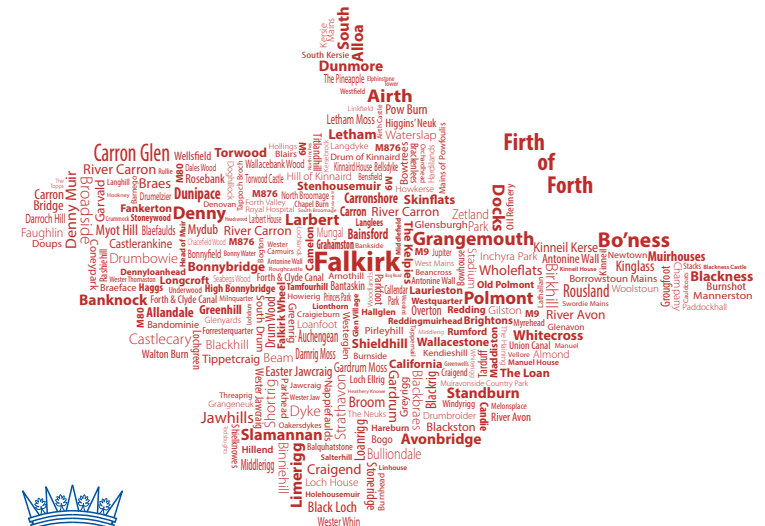


# Supplementary Guidance SG01

May 2021



# Falkirk Council

## Supplementary Guidance

A suite of 14 supplementary guidance notes (SG's) is currently being produced by the Council in conjunction with LDP2. The number of SGs is reducing from seventeen to fourteen, as three of the adopted SGs are being consolidated to provide a more comprehensive and integrated approach to guidance. The SGs seek to provide more detailed guidance on how particular local development plan policies should be applied in practice.

These SGs form a statutory supplement to LDP2, and are intended to expand upon planning policies and proposals contained in the plan.

A full list of the supplementary guidance in this series is found below.

-  **Development in the Countryside**
-  Neighbourhood Design
-  Residential Extension and Alterations
-  Shopfronts
-  Green Infrastructure and New Development
-  Affordable Housing
-  Biodiversity and Development
-  Local Nature Conservation and Geodiversity Sites
-  Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Designations
-  Trees and Development
-  Frontiers of the Roman Empire (Antonine Wall) World Heritage Sites
-  Listed Buildings and Unlisted Properties in Conservations Areas
-  Developer Contributions
-  Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

# Development in the Countryside

1. Introduction

2. Planning Policy Context

3. Housing in the Countryside

4. Business Development in the Countryside

5. Design Guidance

Appendices

# 1. Introduction

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- 1.1 This supplementary guidance has been produced by Falkirk Council to elaborate on key countryside policies contained in the Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2). It provides more detailed guidance to developers and others on matters to take into account when approaching the Council with proposals for development in the countryside, in particular:
- (a) the circumstances in which development in the countryside will be permitted (Sections 3 4 and 5); and
  - (b) design guidance on new development in the countryside (Section 6).
- 1.2 In all cases it is recommended that pre-application advice is sought from the planning authority. Pre-application advice can be particularly useful in helping identify the issues to be covered and information that will be needed to support a planning application, which in turn can help accelerate the process. It is also advised that applicants seek appropriate professional advice (architect, structural engineer, landscape architect, ecologist etc.), particularly where conversion, restoration or replacement of existing buildings in the countryside is involved.

## 2. Planning Policy Context

### National Policy

- 2.1 The national policy framework for rural development is set out in the Scottish Planning Policy (SPP), with additional guidance provided by Planning Advice Note (PAN72): Housing in the Countryside.
- 2.2 The SPP adopts a positive approach to rural areas, with the overarching aim of enabling development which supports prosperous and sustainable communities, whilst protecting and enhancing environmental quality. New development should respond to the specific local circumstances and character of an area.
- 2.3 The focus of PAN72 is set out in key design principles, with the purpose of creating more opportunities for good quality rural housing which respects Scottish landscapes and building traditions. It emphasises the importance of landscape setting and context. If a proper fit in the landscape is not achieved, then even a well designed building can fail. High quality design is seen as integral to new development.

