

The background of the slide features the Falkirk Council Coat of Arms. It is a shield divided into four quarters. The top-left quarter shows a castle tower. The top-right quarter shows a stag's head with antlers. The bottom-left quarter shows a sailing ship on water. The bottom-right quarter shows a bird with spread wings. Above the shield is a crown with four fleurs-de-lis. Below the shield is a ribbon with the motto 'A'NE FOR A'.

Agenda Item 8

Falkirk Local Development Plan 2 Main Issues Report

Falkirk Council

Title: Falkirk Local Development Plan 2
Main Issues Report

Meeting: Falkirk Council

Date: 7 December 2016

Submitted By: Director of Development Services

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek approval for the publication of the Falkirk Local Development Plan 2: Main Issues Report for consultation.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Council approves the Falkirk Local Development Plan 2: Main Issues Report, attached as Appendix 1, for consultation purposes.**

3. Background

- 3.1 In July 2015, the Council adopted the Falkirk Local Development Plan (LDP1). It replaced the previous two-tier system of Structure and Local Plans in the area with a single document which set out the broad vision and spatial strategy for the area over the period to 2034, including detailed site-specific policies and proposals to guide development for the period to 2024. LDP1 is supported by 17 Supplementary Guidance notes, of which 15 have been adopted, and two are under preparation.
- 3.2 Planning authorities are required to replace their LDPs every five years. Because of the relatively long plan preparation period, and the need to ensure that the plan remains robust and up to date, work commenced on the review of the Local Development Plan (LDP2) in autumn 2015. A programme for the preparation of LDP2 was set out in the 2015 Development Plan Scheme, and updated in the 2016 Development Plan Scheme, approved by the Executive on 26 April 2016. The anticipated adoption date for LDP2 is 2020. The plan period will be 2020-2040.
- 3.3 The first major stage in the preparation of the plan is the Main Issues Report (MIR), which is intended to be the main vehicle for consulting on the final content of LDP2. This is the Council's opportunity to set out its preferred approach to the key spatial planning issues facing the Council area over the coming years, while also presenting reasonable alternatives. The outcome of consultation on MIR will inform the preparation of the Proposed Plan, at which

point the Council reaches its settled view on the content of the plan. After the publication of the Proposed Plan, representations can be made and an Examination of unresolved issues takes place. At that stage, opportunities for the Council to change the content of the plan become more limited.

- 3.4 LDP1 is relatively recently adopted and there have not been any major legislative or policy changes since its adoption, Therefore, LDP2 is not expected to be radically different from LDP1, although the land supply for development for an additional five years will of course need to be considered. Changes will be selective, rather than wholesale, and the role of the MIR is to scope out and define these areas of change.

4. Considerations

Vision

- 4.1 Chapter 2 of the MIR sets out a preferred vision for the area. It reviews changes in the policy context, identifies challenges and opportunities which have emerged over the last five years, and concludes that the vision should remain unchanged from that which underpins LDP1. Our ambition for the continuing regeneration of the area remains undiminished, albeit that economic circumstances mean that growth may happen at a slower pace than previously envisaged. The vision sees the Falkirk Council area as:

“The place to be: a dynamic and distinctive area at the heart of Central Scotland characterised by a network of thriving communities and greenspaces and a vibrant and growing economy which is of strategic importance in the national context, providing an attractive and sustainable place in which to live, work, visit and invest.”

Main Issues

- 4.2 Eleven main issues are set out in Chapters 3-5, under the three general headings of Homes and Communities, Jobs and Economy, and Infrastructure and Resources. The issues and the preferred policy approach to each is summarised below.

4.3 Main Issue 1: Making Better Places

This issue considers how we can create high quality places that function well, by more creative use of the various design and placemaking tools at the Council's disposal. The preferred approach is to:

- Consolidate existing design policies into a single placemaking policy; and
- Prepare 'place statements' for each settlement as supplementary guidance.

4.4 Main Issue 2: Green Network

This issue considers how we should further extend and improve our greenspaces and green infrastructure, building on the success of the Falkirk Greenspace Strategy. The preferred approach is to:

- Update the green network opportunities identified in the LDP to embrace new areas of focus such as community growing, outdoor learning, and projects identified within the recently revised Open Space Strategy;

- Prepare consolidated supplementary guidance on integrating green infrastructure into new development;
- Update LDP open space policies to reflect the Council's new Open Space Strategy, and review compensation payments for loss of open space;
- Include appropriate cross references to the Falkirk Forestry and Woodland Strategy to give that document formal planning status; and
- Review and update the list of locally designated nature conservation and geodiversity sites.

4.5 Main Issue 3: Housing Targets and Requirements

This issue considers how many homes we should plan to build in the Council area over the plan period. It considers evidence from the Housing Needs and Demand Assessment and a broad range of other factors as a basis for setting the housing supply target. It also considers what level of flexibility should be applied to the housing supply target to arrive at the housing land requirement. The preferred approach is to:

- Set a housing supply target of 9,600 houses over the 20 year plan period, with 4,800 within the period 2020-30 (i.e. an average of 480 homes per year);
- Apply a flexibility allowance of 15% to the housing target, giving a housing land requirement (the amount of land the LDP has to allocate) of 5,520 houses for the period 2020-30; and
- Within the 480 home annual target, the affordable housing requirement is assessed as 205 units. The affordable housing policy would be maintained.

4.6 Main Issue 4: Existing Housing Land Supply and 'Stalled Sites'

This issue considers how many homes our existing housing land supply can deliver, since this will dictate how much new land we have to identify. It assesses allocated sites where progress has been slow and determines whether such sites should be continued, reprogrammed or de-allocated. The preferred approach is to:

- De-allocate Strategic Growth Areas at Bo'ness Foreshore and Slamannan, sites at East Bonnybridge and Kilsyth Road, and selected sites within the Rural South villages; and
- Reprogramme other selected sites, thereby revising their expected contribution to the housing land supply in the plan period.

4.7 Main Issue 5: Sustainable Community Growth

This issue considers where new homes should be located to meet the housing land requirement for 2020-30, taking account of a range of environmental and infrastructure factors. The preferred approach is to:

- Meet the housing land requirement through the existing housing supply and new allocations as set out in Figure 4.4. of the MIR, and reproduced below;
- In terms of new allocations, identify two new Strategic Growth Areas at the Falkirk Gateway and Bo'ness South West, increase the content of Strategic Growth Areas at North Larbert and Bo'ness South East, and allocate further sites at Falkirk, Maddiston and Skinflats; and
- Make allowance for a contribution from windfall sites of 50 houses per year.

