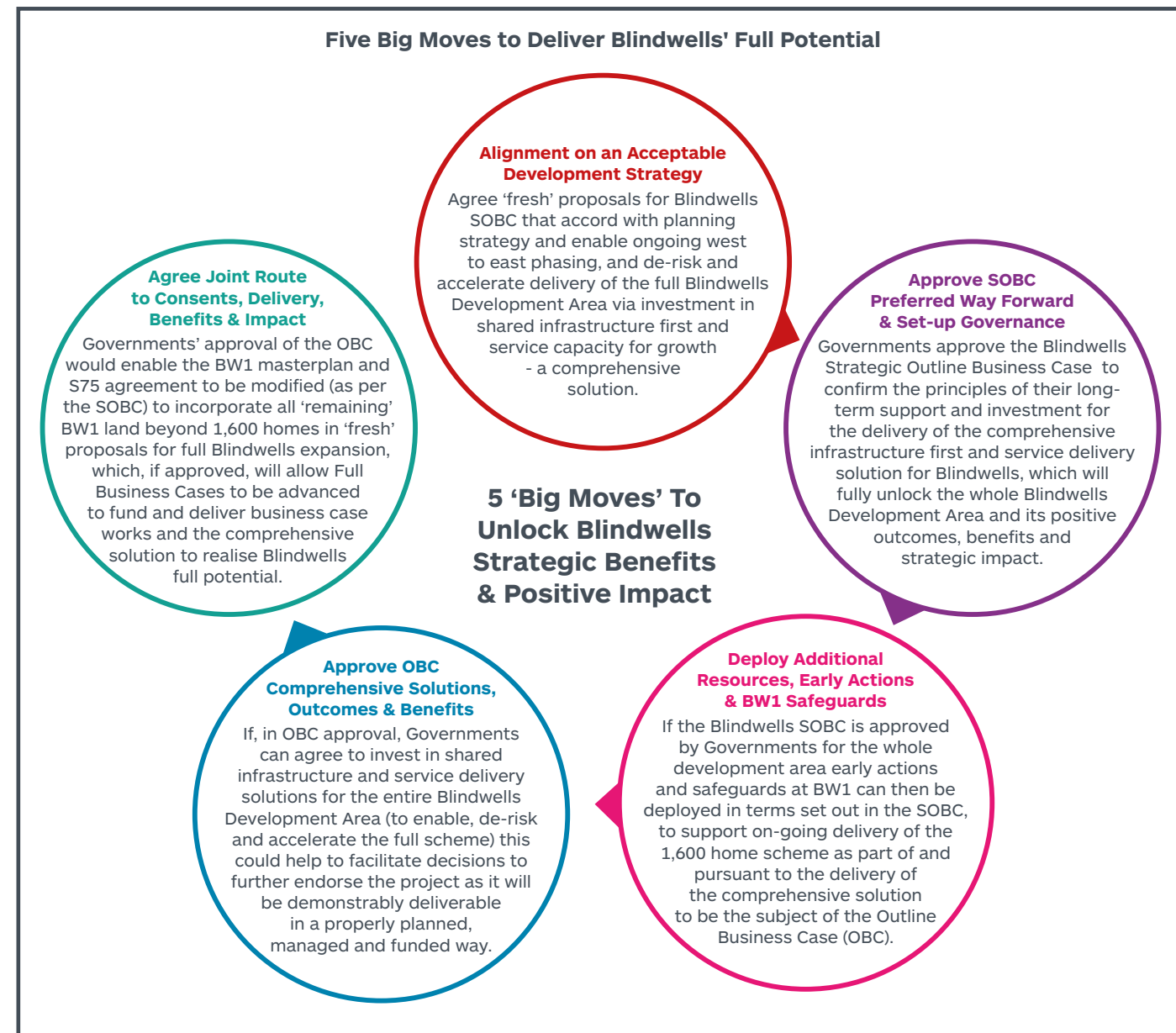
“The Scottish Government and COSLA have agreed to adopt the Place Principle to help overcome organisational and sectoral boundaries... Implementation of the Place Principle requires a more integrated, collaborative and participative approach to ... bring ideas about services, investments, resources and assets together under one roof.”



6. When do we need to act?

We request urgent support from UK and Scottish Governments to help deliver Blindwells so it can help address the National Housing Emergency as well as the wider housing crisis and the shared economic ambitions for Scotland's capital city region. This is so the region can continue as the driver of the Scottish economy and remain a significant contributor to the wider UK economy and prosperity.