### Falkirk Local Development Plan 2

- 2.4 The Council's objective through LDP2 is to protect the character and environmental quality of Falkirk's countryside whilst facilitating well designed development, in the right places, where it is justified and necessary.
- 2.5 The key Local Development Plan policies to guide new development in the countryside are provided by :

<b>Policy PE14</b>	<b>Countryside</b>
<b>Policy PE15</b>	<b>Green Belt</b>
<b>Policy HC05</b>	<b>Housing in the Countryside</b>
<b>Policy JE05</b>	<b>Business Development in the Countryside</b>

**Policy PE14** is a keynote policy which defines 'countryside' as those areas outwith the Urban and Village Limits. The Urban/Village Limits are identified on the Proposals Map of the LDP. It sets out general guidance for countryside proposals which are not covered by the specific uses covered by Policies HC05 and JE05, but are appropriate. It is not possible to provide guidance for every possible circumstance that development may be required, however Policy PE14 sets out general criteria where other uses in the countryside may be supported. PE14 seeks to prevent sporadic and intrusive development which could have a detrimental impact on the character of the countryside. Cross referencing to guidance on infill development, restoration of existing buildings and design guidance contained in this SG will provide further context to the consideration of proposals.

**Policy PE15** applies within areas which, as well as being countryside, are also designated as green belt. Within the green belt there is a stronger presumption against development, and more stringent criteria to meet.

This Supplementary Guidance focuses on Policies **HC05** and **JE05** which deal with housing and business.

- 2.6 Other types of development commonly promoted in the countryside are covered by other specific topic policies, e.g.

<b>Policy IR11</b>	<b>Digital Infrastructure</b>
<b>Policy IR12</b>	<b>Energy Generation Development</b>
<b>Policy IR15/16</b>	<b>Minerals</b>
<b>Policy IR17</b>	<b>Waste Management Facilities</b>

These key policies are supported by a number of general environmental policies which may also apply depending on the individual nature and location of the development proposal e.g.

<b>Policy PE18</b>	<b>Landscape</b>
<b>Policy PE19</b>	<b>Biodiversity and Geodiversity</b>

(A full list of these policies is provided in Appendix 1).

- 2.7 Overarching all new development is the legal requirement and key priority for Falkirk Council to tackle climate change. Reducing the energy requirements of new buildings is critical to this and all new development should incorporate low and zero carbon-generating technologies. Guidance is provided by Policy IR13 Low and Zero Carbon Development and SG14 Renewable and Low Carbon Energy.

## 2. Planning Policy Context

### General Considerations

#### Access and Servicing

- 2.8 All proposals will be required to meet the Council's standards for access and servicing, which are set out in the National Roads Development Guide. New development in the countryside is frequently accessed off narrow, derestricted rural roads, where safety may be an issue. Larger developments may have an impact on the local road network through the introduction of new journeys, in which case a transport assessment may be required. Policy IR05 sets out the criteria for transport assessments and seeks to ensure that any impacts on the transport network are identified at an early stage, and appropriate mitigation measures are introduced. Where schemes would impact on the trunk road network, developers should discuss their proposals with Transport Scotland who can advise on any potential improvements

#### Biodiversity

- 2.9 **Policy PE19** provides general support for biodiversity and sets out the level of protection for nature conservation sites, species and habitats. Of particular relevance when redeveloping existing buildings can be the presence of protected species. Some species are protected by law and to disturb them can constitute an offence. It is therefore recommended that an initial check is undertaken to identify if there are any issues which require further investigation. The presence of protected species is unlikely to mean that works cannot go ahead but does mean that their presence must be accommodated both during and after works. In these circumstances consultation within the Council or NatureScot is essential. Accommodating the presence of some protected species may also require a licence from NatureScot.

### 3. Housing in the Countryside

#### Introduction

- 3.1 The general strategy of the LDP2 is to direct new housing development in rural areas to the existing villages in order to sustain their vitality and take advantage of village services and infrastructure. Whilst it is recognised that there are circumstances where new houses in the countryside are necessary or appropriate, it is vital that the character and amenity of the countryside is safeguarded against suburbanisation, and sporadic, poorly located and poorly designed development.
- 3.2 **Policy HC05** aims to encourage the sympathetic re-use of existing traditional buildings of character in the countryside. These buildings represent a significant resource both architecturally and from a sustainability point of view and have the potential to be re-used and adapted to help meet present and future rural development needs. However there will be circumstances where new housing is considered acceptable, for example where they are needed to support rural economic activity, where they represent infill, or where it will enable the restoration of historic buildings.
- 3.3 **Policy HC05** sets out the circumstances where housing in the countryside will be supported :

#### HC05 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 that the restored/replacement house is of a suitable size and design;
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 HC09.