Settlement Area	2020-2030			2030-2040
	Existing Housing Supply	Additional Housing	Total	Growth Potential
Bo'ness	281	550	831	Medium
Bonnybridge & Banknock	1,188	0	1,188	Medium
Braes & Rural South	545	70	615	High
Denny & Dunipace	982	0	982	Medium
Falkirk	668	370	1,028	Medium
Grangemouth	11	10	21	Low
Larbert & Stenhousemuir	230	70	300	Low
Rural North	140	80	220	Low
Windfall Allowance (50 per annum)		500	500	
Total	4,045	1,650	5,695	
Housing Land Requirement (including 15% flexibility)			5,520	5,520

4.8 Main Issue 6: Business Locations

This issue considers what the vision should be for our major business locations, taking account of business land supply and demand factors. It assesses their future role and how they can best contribute to the area's growth and prosperity over the plan period. The preferred approach is to:

- Within the Falkirk Investment Zone, amend the mix of uses at the Falkirk Gateway and Stadium to focus on business, tourism, food and drink and recreation, with an element of residential use, with large scale retail removed;
- Within the Grangemouth Investment Zone, identify additional land for development within Grangemouth Docks, including a site for a power station with carbon capture and storage, in accordance with the National Planning Framework (NPF3); reflect the detailed extent of development opportunities at Ineos on the proposals map; and extend Earls Road core business area;
- Within the Larbert Gateway, adopt a mixed use approach to the business allocation at Hill of Kinnaird, including housing and community uses, whilst retaining Glenbervie exclusively for business use; and
- Within the Eastern Gateway, shift the emphasis at Drum South to residential use, with a small business element focused on neighbourhood services, whilst retaining the business focus at Gilston, and business as a part of the masterplan for Whitecross.

4.9 Main Issue 7: Town Centres

This issue considers how we can promote active, accessible and attractive town centres, and assist them in diversifying their function in the face of current economic challenges. The preferred approach is to:

- Incorporate the 'town centre first' principle more fully into LDP2 policies;
- Remove the Falkirk Gateway from the network of centres;
- Continue to promote key opportunities in Falkirk Town Centre at Grahamston and the East End;
- Introduce more flexibility on changes of use within Falkirk Town Centre;
- Support residential use in Falkirk Town Centre by relaxing developer contributions on housing applications within the Town Centre boundary; and
- Continue to promote mixed use opportunities in the District Centres, and facilitate redevelopment and restructuring at the Carron Centre.

4.10 Main Issue 8: Tourism

This issue considers what opportunities exist to capitalise on the growth of tourism in the area. The preferred approach is to:

- Maintain the existing framework of tourism themes and nodes in LDP1, and identify some additional tourism opportunities

4.11 Main Issue 9: Infrastructure

This issue considers what infrastructure is needed to support growth, and how it can be delivered. Consideration is given to the range of transport, flooding, drainage, education and healthcare projects already contained in LDP1, and any further infrastructure needs which have arisen more recently. The preferred approach is to:

- Identify an updated list of infrastructure proposals, including additional proposals related to active travel, cemeteries and recreation; and
- Maintain the approach to infrastructure delivery and funding, combining a mix of Council budgets, external funding opportunities, Tax Increment Financing, and developer contributions.

4.12 Main Issue 10: Energy

This issue considers how the Council area can contribute to meeting wider energy needs and the move towards a low carbon economy. The preferred approach is to:

- Include a new policy on all energy developments, as required by Scottish Planning Policy;
- Incorporate the current wind energy spatial framework into LDP2;
- Consolidate guidance on renewable technologies into a single supplementary guidance document; and
- Strengthen the policy on heat networks and their incorporation into new development, and identify the heat network opportunities associated with the Grangemouth Energy Project in LDP2.

4.13 Main Issue 11: Onshore Gas, Mineral and Waste

This issue considers whether existing policies on mineral and gas extraction, and waste management, remain valid and in accordance with national policy. The preferred approach is to:

- Maintain the current policy on onshore gas and oil developments, which is in accord with Scottish Planning Policy, pending the outcome of the Scottish Government's review of unconventional gas extraction; and
- No longer safeguard a site for the extension of Avondale landfill, bearing in mind existing landfill capacity and reducing levels of waste going to landfill.

5. **Consultation**

- 5.1 The MIR has been informed by an issues consultation and 'call for sites' exercise which was undertaken between October 2015 and January 2016. The issues consultation included an online survey, citizens' panel survey, stakeholder workshops, community council training event and youth engagement exercise. The 'call for sites' exercise invited developers and landowners to submit sites they wished considered for inclusion in LDP2. A full

summary of the consultation is contained in one of the technical reports which provides the evidence base for the MIR.

- 5.2 Following approval of the MIR, consultation on the document would be undertaken. The scope of the consultation exercise is set out in the Council's Development Plan Scheme and includes:
- A twelve week consultation period;
 - Publicity through adverts, the Council's web site, the LDP Facebook page, posters in libraries and one stops shops, and letters to all organisations and individuals on the development plan customer database;
 - Neighbour notification in relation to any new preferred sites contained in the MIR;
 - A Development Plan newsletter containing a concise summary of the MIR;
 - An LDP 'roadshow' with a staffed exhibition held at locations across the Council area;
 - Stakeholder workshops; and
 - Briefings for community councils where requested.

6. Implications

Financial

- 6.1 None.

Resources

- 6.2 None

Legal

- 6.3 The statutory provisions associated with the preparation of MIRs are set out in Section 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, and in the Town and Country Planning (Development Planning)(Scotland) Regulations 2008.

Risk

- 6.4 None

Equalities

- 6.5 An Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment has been carried out. It found that there were no negative impacts on groups protected under the Equality Act 2010. The suggested de-allocation of housing sites previously proposed as part of housing-led community regeneration may have some negative impact on groups experiencing poverty and health inequality. However, the MIR has had to take a realistic view of the very limited prospects of these sites coming forward given market conditions. A number of preferred options in the MIR will have positive impacts, including enhancement of the green network, emphasis on placemaking and design, and active travel opportunities.

Sustainability/Environmental Impact

- 6.6 The MIR has been subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and an Environmental Report has been prepared identifying the significant environment effects arising from the preferred options and reasonable alternatives. The Environmental Report identifies a range of significant environmental effects, both positive and negative, on environmental resources and assets and, where negative impacts may arise, opportunities for mitigation are highlighted.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 The Council has a responsibility to keep the Falkirk LDP up to date, and has embarked on the preparation of LDP2. The MIR is the first major stage in this process. It sets out the main planning issues facing the area, under the general headings of homes and communities, jobs and economy, and infrastructure and resources. It identifies preferred policy approaches and site allocations in respect of these issues, as well as reasonable alternatives. If approved by the Council, it will be widely publicised and subject to consultation with stakeholders and the public. The response to the consultation will help the Council prepare the Proposed Plan, which is the next stage in the process.

Director of Development Services

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Date: 25 November 2016

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Falkirk Local Development Plan 2: Main Issues Report

List of Background Papers:

The following papers were relied on in the preparation of this report in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973:

Development Plan Scheme 2016

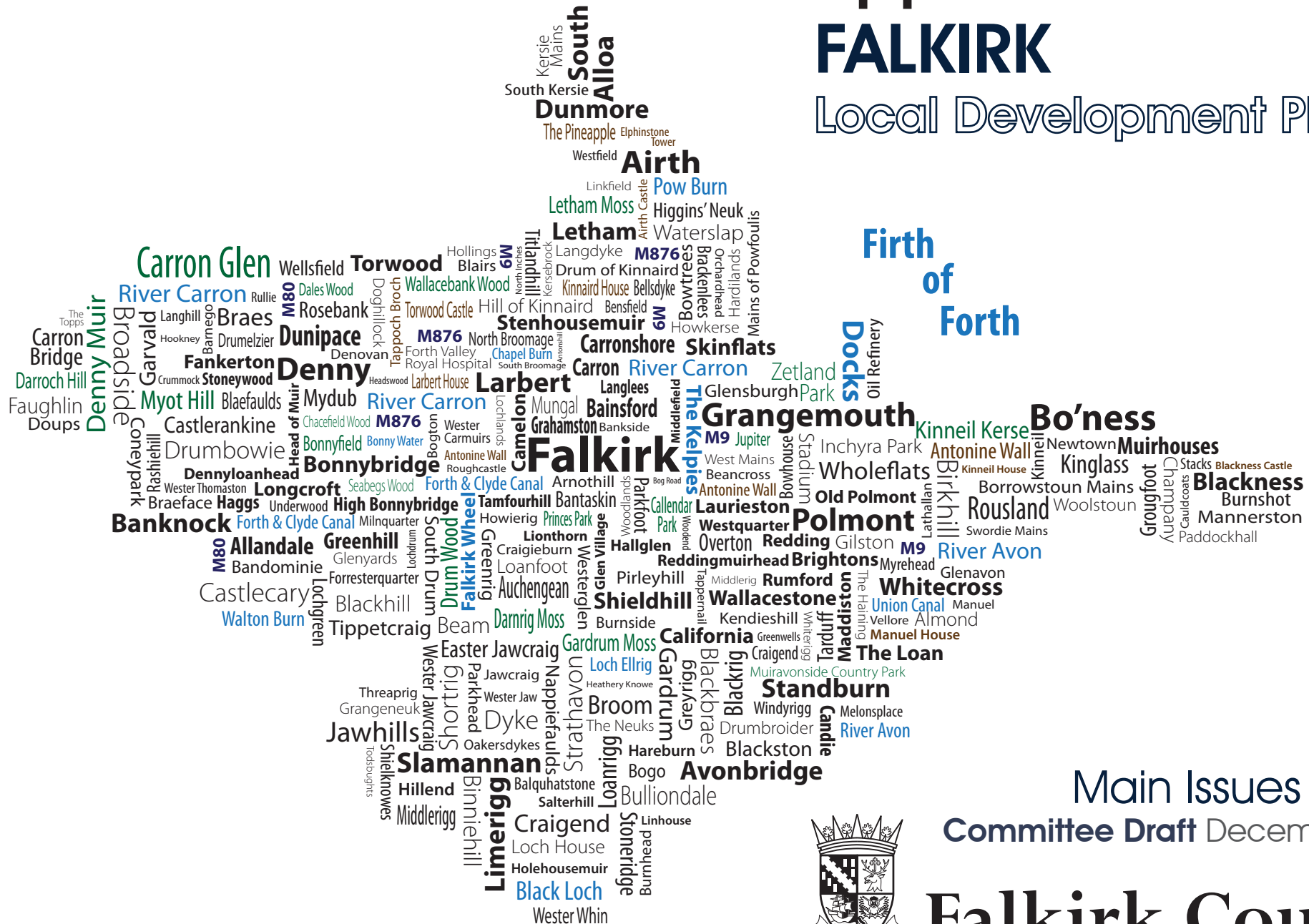
Falkirk Local Development Plan 2: Main Issues Report – Environmental Report

Falkirk Local Development Plan 2: Main Issues Report - Equalities and Poverty Impact Assessment

Technical Report 1: Monitoring Report

Technical Report 2: Site Assessment

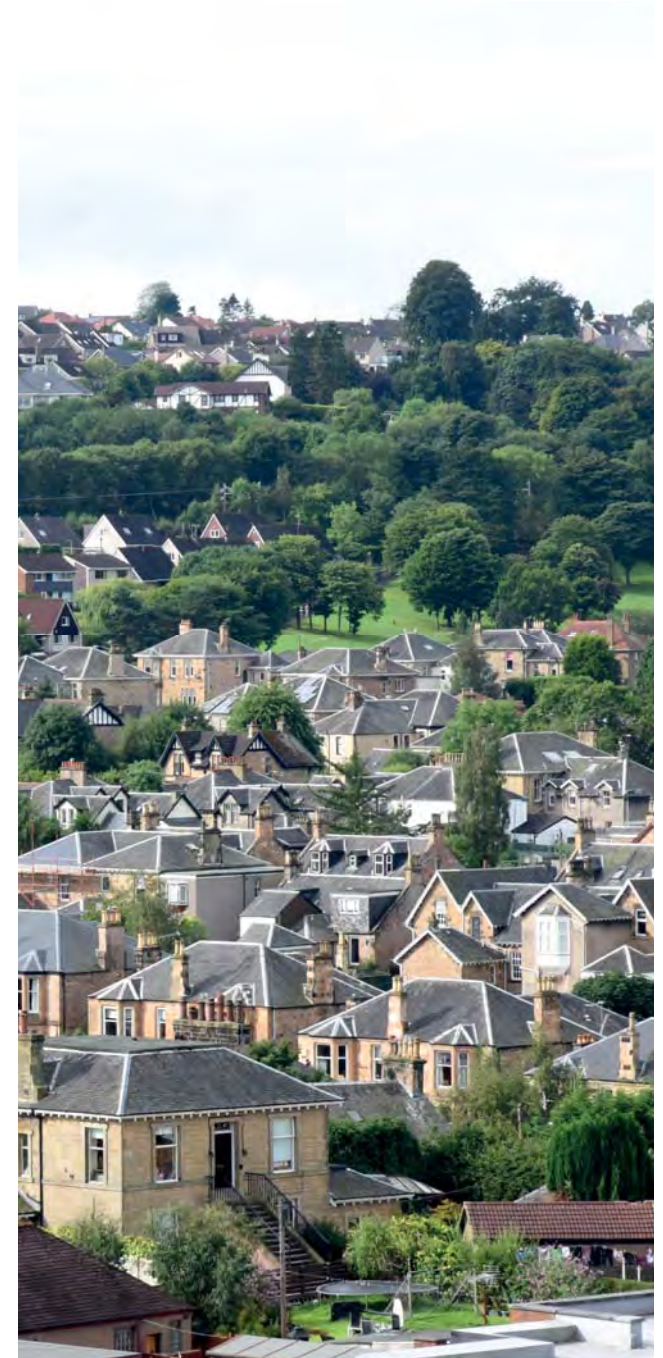
Technical Report 3: Housing and Settlement Growth Options
Technical Report 4: Strategic Constraints
Technical Report 5: Transport Appraisal
Technical Report 6: Employment Land
Technical Report 7: Town Centres and Retailing
Technical Report 8: Green Network
Technical Report 9: Pre-Main Issues Report Consultation



Falkirk Council



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1. Introduction

Falkirk Local Development Plan - The Need for Review

- 1.01** Development plans are prepared by planning authorities to guide the use and development of land within their areas. They contain policies and proposals which indicate where development should, or should not, take place, and provide guidance on the future provision of housing, business, shopping, transport and infrastructure, and recreation and community facilities. They provide protection to key aspects of the built and natural heritage.
- 1.02** The current development plan covering the Falkirk Council area is the Falkirk Local Development Plan (LDP), which was adopted in July 2015. It sets out a broad vision and strategy for the area over the period 2014-2034, with detailed policies and proposals for the period up to 2024.
- 1.03** Planning authorities are required to replace their LDPs every five years. Although the LDP is only recently adopted, it is largely based on information from 2011. The social, economic and environmental context is constantly changing. Falkirk Council has therefore started the process of reviewing the Falkirk LDP, with a view to adopting the new plan (which we are calling LDP2) by 2020. This Main Issues Report is the first major stage in the preparation of the new plan.
- 1.04** With our current LDP being so recently adopted, LDP2 will not be a completely different plan. It will focus on areas of change, which will be selective rather than wholesale. Large parts of it will continue to be relevant, although the rolling forward of the plan by 5 years, and the emergence of some new issues and challenges is likely to require some adjustment of the strategy.

