

Countryside Development in the Countryside

5.62 The countryside is defined as those areas outwith the Urban and Villages Limits, as set out in Policy CG01 of the Spatial Strategy. The criteria for assessing housing and business proposals in the countryside are set out in Policies CG03 and CG04. Detailed guidance on the interpretation and application of these policies is contained within Supplementary Guidance SG01 Development in the Countryside. It should be noted that proposals that lie in the Green Belt will additionally have to meet the terms of Policy CG02 contained within in the Spatial Strategy.

5.63

Policy CG03 Housing in the Countryside

Proposals for housing development in the countryside of a scale, layout and design suitable for its intended location will be supported in the following circumstances:

1. Housing required for the pursuance of agriculture, horticulture, or forestry, or the management of a business for which a countryside location is essential;
2. Restoration or replacement of houses which are still substantially intact, provided the restored/replacement house is of a comparable size to the original;
3. Conversion or restoration of non-domestic farm buildings to residential use, including the sensitive redevelopment of redundant farm steadings;
4. Appropriate infill development;
5. Limited enabling development to secure the restoration of historic buildings or structures; or
6. Small, privately owned gypsy/traveller sites which comply with Policy HSG08.

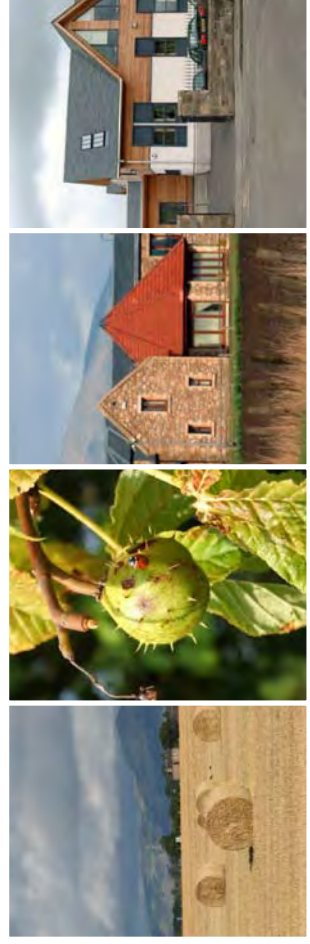
Detailed guidance on the application of these criteria will be contained in Supplementary Guidance SG01 'Development in the Countryside'. Proposals will be subject to a rigorous assessment of their impact on the rural environment, having particular regard to policies protecting natural heritage and the historic environment.

5.64

Policy CG04 Business Development in the Countryside

Proposals for business development in the countryside of a scale, layout and design suitable for its intended location will be supported in the following circumstances:

1. Areas specifically identified for business development on the Proposals Map;
 2. Business development, including appropriate leisure and tourism uses, where a need for a countryside location is demonstrated, or the development constitutes an appropriate form of farm diversification;
 3. Proposals involving the re-use of industrial, commercial or institutional land or premises, or the conversion of farm buildings for business use; or
 4. Limited extensions to existing established business in the countryside;
- Detailed guidance on the application of these criteria will be contained in Supplementary Guidance SG01 'Development in the Countryside'. Proposals will be subject to a rigorous assessment of their impact on the rural environment, having particular regard to policies protecting natural heritage and the historic environment.



5.112

Policy D08 Sites of Archaeological Interest

1. Scheduled ancient monuments and other identified nationally important archaeological resources will be preserved in situ, and within an appropriate setting. Developments which have an adverse effect on scheduled monuments or the integrity of their setting will not be permitted unless there are exceptional circumstances;
2. All other archaeological resources will be preserved in situ wherever feasible. The Council will weigh the significance of any impacts on archaeological resources and their settings against other merits of the development proposals in the determination of planning applications; and
3. Developers may be requested to supply a report of an archaeological evaluation prior to determination of the planning application. Where the case for preservation does not prevail, the developer shall be required to make appropriate and satisfactory provision for archaeological excavation, recording, analysis and publication, in advance of development.