Blindwells needs investment and support from both Governments to deliver a programme of shared public infrastructure and services, to avoid a lack of such capacity stopping the development and preventing ongoing expansion. We want to collaborate with both Governments to co-produce the Blindwells Outline Business Case during 2026, in line with the UK Treasury Green Book revision, with a programme of Full Business Cases to follow. To develop the Outline Business Case, the Council also requests additional financial support to augment its capacity and resources and to commission specialist advice.



Risk and costs can be managed, and delivery can be accelerated, by packaging and delivering infrastructure upfront or early in the programme, not by phasing it over the long term with incremental commitment. If public works are delivered by the private sector as part of the wider development, to a public sector specification, this may bring efficiency if public procurement rules are followed and if assets are transferred to the public sector on completion. Another option is that the public sector delivers or commissions public works once land is remediated, serviced and transferred to it by the private sector.

UK Government Response to New Towns Task Force (September 2025)

“We are determined to get spades in the ground on at least three new towns in this Parliament and the government is prepared to progress work on a far larger range of locations if it proves possible.”



Whatever the eventual approach, the aim is to work with both Governments, Key Agencies, landowners, developers and others to find the most appropriate, efficient and effective way of enabling, de-risking and accelerating high quality place-making at Blindwells, and to maximise the development's benefits, outcomes and impact for our communities and places. Blindwells can deliver strategic benefits and positive impacts at all levels.

The project team request urgent joint working with both Governments, Key Agencies and others to develop a comprehensive delivery solution for Blindwells, to help address the national housing emergency and wider housing crisis on an expedited timeline, and to deliver strategic benefits and positive impacts at UK, national, regional and local level. Blindwells is a major opportunity, and we want to take early collective action to deliver lasting positive change.

Key message: The scale of ambition and scope for a strategic partnership at Blindwells is a major opportunity for both Governments to align their support and investment around the scheme to address delivery gaps and to achieve their shared ambitions. Without this, Blindwells cannot be delivered since it would transfer too much risk and opportunity cost to the public sector.