The Local Development Plan Process

1.05 The intended process for LDP2 is as follows:

MAIN ISSUES REPORT

The Council identifies and consults on the main issues facing the area and its preferred proposals for the future development.

PROPOSED PLAN

The Council sets out its firm view as to the vision and spatial strategy to be followed in the area. Representations are invited.

SUBMISSION TO SCOTTISH MINISTERS

Representations to the proposed plan are considered by the Council and any appropriate modifications made prior to submitting to Scottish Ministers.

EXAMINATION

Unresolved issues raised through objections are considered by an independent reporter who makes recommendations to the Council.

PLAN ADOPTION

The Council adopts the LDP incorporating changes arising from the reporter's recommendations.



1. Introduction

The Main Issues Report

- 1.06** This document is the Main Issues Report (MIR) for LDP2. It has been informed by consultation with the public and key stakeholders during 2015/2016, and by various technical studies which provide the evidence base.
- 1.07** The MIR is the main tool for consulting people on the final content of the LDP. It aims to stimulate debate on the future planning of the area, by indicating the Council's preferred approach to future development, including suggested new development sites, but also by setting out other reasonable alternatives.
- 1.08** Chapter 2 discusses some of the general changes which have happened over the last five years which need to be considered in reviewing the LDP. It reflects on the current vision for the area contained in the plan, and whether this vision remains relevant for LDP2.
- 1.09** Chapters 3-5 examine the main issues under the headings of:
- **Place and Environment**
 - **Home and Communities**
 - **Jobs and Economy**
 - **Infrastructure and Resources**
- 1.10** Appendix 1 contains **site schedules and maps**, showing, on a settlement by settlement basis, the details of which sites have been suggested for development, those that are preferred, and those which are not favoured.
- 1.11** Appendix 2 contains a list of the topics on which the Council would intend to prepare **supplementary guidance** to accompany LDP2.

Supporting Information

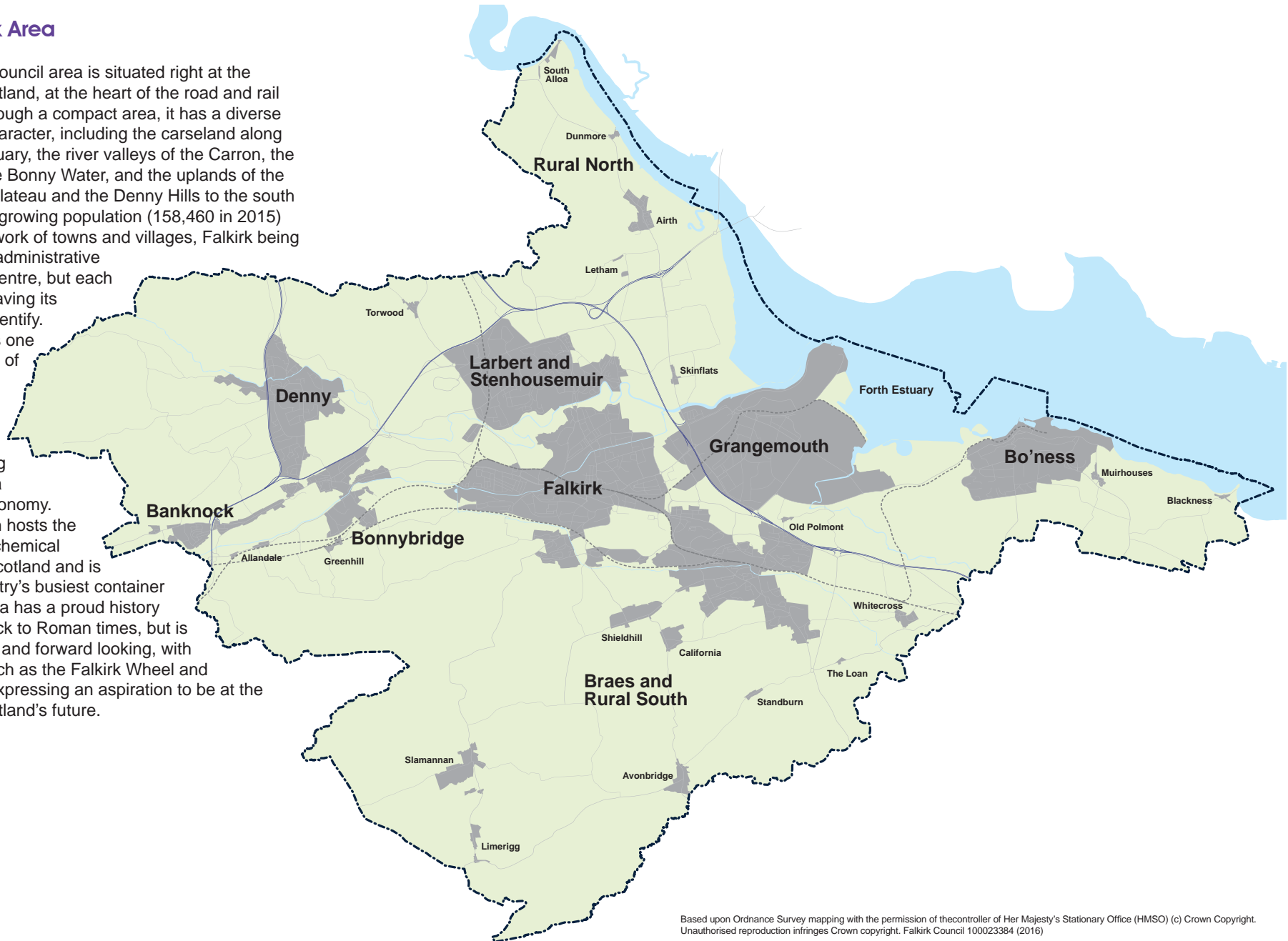
- 1.12** The MIR is supported by a number of technical reports which have been published alongside it, as follows:
- Technical Report 1: Monitoring Report**
Technical Report 2: Site Assessment
Technical Report 3: Housing and Settlement Growth Options
Technical Report 4: Strategic Constraints
Technical Report 5: Transport Appraisal
Technical Report 6: Employment Land
Technical Report 7: Town Centres and Retailing
Technical Report 8: Green Network
Technical Report 9: Pre-Main Issues Report Consultation
- 1.13** Strategic environmental assessment (SEA) is an integral part of the plan preparation process, which highlights the environmental effects of the preferred policies and proposals, and the alternatives, and considers measures to mitigate those effects. The results of the SEA are contained in the Environmental Report.