5.113

Policy D09 Listed Buildings

The Council supports the sustainable re-use and management of the historic built environment, and on that basis there is a presumption against demolition or any other works that would adversely affect the special interest or setting of a listed building. The Council recognises, however, that listed buildings will require alteration, extension and adaptation from time to time to remain in beneficial use and encourages creative and sensitive development where there are no such adverse effects. Accordingly:

1. The layout, design, materials, scale, siting and use of any development affecting a listed building, or its setting, including extensions, replacement windows, doors, roofs, rainwater goods, boundary treatments and other features, shall be appropriate to the character and appearance of the building and its setting, and should conform to Supplementary Guidance SG16 'Design Guidance for Listed Buildings and Non-Listed Buildings in Conservation Areas'.
2. Proposals for the total or substantial demolition of a listed building will only be supported where it is demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that every effort has been made by all concerned to find practical ways of keeping it. In particular it should be demonstrated that:
 - the existing building is no longer of special interest;
 - the existing building is incapable of physical repair and re-use, as shown by the submission and verification of a thorough structural condition report;
 - the costs of repair and re-use are such that it is not economically viable. Supporting evidence should include a full economic appraisal, evidence that grant aid is not able to meet any funding deficit, and evidence that the building has been actively marketed at a reasonable price and for a period reflecting its location, condition and possible viable uses without finding a restoring purchaser; or
 - the demolition of the building is essential for the delivery of significant economic benefits for the local or wider community.
3. RCAHMS will be formally notified of all proposals to demolish listed buildings to enable features to be recorded.

5.114

Policy D10 Conservation Areas

The Council will protect the historic character and visual amenity of each Conservation Area. Accordingly:

1. New development in Conservation Areas should not erode the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, with particular reference to the historic pattern and density of development; its setting; the architectural style, massing and materials of buildings; landscape treatments; and boundary features.
2. The layout, design, materials, scale, siting and use of any development affecting an unlisted building in a Conservation Area, including extensions, replacement windows, doors, roofs, rainwater goods, boundary treatments and other features, should respect the character and appearance of the original building, and should conform to Supplementary Guidance SG16 'Design Guidance for Listed Buildings and Non-Listed Buildings in Conservation Areas'.
3. Demolition of unlisted buildings within Conservation Areas which make a positive contribution to the special character and appearance of the area will only be supported where:
 - the existing building is incapable of physical repair and re-use, as shown by the submission and verification of a thorough structural condition report; or
 - the costs of repair and re-use are such that it is not economically viable. Supporting evidence should include a full economic appraisal, evidence that grant aid is not able to meet any funding deficit, and evidence that the building has been actively marketed at a reasonable price and for a period reflecting its location, condition and possible viable uses without finding a restoring purchaser; or
 - the demolition of the building is essential for the delivery of significant economic benefits for the local or wider community; and
 - proposals for redevelopment of the site contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation Area.

Existing buildings shall be retained on site until the redevelopment commences.

5.115

Policy D11 Areas of Townscape Value

The Council recognises the architectural and historic merit and potential of the additional areas of townscape value identified on the Proposals Map, which do not currently have Conservation Area status. Within these areas:

1. The Council will undertake Character Appraisals to determine whether the areas merit designation as Conservation Areas, either as new Conservation Areas, or as extensions to existing ones; and
2. Development proposals will be required to fit with the distinctive character of the area with particular reference to the historic pattern and density of development; its setting; the architectural style, massing and materials of buildings; landscape treatments; and boundary features.

5.116

Policy D12 Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes

1. There will be a presumption against development which would adversely affect the character or setting of sites identified in the 'Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes in Scotland', as identified on the Proposals Map.
2. The value of other historic gardens and designed landscapes not listed in the Inventory will be given due weight in the planning process, having regard to their historical significance, integrity and condition. Non-inventory sites will be identified within Supplementary Guidance SG09 'Landscape Character and Assessment'.
3. The Council will seek to encourage sensitive restoration and management of historic gardens and designed landscapes.

5.117

Policy D13 Battlefield Sites

There will be a presumption against development outwith the Urban or Village Limits which would destroy, erode, or adversely affect battlefield sites listed in the Inventory of Historic Battlefields, as identified on the Proposals Map. In assessing impacts, guidance provided in the relevant Historic Scotland guidance note will be followed. Proposals for the sensitive management and interpretation of battlefield sites will be supported.

Biodiversity

5.83 The promotion of biodiversity – the variety of life that exists on earth – is a key function of the green network. Public bodies have a duty under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 to further the conservation of biodiversity. An important part of this is the safeguarding of identified sites, habitats and species which are protected under national legislation, and international obligations such as the Habitats and Bird Directives. In addition, the Falkirk area has a system of non-statutory local nature conservation sites (Wildlife Sites and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation) and a Local Biodiversity Action Plan which identifies a number of priority species and habitats. Designated sites are shown on the Proposals Map.