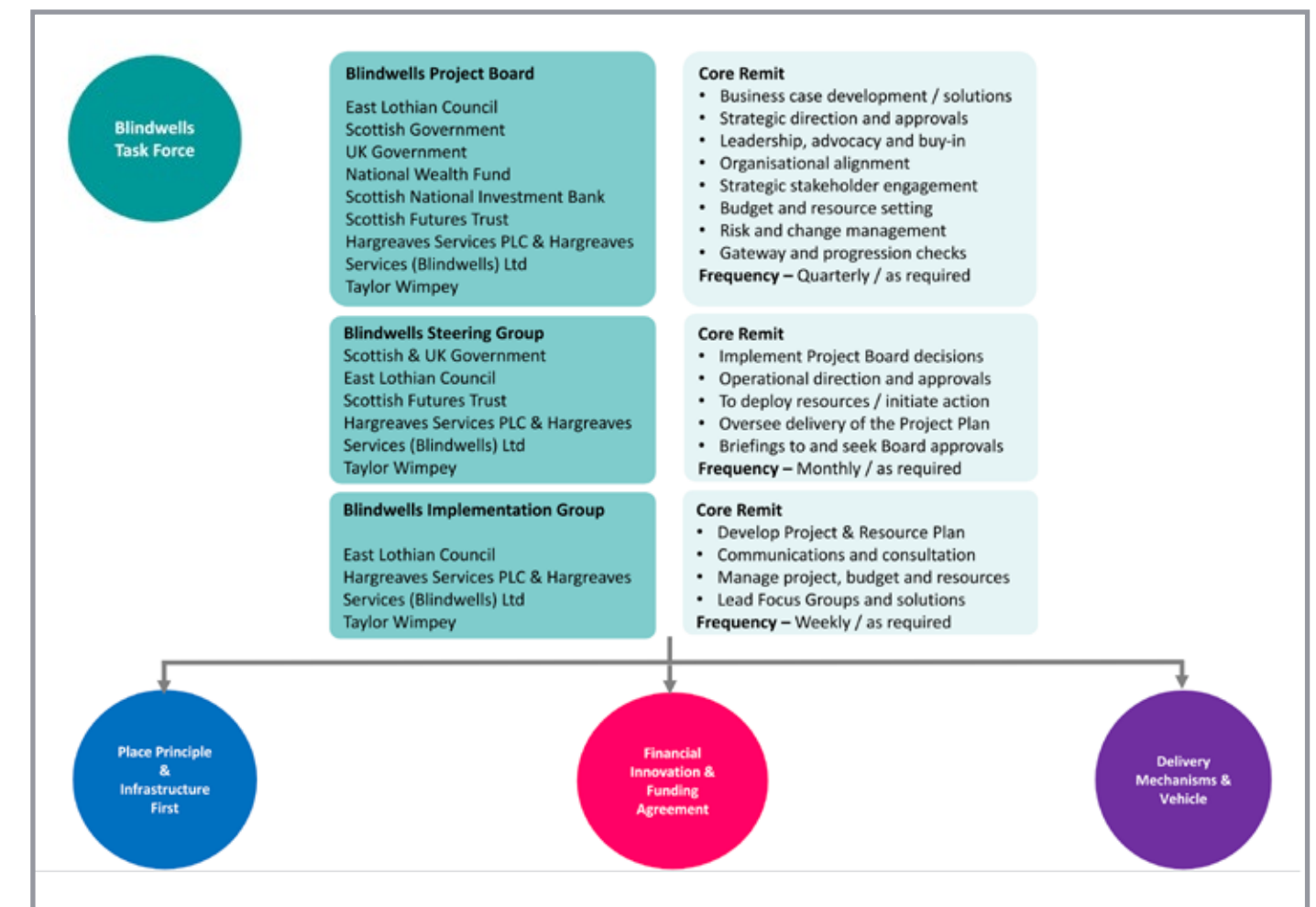


Housing Emergency Action Plan – Call to Action, Scottish Government September 2025

“The Scottish Government is committed to addressing the housing emergency with urgency, ambition and collaboration. We are calling on all partners across the housing sector, and beyond, to work alongside us as we take bold, coordinated action.”