2. Vision

The Falkirk Area

2.01 The Falkirk Council area is situated right at the centre of Scotland, at the heart of the road and rail network. Although a compact area, it has a diverse landscape character, including the carseland along the Forth Estuary, the river valleys of the Carron, the Avon, and the Bonny Water, and the uplands of the Slamannan Plateau and the Denny Hills to the south and west. Its growing population (158,460 in 2015) lives in a network of towns and villages, Falkirk being the principal administrative and service centre, but each community having its own strong identity. The area was one of the cradles of the industrial revolution, and retains a strong manufacturing base, within a diversified economy. Grangemouth hosts the largest petrochemical complex in Scotland and is also the country's busiest container port. The area has a proud history stretching back to Roman times, but is also dynamic and forward looking, with new icons such as the Falkirk Wheel and the Kelpies expressing an aspiration to be at the centre of Scotland's future.



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The Last Five Years: Challenges and Opportunities

- 2.02 Place.** Falkirk has some great places to live, work and visit, as evidenced by the increasing desire of people to come to the area. The green network in and around our towns has seen continued expansion, culminating in the Helix, an example of placemaking which has strengthened the area's identity. The value of our historic environment has been increasingly acknowledged. However, finding the resources to maintain and improve the quality of our towns and villages is becoming ever more challenging. There is also a need to ensure that new development, particularly on our strategic sites, adds to the quality and attractiveness of our area, through proper attention to masterplanning and design.
- 2.03 Population and Housing.** Since 2011, the population of the area has continued to grow. However, the rate of growth has slowed and levels of housebuilding, which declined sharply around the time of the recession, have showed little sign of returning to pre-recession levels. Problems with housing delivery are a national issue, and are evidenced locally in the 'stalling' of a number of our large scale housing regeneration projects. Population growth has been focused on the core area of Larbert/ Stenhousemuir, Falkirk and Polmont/Braes, where most new homes have been built and the housing market has remained relatively strong. Sustained growth in these areas has continued to put pressure on local infrastructure.

2.04 Economy. Recovery from recession has been slow but employment levels have now returned to pre-recession levels. Manufacturing remains a strength, focused on the Grangemouth petrochemical complex which has seen major new investment, as does the logistics sector, as evidenced by ASDA's new distribution centre. However, other sectors such as finance and business services are under-represented. Tourism continues to be a growth sector, given further impetus by the opening of the Helix/Kelpies, and the visitor economy remains an area of great potential. Commuting is on an upward trend, suggesting that many of our in-migrants are choosing our area because of its communication links to the major employment centres in the cities. Meanwhile, many of the LDP's key strategic employment sites remains stalled, reflecting generally low demand for business land and, in some cases, infrastructure issues.

2.05 Town Centres. Falkirk Town Centre has experienced relative decline since 2011, evidenced by increased vacancies and a decline in vitality particularly in the High Street. With the continuing structural changes in the way people shop, there is a need to diversify away from retailing and focus on other ways of creating activity. The retail sector continues to evolve in response to consumer demand, with discount formats becoming popular.

2.06 Infrastructure. There has been progress on the delivery of infrastructure required to support the development strategy of the LDP, most notably through the Council's Tax Increment Finance (TIF) scheme. However, TIF is only applicable to economic development, and the funding of infrastructure needed to enable housing developments remains challenging. Developer contributions are sought, but have the potential to impact on viability and delay sites coming forward. There has been continuing major investment in the school estate, mostly to deal with existing capacity issues.

2.07 Energy and Climate Change. Climate change continues to drive the need to move to a low carbon economy. Wind energy generation has expanded significantly over the last five years, but further development of renewables remains highly dependent on subsidy levels. The potential for heat networks in the area is starting to be investigated. The future exploitation of the area's onshore gas reserves has also been a focus of debate, which has been put on hold pending the Scottish Government's review of unconventional gas extraction.



Policy Context

- 2.08** The policy context of the LDP has changed significantly over the past five years.
- 2.09** National Planning Framework (NPF3) and Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) were comprehensively revised in June 2014, promoting a vision for Scotland as:
- **A successful sustainable place**
 - **A low carbon place**
 - **A natural resilient place**
 - **A connected place**
- 2.10** These national policy documents have considerable influence over the Falkirk LDP. Four of the national developments in NPF3 have direct implications for the Falkirk area: the Grangemouth Investment Zone; the Carbon Capture and Storage Network and Thermal Generation; Freight Handling Capacity on the Forth; and the Central Scotland Green Network. SPP contains policies on a wide range of subjects such as housing, town centres, business, energy and the environment which are of relevance to our area. The provisions of NPF3 and SPP were largely incorporated into LDP1 through modifications made by the Examination Reporter. LDP2 will have to continue to fully reflect these key national documents.
- 2.11** A further significant change is in the area of marine planning which was placed on a statutory footing by the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010. The National Marine Plan was published in 2015, and will be followed in due course by Regional Marine Plans, the Falkirk area being covered by the Forth and Tay Marine Region. The Forth Estuary and its coast is integral to a number of key issues in LDP2, as a major component of the green network and through its relationship with the Grangemouth Investment Zone.

- 2.12** Locally, the Strategic Outcomes and Local Delivery Plan 2016-2020 promotes a vision of the area as 'the place to be'. It identifies priorities and outcomes for the area as an agenda for action for the community planning partnership. The Economic Strategy for Falkirk 2015-2025 has recently been revised, at the forefront of which are the three priorities of growth, investment and inclusion. The LDP's role is to express the spatial dimension of these high level visions. A range of other regional and local strategies and plans must be taken into account by the LDP.



LDP Vision for 2040

- 2.13** The vision set out in LDP1 is based around the themes of thriving communities, a growing economy and a sustainable place. It reflects the strength of the existing communities which make up our area, and the desire to maintain and improve their identity, vitality and quality of life. It reflects an aspiration to continue the process of transformation and regeneration of the area, through further growth, investment and jobs. It reflects our desire for an environmentally sustainable future, where our assets and resources are carefully managed for generations to come.
- 2.14** Clearly, there are major economic challenges ahead, not least the ever increasing constraints on public finance. The evidence from the last five years suggests that growth and recovery in some sectors will be slower post-recession than previously envisaged. In other sectors, such as tourism and the visitor economy, the prospects for growth are strong. In overall terms, our ambition to build on our strengths and reposition the area as 'the place to be' remains undiminished. Accordingly, the preferred vision for the Falkirk area within LDP2 remains substantially unaltered, as follows:

The place to be: a dynamic and distinctive area at the heart of Central Scotland characterised by a network of thriving communities and greenspaces and a vibrant and growing economy which is of strategic importance in the national context, providing an attractive and sustainable place in which to live, work, visit and invest.

2. Vision

2.14 The objectives underpinning the key themes are illustrated below:

THRIVING COMMUNITIES

Facilitate continued **population and household growth**, and the delivery of housing to meet the full range of housing needs

Build **sustainable attractive communities** which are distinctive, safe and pleasant, welcoming, adaptable, resource efficient, and easy to move around in

Provide **infrastructure** to meet the needs of an increasing population and to further improve the area's **connectivity**

GROWING ECONOMY

Foster **economic growth, investment and inclusion**, reinforcing the area as a strategic component of the Scottish economy

Make our **town centres** vibrant and viable focal points within our communities

Capitalise on the area's **tourism potential** and build a strong visitor economy

SUSTAINABLE PLACE

Support a **low carbon, circular economy** and build resilience to **climate change**

Extend and improve the **green network** and protect the area's natural environment and resources

To protect, enhance and promote our **historic environment**

Issue 1: Making Better Places

Key Question: How do we create high quality places that function well?