Detailed guidance on the application of these criteria will be contained in Supplementary Guidance SG01 Development in the Countryside.

## 3. Housing in the Countryside

3.4 The following supporting information gives further explanation to aid the interpretation of sub sections 1-6 of **Policy HC05**.

### 3.5 (1) Required to Support an Economic Activity

The Council recognises that the nature of a rural business may mean that managers or employees need to live on site. If a house is required on site for an economic activity all of the following criteria must be met:

- The submission of a business plan to demonstrate that the business has been planned on a sound financial basis and the business is economically viable;
- The submission of a supporting statement to demonstrate the operational need for the additional house in association with the business;
- Evidence that no existing dwelling which might have served that need has been sold or otherwise alienated from the holding;
- Evidence that there are no reasonable opportunities for re-using or converting redundant buildings rather than building a new dwelling;
- If the above criteria are met, the proposed house will then be assessed in terms of its location, siting and design.

It should be noted that where a house is to be associated with a proposed economic activity, construction of the house will not be permitted in advance of the development of the business. In these circumstances, it is usual for the Council to grant a temporary permission for a non-permanent form of housing pending the establishment of the business.

### 3.6 (2) Restoration or Replacement of a House

#### (a) Restoration

The Council wants to encourage the restoration and re-use of worthwhile buildings in the countryside. Restoration rather than replacement will be favoured where the building is of traditional form and construction, is otherwise of architectural or historic merit, makes a positive contribution to the landscape or contributes to local character. The emphasis is on utilising the historic building fabric which already exists in the countryside. In these circumstances all of the following criteria must be met:

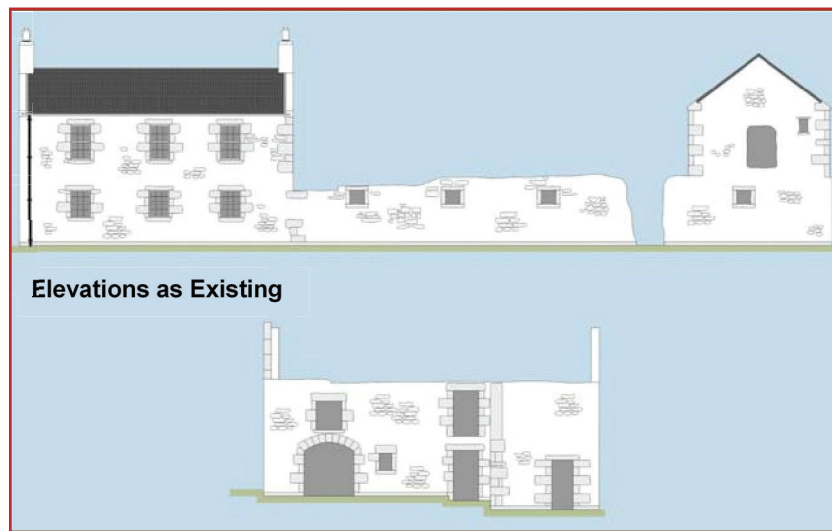
- The building, by virtue of its existing character, has the potential to make a positive contribution to the rural landscape;
- The building is substantially intact and is capable of beneficial restoration without substantial rebuilding. (Refer to Note 1 on Page 7);
- The restored or converted building is of a suitable size and design, and utilises natural materials which are locally sourced where possible.



### 3. Housing in the Countryside



Existing Building Contributes to Local Character



Elevations as Existing



Elevations as Proposed

**Case Study :** Bulliondale House, Avonbridge

**Copyright and Credits :** The Pollock Hammond Partnership Architects and Conservation Consultants

### 3. Housing in the Countryside

#### (b) Replacement

The Council allows for the replacement of a house that is substantially intact but sub-standard. It recognises that there may be some houses in the countryside that no longer meet the requirements for modern living, having fallen into a poor state of repair, or have been affected by adverse structural conditions. Such houses may have a dilapidated appearance, detracting from the landscape setting of the countryside and their removal would be beneficial. In the case of a replacement house all of the following criteria must be met:

- The existing house is substantially intact;
- The building is of no architectural or historic interest, and makes no contribution to the local landscape;
- Evidence is provided that the existing house is sub-standard and of a design that is not readily improvable or extendable;
- The replacement house is of suitable size and design, which is appropriate to its setting and the surrounding area;
- The new house should occupy the same site as the original house, unless it can be demonstrated that an adjacent area provides a better landscape fit, in which case the existing house must be demolished and the land should be reinstated (the footprint will not be accepted as a site for a future housing proposal). It should be noted that where a building is listed, proposals will firstly have to meet the terms of **Policy PE07** Listed Buildings contained within LDP2 (Supporting Policies Section).