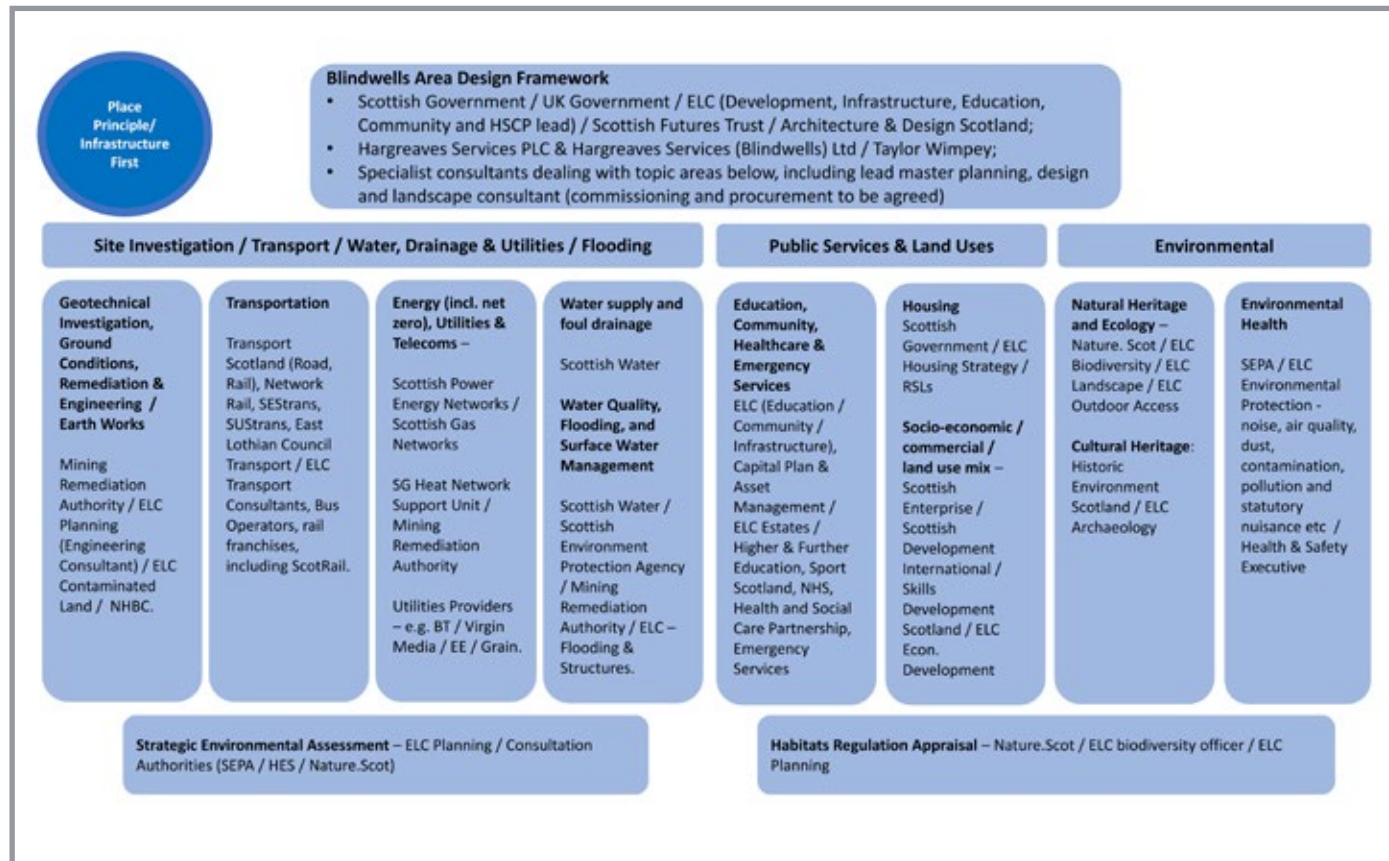


Appendix 1





Appendix 1

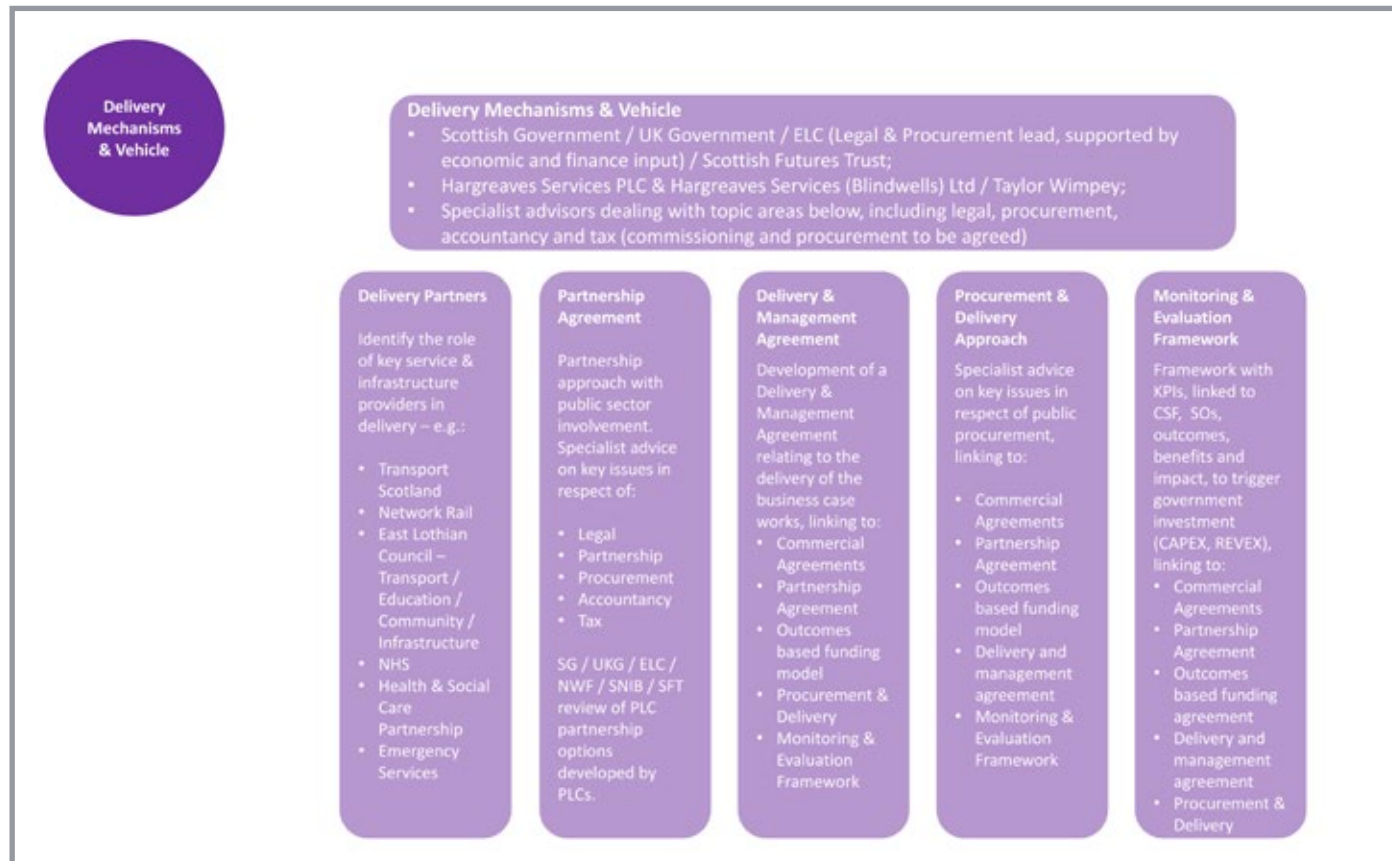


Appendix 1