3.01 Planning is about creating better places. This means directing the right development to the right place, and designing it to a high quality. SPP identifies six qualities of successful places which should underpin all new development:

- **Distinctive**
- **Safe and pleasant**
- **Welcoming**
- **Adaptable**
- **Resource efficient**
- **Easy to move around and beyond**

Policy and Guidance

3.02 There are various tools the Council uses to raise the standard of design in new development, and to embed the above principles in the new places we are building. These are listed in Figure 3.1. Consideration needs to be given to how these tools will be developed through LDP2 to improve our response to design and placemaking issues.

3.03 Preferred Option

Consolidate existing design policies into a single placemaking policy based around the six qualities of successful places. Continue to promote the use of a variety of design tools as indicated in Figure 3.1.

Alternative

Existing design policies could be continued.

How does this differ from LDP1?

The preferred option differs from LDP1 by consolidating existing design policies into a single policy, and relating it more clearly to the six qualities of successful places.

Figure 3.1 Placemaking Tools

National Policy and Guidance	This includes 'Creating Places', SPP and 'Designing Streets' which are built around the six qualities of successful places. These need to be fully reflected in local policy.
Local Design Policies	The design policies in LDP1 have evolved over time and would benefit from consolidation and structuring around the six qualities of successful places. A new placemaking policy will therefore be developed for LDP2.
Topic based Supplementary Guidance	These will continue to play an important role, particularly the Council's Neighbourhood Design guide, which provides a local interpretation of 'Designing Streets', and supplementary guidance on Development in the Countryside, Residential Extensions and Alterations and Shopfronts . These SGs will be updated if required.
Site-Specific Design Guidance	These are in place for many of our current housing and business growth areas, and will continue to be produced as and when required. Development Frameworks will be important for wider areas where development on a series of sites must be co-ordinated. Masterplans will be essential for all allocated sites to demonstrate that design policies are properly addressed and the proposal is not developed in a piecemeal fashion. Briefs may be used where the Council wishes to establish the requirements that must be met on a site, as a basis for preparing a masterplan.
Design Statements	These will continue to be requested in association with planning applications depending on the scale or sensitivity of the site, and at the discretion of the Council.
Place Standard	This is a tool for assessing the quality of a place in partnership with communities and could be used at an early stage where change or development is proposed. Its use could be actively supported by LDP2.



3. Place and Environment

Issue 1: Making Better Places

Communities and Place

- 3.05** Each of our towns and villages has its own distinctive character and identity. Each place has particular assets which need to be safeguarded and enhanced, as well as problems with the way it looks and functions. These can be related to the six qualities of successful places, and can be explored using the Place Standard.
- 3.06** Some place assets are protected by existing LDP policies - listed buildings, conservation areas, areas of townscape value, ancient woodland and core paths. LDP1 also has a general policy highlighting types of area (e.g. town and village centres, the canal corridor) which will be priorities for high quality design and environmental enhancement. However, there is a case for developing 'place statements' for each community which would capture all the aspects of the urban environment which are of value to local people, identify issues which detract from quality, and a framework for improvements. Such statements could be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, help to inform future briefs and masterplans for development sites, and provide ideas for future projects. These would be developed in consultation with local communities.

3.07 Preferred Option

Prepare 'place statements' for each settlement which would be adopted as supplementary guidance.

Alternative

Continue the current approach of promoting placemaking through topic based policies and guidance, and site-specific briefs and masterplans.

How does this differ from LDP1?

The preferred option would differ from LDP1 by introducing new supplementary guidance which would provide community specific placemaking guidance.

Historic Environment

- 3.08** Our historic environment - conservation areas, listed buildings, designed landscapes, and archaeological and battlefield sites - provide us with some of our most distinctive and well-loved places, as well being important economic and tourism assets.
- 3.09** Over the last five years we have continued to implement our Built Heritage Strategy. A management plan and local action plan is in place for the Antonine Wall World Heritage Site, and is being implemented. The programme of character appraisals and management plans for our conservation areas has been completed. Conservation area enhancement programmes have been implemented and the £5.5m Falkirk Town Centre Townscape Heritage Initiative is well advanced.
- 3.10** Formal appraisals of our Areas of Townscape Value remain to be undertaken. Likewise, although a provisional list of non-inventory designed landscapes has been drawn up, more investigation of these potential assets is needed to assess their value and how they can best be protected and managed. The Council continues to monitor the status of buildings at risk. Whilst there are examples of successes, such as the restoration of Larbert House and its associated buildings, other restoration projects have stalled due to the current economic climate.
- 3.11** The Council has commenced a review of the Built Heritage Strategy, and this may contain policies and actions which will feed through into LDP2. In general terms, however, the existing policies on the historic environment are considered robust, and are expected to remain largely unchanged.



Issue 2: Green Network

Key Question: How should we further extend and improve our greenspaces and green infrastructure?

CSGN and Falkirk Greenspace

- 3.12** The Central Scotland Green Network is a key national development within the National Planning Framework (NPF3). It seeks to transform the landscape of Central Scotland through the development of high quality green networks, making the area a more attractive place to live in, do business and visit; helping to tackle climate change; enhancing biodiversity; and promoting active travel and healthier life styles. NPF3 has highlighted the CSGN priorities as the remediation of derelict land; action in disadvantaged communities; and active travel (walking and cycling). The term 'green network' also embraces the water environment, which is sometimes described as the 'blue network'.
- 3.13** The Council has continued to develop the award-winning Falkirk Greenspace Strategy as the local expression of the Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN). The Strategy was refreshed in 2013, with themes and priorities better aligned to the CSGN, and implementation of a number of projects is ongoing. This includes the Inner Forth Landscape Initiative, a major partnership scheme delivering a wide range of projects to enhance the unique landscape of the upper Firth of Forth. Other recent related strategies include the Council's Open Space Strategy, approved in 2016, and the Falkirk Forestry and Woodland Strategy, adopted in 2015. Community growing is becoming an important theme, with local authorities having been given new responsibilities with respect to allotments by the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. SPP states that plans should encourage opportunities for a range of community growing spaces.

- 3.14** LDP1 mapped the Falkirk Greenspace as a series of components and corridors. These form a broadly defined and multi-functional green network embracing the urban fringe, and key river and habitat corridors extending out to link with adjacent areas (Figure 3.3). These are still considered robust and will be carried into LDP2, although the function of the various components has been reviewed to better reflect the CSGN priorities outlined in NPF3 and the priorities of the Falkirk Greenspace Strategy.
- 3.15** LDP1 also contained a number of green network opportunities, associated with each of the components. These have been reviewed and updated to reflect current strategies, priorities and programmes, and are highlighted in Figures 3.2 and 3.3. Figure 3.2 indicates which key green network priorities are addressed by each of the opportunities. New opportunities flowing from the Falkirk Greenspace Strategy relate to outdoor learning, community growing and the creation of an Antonine Wall Trail. Opportunities arising from the recently reviewed Open Space Strategy relate to masterplanning opportunities at some of our larger parks.
- 3.16** Community growing features prominently in the Falkirk Greenspace Strategy, with a proposal that five priority community growing sites should be developed across the area. Seven opportunities have been identified which could be suitable for different forms of community growing, some of which may be appropriate as sites for new allotments.