**Photograph Copyright :** Andrew Lee Photographer  
**Copyright and Credits :** Simon Winstanley Architects

**Note 1.** For the purposes of sections (2) and (3), 'substantially intact' will generally mean that the external walls and gables are still intact and are structurally sound. Applications should be accompanied by a structural engineer's report certifying that the building is capable of conversion without rebuilding the intact sections.

### 3. Housing in the Countryside

#### 3.7 (3) Conversion or Restoration of non-domestic Farm Buildings/ Redevelopment of Farm Steadings

##### (a) Conversion or Restoration of non-domestic Farm Buildings

Farm or other non-residential buildings can also offer opportunities for beneficial conversion and re-use as homes. Proposals must meet all of the following criteria:

- The building is no longer required for the purposes it was built;
- The building, by virtue of its existing character, has the potential to make a positive contribution to the rural landscape;
- The building is substantially intact and is capable of beneficial restoration; (Refer to Note 1 on Page 7).
- The building is safely accessible and can be linked to water and other services without substantial rebuilding;
- The restored or converted building is a suitable size and design, and materials used should be sympathetic.



**Case Study :** Barn Conversion  
**Copyright and Credits :** Beaton and McMurphy Architects



**Non-Domestic Farm Buildings Capable of Beneficial Restoration**



**Converted Farm Steading**



### 3. Housing in the Countryside

#### (b) Redevelopment of Farm Steadings

Traditional agricultural farm steadings are a significant feature of the Scottish landscape, usually comprising a collection of individual buildings as well as the farmhouse itself formed around a central courtyard area. Changes in agricultural practice have resulted in many buildings becoming redundant. Conversion and redevelopment of farm steadings offers the opportunity to increase the level and variety of Falkirk's housing stock, as well as meeting the needs of rural areas for commercial or industrial development.

Farm steadings are a finite resource and once their character has been eroded or lost, they cannot be replaced and their contribution towards the character of the rural landscape will be diminished. It is therefore important that conversions and redevelopment proposals are undertaken in a sensitive and innovative manner that conserves their original character.

In addition to the criteria set out in 3 (a) for the conversion or restoration of residential and non-residential buildings, proposals for the redevelopment of farm steadings must meet all of the following criteria:

- There must be retention of some of the built elements of the steading;
- Limited new development will be permitted within the steading envelope\* provided it integrates well with, and does not impact on the scale character and form of the existing building group;
- Extensions will only be permitted where they would complete the overall composition of the steading and provide a unified appearance;
- The traditional character and form of the existing building group is retained;
- The emphasis is on a coherent design concept which seeks to retain the steading character rather than a collection of 'suburban style' houses;
- The submission of a masterplan will be required. Photo montages are also encouraged.

*\*envelope is defined as the footprint of the buildings and the internal yard and spaces enclosed by the buildings.*



**Farm Steading Converted and Extended to Create a Coherent Building Group**



**Traditional Character Retained by Redevelopment of Farm Steading**

### 3. Housing in the Countryside

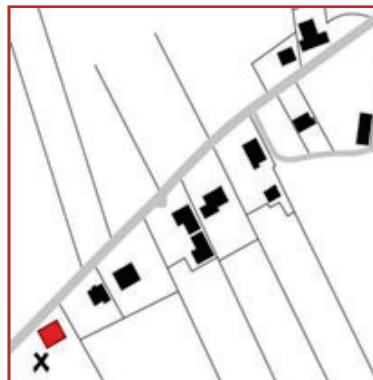
#### 3.8 (4) Infill Development

##### (i) Linear Situations

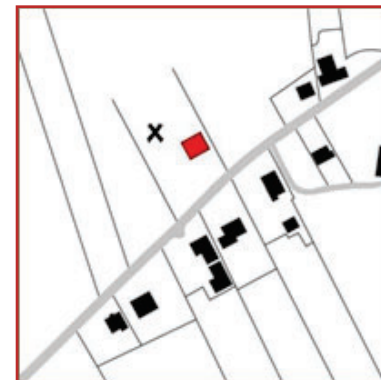
Appropriate infill development will be allowed between two residential buildings where all of the following criteria are met:

- The proposed infill development must occupy a clear gap between two existing residential buildings;
- The scale, density and design of the proposed infill housing should respect the character of existing development. Proposals should respond to local distinctiveness;
- The existing residential buildings must front a road or access lane and be less than 80 metres apart;
- The gap is not on the edge of an existing village or urban limit where the edge of the settlement has already been defined;
- The development should not constitute ribbon or backland development. (Ribbon development is defined as the outward linear growth of development along a road);
- If there is a predominant building line this should be adhered to;
- The terms of LDP2 **Policy HC06** (Infill Development and Subdivision of Plots) should be met.

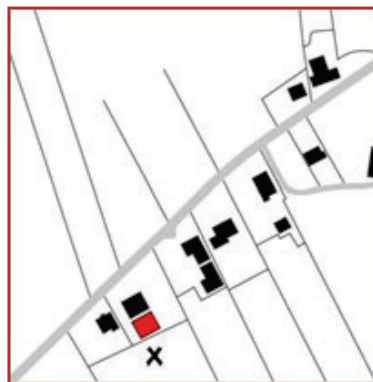
Figure 1: Examples of unacceptable and acceptable infill development



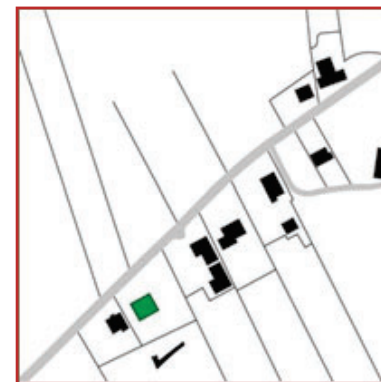
Inappropriate  
Ribbon Development



Inappropriate  
Sporadic Development



Inappropriate  
Backland Development



Appropriate  
Infill Development

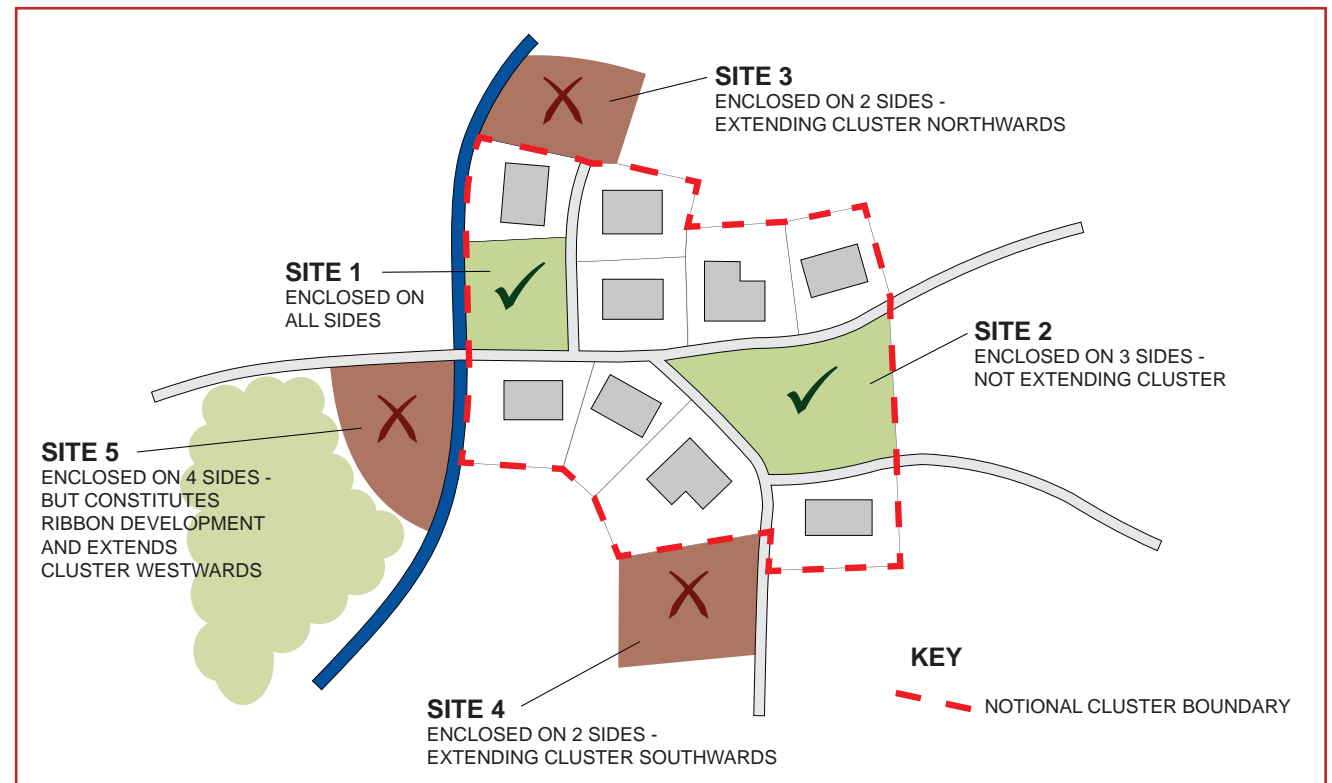
### 3. Housing in the Countryside

#### (ii) Building Cluster

Houses will be allowed within an established existing building group where all of the following criteria are met:

- The existing cluster forms an obvious residential group within its landscape setting. The buildings within the group have a strong physical and visual cohesion;
- The proposal relates to a contained site within the original cluster and does not extend the cluster outwards. The site must be contained on three sides which can be formed by residential buildings, roads, watercourses or a well established landscape feature (e.g. mature woodland or a significant change in gradient);
- The development should not constitute ribbon or backland development;
- The proposal should respect the character layout and building pattern of the existing cluster;
- The proposal does not expand the cluster by more than 50% of the number of houses;
- The terms of LDP2 **Policy HC06** (Infill Development and Subdivision of Plots) should be met.

Figure 2: Examples of unacceptable and acceptable development within building clusters.



## 3. Housing in the Countryside

### 3.10 (5) Enabling Development

Enabling development may be permitted in some circumstances where it will secure the long term future of historic buildings or historic assets. This is development that would not normally be acceptable in general policy terms, but can be justified where there are overriding conservation benefits to be gained from the overall development scheme, which could not be achieved through other means. It would typically seek to subsidise the cost of major repair or conversion to a viable use of a significant historic building or historic asset.