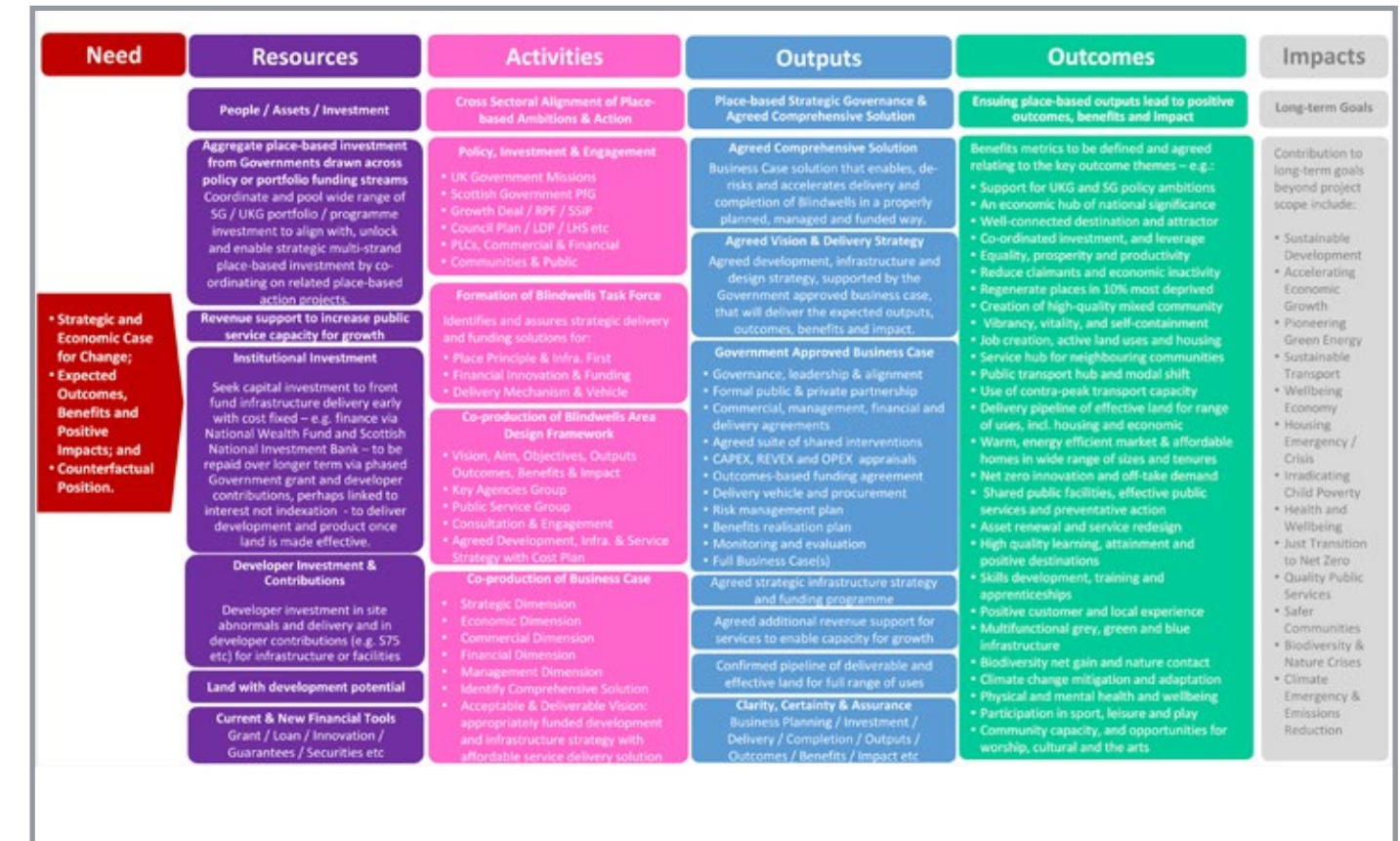




Appendix 1



Appendix 2





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