3.17 Preferred Option

The CSGN/Falkirk Greenspace will continue to be spatially defined in terms of the components and corridors identified in LDP1. An updated set of specific green network opportunities will be promoted as highlighted in Figures 3.2 and 3.3.

Alternative

A review of the spatial extent of the CSGN/Falkirk Greenspace could have been undertaken focussing only on the NPF3 priorities of derelict land; disadvantaged communities and active travel.

How does this differ from LDP1?

The spatial definition of the CSGN/Falkirk Greenspace remains the same, but the list of green network opportunities is updated.



Issue 2: Green Network

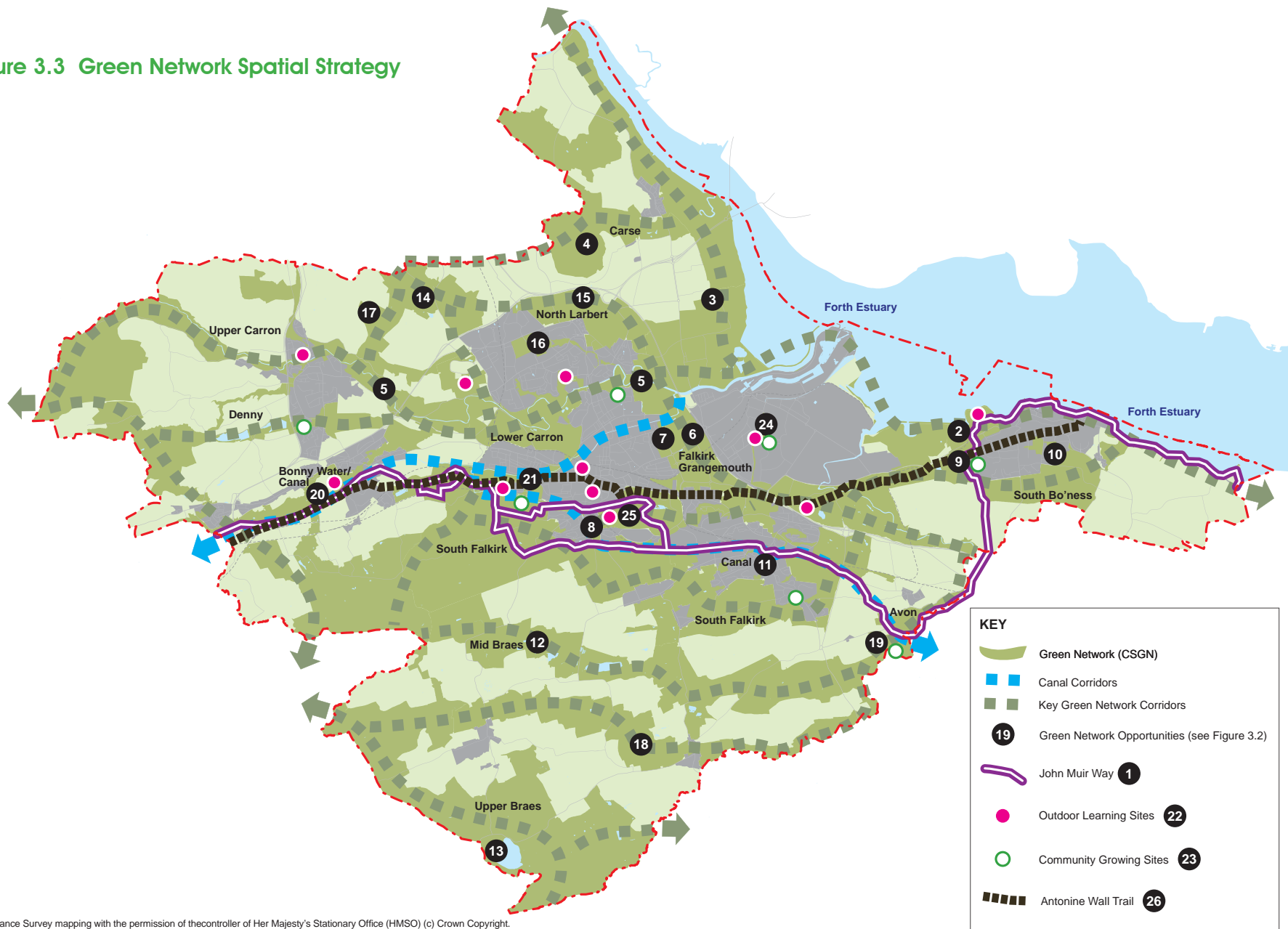
Figure 3.2 Revised Green Network Opportunities

Reference	Opportunity	Key Green Network Priorities					
		Biodiversity	Outdoor Access	Landscape	Climate Change	Placemaking	Serving Disadvantaged Communities
1	John Muir Way						
2	Kinneil Kerse						
3	Bothkennar/Skinflats						
4	Carse Peatland Restoration						
5	River Carron Corridor Improvements						
6	Helix						
7	East Falkirk Open Space Corridor						
8	Lionthorn Policy Bing						
9	Kinneil Estate						
10	Bo'ness Open Space Corridors						
11	Polmont Area Open Space Corridors						
12	Braes Wetland and Peatland Restoration						
13	Black Loch Access						
14	Torwood						
15	Kinnaird/Carron Policies						
16	Larbert Open Space Corridors						
17	Glenbervie to Denny						
18	River Avon Corridor						
19	Muiravonside						
20	Bonnyfield Expansion						
21	Portdownie/Falkirk Canal Corridor						
22	Outdoor Learning Sites*1						
23	Community Growing Sites*2						
24	Zetland Park						
25	Callendar Park and Wood						
26	Antonine Wall Trail						

* 1 Potential outdoor learning sites at Dollar Park; Falkirk Community Hospital; Summerford; Bonnyfield LNR; Gala Park; Carron Dams LNR; Forth Valley Royal Hospital Woodland; Kinneil Foreshore LNR; Polmont Woods; Callendar Park and Woods; Zetland Park.

* 2 Potential community growing sites at Kinneil Walled Garden; Bantakine Park Extension; Coo Park, Langlees; Myothill, Denny; California Road Playing Fields, Maddiston; Zetland Park, Grangemouth; Muiravonside.

Figure 3.3 Green Network Spatial Strategy



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Issue 2: Green Network

Green Infrastructure and New Development

- 3.18** Green infrastructure refers to the components which help to build green networks and which are essential to quality of life, environmental performance and climate resilience. It comprises features such as open space, woodland, habitats, active travel networks and sustainable drainage systems.
- 3.19** Green infrastructure is as essential a part of new development as traditional infrastructure such as roads, schools and community facilities. New development, particularly our strategic growth areas and strategic business locations, provides major opportunities to extend the green network through the provision of these facilities.
- 3.20** At present, the Council provides general guidance on green infrastructure through various policies and supplementary guidance. There is a case for consolidating such guidance into a single supplementary guidance note, which will provide developers with a more integrated context for considering green infrastructure opportunities associated with their sites, and guidance on incorporating provision into masterplans and development frameworks. It will also clarify where developer contributions to wider green infrastructure will be sought.

3.21 Preferred Option

Prepare consolidated supplementary guidance on incorporating green infrastructure into new development.

Alternative

Continue to provide separate guidance on the different types of green infrastructure.

How does this differ from LDP1?