Proposals involving enabling development will only be permitted where all of the following criteria can be met :

- The enabling development will secure the restoration, re-use and long-term future of an historic building or structure of acknowledged importance;
- The conservation benefits significantly outweigh the disbenefits of setting aside the normal presumption against development in the countryside;
- The design, materials, massing, location and density of the enabling development does not compromise the special character or historic setting of the principal restoration development, its relationship to ancillary historic buildings and structures, and any associated designed landscape, with particular reference to LDP2 Policies PE07 (Listed Buildings) and PE10 (Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes);
- The submission of a Viability Statement, which includes sufficient detailed financial information to allow the proposal to be fully assessed (Appendix 2 provides more information);
- The Viability Statement should demonstrate that:
  - The principal restoration development would be financially unviable without the enabling development due to a demonstrable level of conservation deficit. All other potential sources of subsidy have been explored, and the property or asset has been subjected to appropriate marketing;
  - The scale of enabling development is the minimum necessary to secure the long term future of the principal restoration development, whilst allowing an appropriate level of developer profit.

### 3.11 (6) Gypsy/Travellers

Gypsies and Travellers have specific housing needs, requiring sites for caravans and mobile homes, which are difficult to locate within urban areas. The SPP requires authorities to set out policies for dealing with applications for small privately owned sites.

Proposals for small privately owned sites to accommodate gypsy/travellers should not impact negatively on the surrounding countryside. Proposals will be permitted where they comply with **Policy HC09** Gypsy/Travellers' Sites which requires that :

- The site satisfies policies in LDP2 relating to the protection of the historic and natural environment (**Policies PE05 - PE27**);
- The site can be appropriately landscaped, such that there will be no adverse effect on the character, appearance and amenity of the area;
- The site affords an appropriate level of residential amenity and access to community facilities; and
- Access, parking and other servicing can be provided to a satisfactory standard, and the site is not at significant risk from flooding.