5.84 Policy GN03 provides general support for biodiversity as a consideration within the planning process, and sets out the level of protection which will be afforded to the hierarchy of sites, species and habitats. Supplementary Guidance SG05 'Biodiversity and Development' provides guidance on how biodiversity should be safeguarded and promoted through development. Supplementary Guidance SG08 'Local Nature Conservation and Geodiversity Sites' provides further information on the definition and conservation value of non-statutory local sites and will be the means by which the list of such sites will be reviewed. Geodiversity is also given consideration within the policy, and Supplementary Guidance SG08 will identify a provisional list of locally important geological and geomorphological sites.

5.85

Policy GN03 Biodiversity and Geodiversity

The Council will protect and enhance habitats and species of importance, and will promote biodiversity and geodiversity through the planning process Accordingly:

1. Development likely to have a significant effect on Natura 2000 sites (including Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, and Ramsar Sites) will be subject to an appropriate assessment. Qualifying features of a Natura 2000 site may not be confined to the boundary of a designated site. Where an assessment is unable to conclude that a development will not adversely affect the integrity of the site, development will only be permitted where there are no alternative solutions, and there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest.

These can be of a social or economic nature except where the site has been designated for a European priority habitat or species. Consent can only be issued in such cases where the reasons for overriding public interest relate to human health, public safety, beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or other reasons subject to the opinion of the European Commission (via Scottish Ministers).

2. Development affecting Sites of Special Scientific Interest will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the overall objectives of the designation and the overall integrity of the designated area would not be compromised, or any adverse effects are clearly outweighed by social or economic benefits of national importance.
3. Development likely to have an adverse effect on European protected species, a species listed in Schedules 5, 5A, 6, 6A and 8 of Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), or a species of bird protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) will only be permitted where the applicant can demonstrate that a species licence is likely to be granted.
4. Development affecting Local Nature Reserves, Wildlife Sites, Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation and Geodiversity Sites (as identified in Supplementary Guidance SG08 'Local Nature Conservation and Geodiversity Sites'), and national and local priority habitats and species (as identified in the Falkirk Local Biodiversity Action Plan) will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the overall integrity of the site, habitat or species will not be compromised, or any adverse effects are clearly outweighed by social or economic benefits of substantial local importance.
5. Where development is to be approved which could adversely affect any site or species of significant nature conservation value, the Council will require appropriate mitigating measures to conserve and secure future management of the relevant natural heritage interest. Where habitat loss is unavoidable, the creation of replacement habitat to compensate for any losses will be required, along with provision for its future management.
6. All development proposals should conform to Supplementary Guidance SG05 'Biodiversity and Development'.

Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows

5.86 Woodland cover, and the proportion of woodland brought under management, has increased in the Falkirk area over recent years, contributing significantly to the green network and bringing multiple benefits. As well as being of commercial value, trees contribute to landscape, placemaking, biodiversity, recreation, carbon fixing, and flood management. The Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal Policy includes a presumption in favour of protecting woodland resources. Control is exercised over felling by the Forestry Commission Scotland. A number of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) are in force across the Council area, as shown on the Proposals Map.

5.87

Policy GN04 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows

The Council recognises the ecological, landscape, economic and recreational importance of trees, woodland and hedgerows. Accordingly:

1. Felling detrimental to landscape, amenity, nature conservation or recreational interests will be discouraged. In particular ancient, long-established and semi-natural woodlands will be protected as a habitat resource of irreplaceable value;
2. In an area covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) or a Conservation Area, development will not be permitted unless it can be proven that the proposal will not adversely affect the longevity, stability or appearance of the trees. Where necessary, endangered trees and woodlands will be protected through the designation of further TPOs;
3. Development which is likely to affect trees should comply with Supplementary Guidance SG06 'Trees and Development', including the preparation where appropriate of a Tree Survey, Constraints Plan, and Tree Protection Plan. Where development is permitted which will involve the loss of trees or hedgerows of amenity value, the Council will normally require replacement planting appropriate in terms of number, size, species and position;
4. The enhancement and management of existing woodland and hedgerows will be encouraged. Where the retention of a woodland area is integral to a development proposal, developers will normally be required to prepare and implement an appropriate Management Plan; and
5. There will be a preference for the use of appropriate local native species in new and replacement planting schemes, or non-native species which are integral to the historic landscape character.