Currently, supplementary guidance on green infrastructure is fragmented. The proposed approach would bring it together in a single document.

Open Space

- 3.22** Access to quality open space is a key aspect of community infrastructure. The Council's recently reviewed Open Space Strategy has demonstrated that the overall quantity of open space is good in the majority of our towns and villages, but that there are issues of quality, accessibility and long-term financial sustainability. The Strategy sets out new policies and standards for open space. Where appropriate, changes to standards will have to be reflected in the LDP's open space policies and associated supplementary guidance. There are also detailed strategies and action plans for each of the settlement areas. Most individual open space projects will not be detailed within LDP2, due to their number and relatively small scale, although some of the larger park masterplanning projects are included as green network opportunities in Figure 3.2. The Open Space Strategy will nonetheless be cross referenced within the plan as a key strategy document.
- 3.23** The Council's overall approach to open space in new residential development is that all sites of greater than three units should contribute to open space and play provision. Thresholds and contribution rates will be reviewed as part of the general review of developer contributions discussed under Issue 9: Infrastructure. However, the general policy of requiring all developments over a certain size to contribute to open space in proportion to their scale is not proposed to be changed. This is justified on the basis that increasing the population of an area places additional demands on open space and that new development should contribute towards meeting this demand.

- 3.24** At present, development involving the loss of open space is only permitted in certain circumstances, and, where loss is permitted, financial compensation is sought. At present, the value of the open space to be lost is not factored into the calculation of the amount of compensation. Therefore, we will review our policy and supplementary guidance with the aim of achieving a level of compensation which is better related to the level of impact of the loss.

3.25 Preferred Option

1. Amend open space policies and supplementary guidance to reflect revised open space standards and other changes to the Open Space Strategy.
2. Review the policy and guidance on compensation payments for the loss of open space to achieve a more proportionate approach.

Alternative

Change the policy on developer contributions so that the scale of contributions is dependent on the quality and accessibility of local open space, rather than being purely related to the scale of the residential development.

How does this differ from LDP1?

The preferred option proposes revisions to open space policy and supplementary guidance to reflect changes to the Open Space Strategy and to achieve a more proportionate approach to compensation payments for loss of open space.

Issue 2: Green Network

Forestry and Woodland

- 3.26** The Falkirk Forestry and Woodland Strategy was adopted by the Council in 2015 as a guide to long term woodland management and expansion in the area. It aims to support the delivery of 850 hectares of new woodland between 2015 and 2055, which requires a significant increase in the current rate of woodland planting. It identifies opportunities and constraints for new planting, and is effectively the successor to the indicative forestry strategy which was a part of previous Structure Plans for the area.
- 3.27** LDP1 already provides policy support for the protection and management of existing trees, woodland and hedgerows. LDP2 provides the opportunity to embed the Forestry and Woodland Strategy in the development plan and provide planning policy support for the Strategy's aims.

3.28 Preferred Option

Continue the existing policy on trees, woodland and hedgerows, but with appropriate reference to the Falkirk Forestry and Woodland Strategy as key guidance on future woodland management and expansion in the area.

Alternative

Maintain the existing policy on trees, woodland and hedgerows, with no reference to the Falkirk Forestry and Woodland Strategy.

How does this differ from LDP1?

The preferred option augments the existing LDP1 policy by including reference to the Falkirk Forestry and Woodland Strategy.

Protected Habitats

- 3.29** Whilst the green network emphasises the need to promote habitat enhancement and connectivity at a landscape scale across the Council area, there is a continuing need to offer particular protection to specific sites and species.
- 3.30** The Falkirk area has a number of locally, nationally and internationally designated sites for nature conservation, including 4 international designations; 10 nationally designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest; 3 Local Nature Reserves; and a system of non-statutory local sites comprising 62 Wildlife Sites and 24 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). LDP1 contains a policy offering an appropriate level of protection to each type of site in the hierarchy. This remains appropriate and will be carried through into LDP2.
- 3.31** Whilst national and international sites are designated by SNH, and have statutory protection in their own right, local sites (including SINC, Wildlife Sites and Geodiversity Sites) are identified by the Council, and are given status by inclusion in the development plan. Supplementary guidance has been produced which provides information on the importance of these local sites and sets out the criteria against which a future review of these sites will be conducted. It is intended that such a review will be carried out through the LDP2 process.

3.32 Preferred Option

Review and update the list of locally designated sites (Wildlife Sites, Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation and Geodiversity Sites) through the LDP2 preparation process based on criteria already established in supplementary guidance.

Alternative

Review locally designated sites through the preparation of supplementary guidance, rather than the LDP itself.

How does this differ from LDP1?

LDP1 did not involve a comprehensive review of locally designated sites.



Issue 2: Green Network

Landscape

- 3.33** The Falkirk area does not have any nationally important landscapes, but landscape quality is nonetheless important to the setting of settlements, and to the area's image and identity. The current approach to landscape protection is based on a general policy requiring landscape and visual assessment for significant proposals, with Special Landscape Areas (SLA) designated to protect locally important landscapes in the Denny Hills, the Slamannan Plateau/Avon Valley and South Bo'ness.
- 3.34** Landscape character assessments covering the area were reviewed as part of landscape capacity work carried out in 2012 to inform guidance on wind energy developments. This redefined the landscape character units in the area. Supplementary guidance on landscape character assessment and landscape designations was then produced in association with LDP1. This has provided comprehensive information on the forces for change, sensitivities and future guidelines for development in each of the landscape character areas. It has also provided statements of importance for each of the SLAs, and guidance on designed landscapes, including a provisional list of 'non-inventory' designed landscapes. This supplementary guidance will be carried forward under LDP2, and revised as required. Further information on 'non-inventory' designed landscapes would be beneficial as part of this process.



Land and Soil

- 3.35** Prime quality agricultural land is a finite national resource and occupies about 17% of the Council area 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. LDP1 provides policy protection for prime quality agricultural land and this will be carried forward into LDP2.
- 3.36** The disturbance of carbon rich soils may lead to the release of stored carbon, contributing to greenhouse gas emissions. Carbon rich soils also help to slow the progress of rainwater from the upper catchment into burns and rivers and on towards the Forth Estuary and in that respect perform an important flood attenuation function. Carbon rich soils occur mainly in the Upper Braes and the Slamannan Plateau. There are also some rare soil types including podzols, humus iron podzols and saltings of potential national interest within the Council area. LDP1 provides policy protection for carbon rich and rare soils and this will be carried forward into LDP2.



The Water Environment

- 3.37** The water environment of the Council area represents a valuable ecological and recreational resource. Preventing the deterioration of aquatic ecosystems and, where possible, restoring damaged surface waters and groundwaters to 'good' status are key objectives of the Scotland and Forth Area River Basin Management Plans. This will also have positive effects on Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE). LDP1 contains a policy framework which promotes the water environment as a recreational resource; presumes against development which would cause a deterioration of aquatic ecosystems and encourages developers to explore opportunities to improve the ecological status of the water environment in association with new development. This policy framework will be carried forward into LDP2.
- 3.38** The Forth & Clyde and Union Canals are particular water environment assets which have special ecological, historic, landscape and recreational value. The regeneration of the canal corridor remains a priority for the Council and the current policy on canals in LDP1 which seeks to safeguard the canal environment whilst promoting sustainable development, will be continued.