## 4. Business Development in the Countryside

- 4.1 The Council wishes to promote sustainable economic activity in rural areas. Rural sites may offer various opportunities for economic growth. Farm diversification, the re-use of rural buildings and appropriate redevelopment and expansion proposals for existing industrial and business purposes will generally offer the greatest scope for sustainable economic development in the countryside. However new businesses may arise where there is a site specific resource opportunity.
- 4.2 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, as well as promoting the enjoyment of the area's natural heritage. At the same time, a cautious approach is necessary as some activities have implications for the character of the countryside, in terms of visual, ecological and noise impacts which need to be carefully assessed.
- 4.3 Policy JE05 sets out the circumstances where business development will be supported :



Farm Diversification at Wellsfield Farm Equestrian Centre

### JE05 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. Proposals involving the re-use of industrial, commercial or institutional land or premises, or the conversion of farm buildings for business use;
3. Limited extensions to existing established business in the countryside; or
4. Business development where a need for a countryside location is demonstrated or the development constitutes an appropriate form of farm diversification.

Detailed guidance on the application of these criteria will be contained in Supplementary Guidance SG01 'Development in the Countryside'.

- 4.4 The following supporting information gives further explanation to aid the interpretation of sub sections 1-4 of **Policy JE05**.



## 4. Business Development in the Countryside

### 4.5 (1) Areas Identified for Business Development

There are a few areas specifically identified outwith settlements in the LDP for business development, either as specific economic development proposals or as core business areas. Development within these areas will be subject to the relevant site specific policies and criteria contained in the LDP.

### 4.6 (2) New Business Development

Within the countryside, new business development will generally only be permitted where the need for a countryside location is demonstrated, or the proposal is an appropriate form of farm diversification. All proposals will be subject to a rigorous assessment of their impact on the rural environment.

Tourism is one of the developing sectors in the Falkirk Council area and is recognised in a number of the Council's initiatives and strategies. Appropriate countryside tourism and leisure uses that require a rural location are therefore welcomed in the countryside. LDP2 outlines that priority will be given to the development of tourism proposals which support the networks, themes and nodes identified in the plan. The spatial strategy is based on several themed networks - town centres, the canal corridor, the Central Scotland Green Network, the Antonine Wall and gateway locations offering visitor services. The tourism nodes highlighted below, will provide the focus for development opportunities and investment, some of which are in the countryside:

#### Tourism Nodes

Falkirk Town Centre  
Bo'ness Town Centre/ Callendar House/Park  
Helix/Falkirk Gateway  
Falkirk Wheel/Portdownie Gilston  
Kinneil  
Muiravonside

Falkirk's strength in outdoor attractions and activities has been enhanced by projects such as the Helix, the John Muir Way and the World Heritage status of the Antonine Wall. All of these projects will provide opportunities to further enhance Falkirk's status as a tourist location and encourage more visitors to come and stay in the area for a longer period.

Farm diversification into non-agricultural activities can be vital to the continuing viability of many farm enterprises. Not only can diversification help sustain the rural economy, it can provide much needed additional facilities and services for local communities. Diversification should not however result in excessive expansion and encroachment of building development into the countryside, creating problems such as access congestion, noise pollution and loss of amenity. Ideally diversification schemes should remain additional to the main agricultural function of the land, and agriculture should remain the dominant land use in order to preserve landscapes that have resulted from farming activity.

Proposals for new business development will be permitted where the following criteria are met :

- The submission of a Statement of Justification, which includes sufficient detailed financial information to allow the proposal to be fully assessed;
- The Statement of Justification should demonstrate that :
  - A countryside location is essential and how the proposal would benefit the local economy;
  - A business plan demonstrating the viability of the proposal in the long term which includes financial projections. (Guidance on producing a business plan and what it should contain can be found on the Business Gateway site).
- <http://www.bgateway.com/starting-up/create-business-plan/prepare-a-business-plan/>
- The siting and scale of the proposal and associated infrastructure is appropriate, and design is of a high standard, allowing the development to integrate well into the landscape.
- Proposals for new visitor attractions and tourism infrastructure should support the themes set out in the LDP2 and the tourism strategies of the Council, thereby enhancing the image and tourism profile of the area.
- Proposals for new hotels, B&B's will only be permitted where a specific opportunity is identified in LDP2 or existing buildings are being utilised. New restaurants/pubs and small scale self-catering accommodation may be supported subject to appropriate siting and high quality design.