Outdoor Access

5.88 The Council is committed to promoting outdoor access through the provision of strategic and local path networks, and has prepared a Core Paths Plan identifying a network of key routes. In considering new development, the protection of established paths and rights of way, and the securing of appropriate new access opportunities to enhance the network, will be given priority.

5.89

Policy GN05 Outdoor Access

The Council will seek to safeguard, improve and extend the network of outdoor access routes, with particular emphasis on the core path network, and routes which support the development of the Green Network. When considering development proposals, the Council will:

1. Safeguard the line of any existing or proposed access route affected by the development, and require its incorporation into the development unless a satisfactory alternative route can be agreed;
2. Seek to secure any additional outdoor access opportunities which may be achievable as a result of the development; and
3. Where an access route is to be temporarily disrupted, require the provision of an alternative route for the duration of construction work and the satisfactory reinstatement of the route on completion of the development.



5.54

Policy INF11 Parking

The Council will manage parking provision as an integral part of wider transport planning policy to ensure that road traffic reduction, public transport, walking, cycling and safety objectives are met.

1. The scale of public parking provision in Falkirk Town Centre will be maintained broadly at its current level and any proposed change to parking provision will be assessed against its effect on the vitality and viability of the centre.
2. The feasibility of promoting Park and Ride facilities on the road corridors into Falkirk Town Centre will continue to be investigated.
3. Parking in District and Local Centres will be managed to promote sustainable travel and the role of the centres.
4. New parking will be provided to support the strategic role of railway stations, with priority given to new provision at Falkirk High. Where possible, the provision of new off street parking facilities will be associated with traffic management and other measures to reduce uncontrolled on-street parking.
5. The maximum parking standards set out in the SPP will be applied to new development, where relevant, in tandem with the Council's minimum standards. Where the minimum standards cannot be met, developer contributions to enhance travel plan resources may be required in compensation.

Water and Drainage Infrastructure

5.55

Scottish Water is responsible for the provision of water supplies, waste water treatment works and the sewerage network. In the Falkirk Council area, water supply can be managed to provide for growth. However the adequacy of capacity at waste water treatment works is more varied, with several of the rural works currently unable to accommodate all planned growth. While two are programmed for growth before 2015, the remainder will continue to be a potential brake on development in their catchments. In addition, there are capacity issues with the sewer network in some localities which have experienced sustained housing growth in recent years.

5.56 Falkirk Council continues to engage with Scottish Water is addressing these pinch points but it remains the case that proposals for development in the constrained localities will have to be considered cautiously by the Council. The Council's approach is set out in Policy INF12 below.

5.57 The use of sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) is now a requirement for the majority of development types, the only exceptions to this are single house developments and where the discharge is to coastal waters.

5.58

Policy INF12 Water and Drainage Infrastructure

1. New development will only be permitted if necessary sewerage infrastructure is adopted by Scottish Water or alternative maintenance arrangements are acceptable to SEPA.
2. Surface water management for new development should comply with current best practice on sustainable urban drainage systems, including opportunities for promoting biodiversity through habitat creation.
3. A drainage strategy, as set out in PAN61, should be submitted with planning applications and must include flood attenuation measures, details for the long term maintenance of any necessary features and a risk assessment.

Leisure and Tourism Development in the Countryside

- 5.39** The countryside provides a setting for many leisure activities. These include both informal pursuits and organised sports, with a range of requirements in terms of infrastructure and facilities. Countryside recreation can provide much-needed economic activity in the rural area, add to the tourism product and promote enjoyment of the area's natural heritage. At the same time, some activities have implications for the character of the countryside, in terms of visual, ecological and noise impacts. There can also be issues for rural land management.
- 5.40** There is also continuing interest in more intensive tourism development in the countryside, some of which has been driven by demand for roadside facilities linked to the motorway and trunk road network. Potential developments include tourist accommodation, from hotels to self-catering chalets, pub/restaurants, visitor attractions and interpretation facilities. The area's central location has also created some developer interest in the creation of large themed visitor attractions.
- 5.41** Structure Plan Policy ENV.1 states that development in the countryside must demonstrate that a countryside location is needed. Other factors which will be important for leisure and tourism developments in the countryside will be landscape, nature conservation and access considerations. For tourism developments, applicants may be required to submit a business plan to demonstrate the viability of particular tourism proposals. In the case of new tourism accommodation, applicants may be required to enter into a legal agreement under Section 75 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 limiting use of the accommodation to tourism use.

5.42

EP16 LEISURE AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

Leisure and tourism development within the countryside will only be permitted where the use demonstrates a particular need for a countryside location and could not more appropriately be located within the Urban or Village Limits, or where existing buildings are to be utilised. In particular:

- (1) Proposals for small-scale self-catering chalet developments, caravan and camping sites may be acceptable, subject to appropriate siting and compliance with Policy EP15. Proposals for new hotels, B&Bs, guest houses and pubs/restaurants will generally only be permitted where existing buildings are being utilised or where a specific opportunity is identified in the Local Plan;
- (2) Proposals for outdoor sport and recreation which require a countryside location may be acceptable, subject to appropriate siting. Associated built development will be limited to that which is directly ancillary to the activity (e.g. clubhouses, changing facilities, parking);
- (3) Proposals for new visitor attractions, heritage and interpretative centres may be acceptable, subject to appropriate siting and compliance with Policy EP15. The nature and theme of the facility must provide a clear rationale for the countryside location chosen; and
- (4) Proposals for new roadside facilities will not be permitted unless it is demonstrated that there is a clear need for additional services. Proposals for facilities on motorways and the trunk road network should comply with the guidance in the SPP.

Proposals will be subject to rigorous assessment of their impact on the rural environment, having particular regard to Local Plan policies protecting natural heritage (EQ19-EQ30) and built heritage (EQ12-EQ18), and of the adequacy of access and car parking arrangements.

Other Areas of Townscape Value

- 3.37 There are other areas of townscape which, although not currently designated as Conservation Areas, nonetheless form coherent and historically interesting groupings of buildings. In recognition of their value and in order to safeguard this wider resource, the Local Plan identifies these areas on the Proposals Map, recommends that they be assessed to see if they merit Conservation Area status, and requires that new development takes account of their particular character.

3.38

EQ13 AREAS OF TOWNSCAPE VALUE

The Council recognises the architectural and historic merit and potential of the additional areas of townscape value identified on the Proposals Map, which do not currently have Conservation Area status. Within these areas:

- (1) The Council will undertake Character Appraisals to determine whether the areas merit designation as Conservation Areas, either as new Conservation Areas, or as extensions to existing ones; and
- (2) Development proposals will be required to fit with the distinctive character of the area with particular reference to the historic pattern and density of development; its setting; the architectural style, massing and materials of buildings; landscape treatments; and boundary features.

Listed Buildings

- 3.39 There are over 300 listed buildings and structures in the Council area. These are catalogued in Appendix 3. A wide variety of periods and building types are represented from medieval tower houses to post-war churches. The largest concentrations are in Falkirk, Bo'ness and Airth/Dunmore. Policy EQ14 states the Council's commitment to conserve this resource by strictly controlling the demolition, alteration and extension of listed buildings. Controlling works within the curtilage of listed buildings, and protecting their settings are also important. Detailed advice on the implementation of listed building control is contained in guidance notes published by Historic Scotland.

- 3.40 Apart from inappropriate development, the other major threat facing the stock of listed buildings is redundancy and associated deterioration. A further objective of Policy EQ14 is to promote the re-use of redundant listed buildings. Whilst the character of a listed building is best safeguarded by retaining the building in the use for which it was built, this may not always be viable. Changes of use which secure the future of a building will therefore be viewed favourably depending on their impact on the character of the building. Proposals in the Local Plan cover the reuse of a number of vacant listed buildings, and their promotion for alternative uses. The Buildings at Risk Register also performs an important role in highlighted historic buildings under threat.

3.41

EQ14 LISTED BUILDINGS

The Council will seek to preserve the character and appearance of listed buildings. Accordingly:

- (1) Development affecting a listed building, or its setting, shall preserve the building or its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. The layout, design, materials, scale, siting and use of any development shall be appropriate to the character and appearance of the listed building and its setting.
- (2) Proposals for the total or substantial demolition of a listed building will only be supported where it is demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that every effort has been exerted by all concerned to find practical ways of keeping it. This will be demonstrated by inclusion of evidence to the Council that the building:
 - has been actively marketed at a reasonable price and for a period reflecting its location, condition and possible viable uses without finding a purchaser; and
 - is incapable of physical repair and re-use through the submission and verification of a thorough structural condition report; and
- (3) RCAHMS shall be formally notified of all proposals to demolish listed buildings to enable features to be recorded.