## 4. Business Development in the Countryside

### 4.7 (3) Brownfield Land/Conversion of Rural Buildings

#### (a) Brownfield Land

The policy allows for business proposals which reuse vacant industrial / commercial / institutional land or premises (essentially brownfield land i.e. land that has been previously developed). Usually these sites have been significantly degraded by a former activity. When such sites fall into disuse or are abandoned they have the potential to detract seriously from the visual and environmental amenity of a rural area. This policy recognises that their redevelopment could serve to enhance landscape quality by reducing the physical mass and presence of intrusive buildings within the countryside and simultaneously provide an opportunity to clean up contaminated land and assist environmental, social and economic regeneration. It could also make the best use of existing infrastructure and services and relieve the pressure to build on greenfield land, thus helping to protect the character of the countryside.

Proposals involving the re-use of industrial, commercial or institutional land or premises will require to meet all of the following criteria

- There are significant environmental and/or community benefits to be gained as a consequence of the vacant site/buildings being re-developed;
- The scale of new development should be dictated by the available brownfield land, the needs of the business, and the capacity of the environment to accept it;
- The siting and scale of the proposal and associated infrastructure is appropriate, and the design is of a high standard, allowing the development to integrate well into the landscape.

#### (b) Conversion of Farm Buildings

The conversion of existing farm buildings for new business uses will be supported providing the proposal is compatible with surrounding uses.

### 4.8 (4) Extensions

Proposals for the expansion of an established economic development use in the countryside will be permitted in the following circumstances:

- The scale and nature of the proposal would not impact on the surrounding rural character;
- Where it is not possible to utilise existing buildings, new buildings would need to be in proportion with existing development and integrate well as part of the overall development;
- Where appropriate, proposals should respect scale design and materials of existing buildings;
- Appropriate landscaping measures are introduced which will help aid integration into the landscape.

### Prior Approval Notification

- 4.9 It should be noted that certain agricultural buildings and operations do not require formal planning permission. Developments involving agriculture will normally require an approval from the planning authority known as Prior Approval Notification to be submitted. This is a quicker procedure than planning permission but still allows the planning authority to raise concerns with the siting, design and external appearance of a building.



A typical vernacular farm building

## 5. Design Guidance

### Introduction

- 5.1 This design guidance aims to promote a sensitive and imaginative approach to new development in Falkirk's countryside to create a sense of place and maintain local distinctiveness.
- 5.2 New development should respond to the unique character of the area's countryside. This guidance therefore includes overviews of local landscape character and rural building types.
- 5.3 A key objective is to inspire development which is "distinctive, safe and pleasant, welcoming, resource efficient, adaptable, and easy to get around." These 6 qualities of successful places are set out in the Scottish Government's Policy Statement, "Designing Places."
- 5.4 PAN 72 provides advice on best practice in terms of design of rural housing which respects the Scottish countryside. Inspirational design forms part of the Scottish Government's agenda to promote good quality housing design and placemaking throughout Scotland.

### Distinctive Local Character

#### (a) Landscape Character

- 5.5 This design guidance is intended to encourage high quality, contemporary design which reflects local character. To achieve this, developers and their agents require a proper understanding of Falkirk's countryside.
- 5.6 The Falkirk Council area contains a rich diversity of landscapes variously shaped by geology, climate, historical settlement patterns, variations in types of land use and buildings. They include the flat carselands adjacent to the Forth Estuary to the north, the river valleys of the Carron and the Bonny Water in the central area, the undulating Slamannan plateau to the south, the Denny hills to the east and the rolling farmland of the east, bisected by the scenic Avon Valley.
- 5.7 These varied landscapes are populated by single houses, country estates, groups of houses, industrial premises and agricultural buildings, the best of which are well sited and are of a scale and design to complement their countryside setting. Inappropriate development in rural areas has a significant detrimental impact, which can affect a large area since many buildings in the countryside can be viewed from a long distance away.
- 5.8 Supplementary Guidance (SG09) on Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Designations sets out key information and guidelines based on 16 Landscape Character Areas (LCA's) contained within 6 generic Landscape Character Types that cover the Falkirk Council area. Information includes details on key characteristics, likely future forces for change, sensitivities and guidelines. It is recommended, therefore, that applicants make reference to the appropriate section within SG09 prior to developing preliminary proposals for development in any of the countryside areas.
- 5.9 The location of new development in any of the 16 LCAs must take into account all factors highlighted in SG09 to ensure that location and design enhance positive attributes of the landscape and meet key aims and objectives.

## 5. Design Guidance

### (b) Buildings in the Countryside

- 5.10 The countryside area of Falkirk has a unique built heritage, reflecting its long settlement history and its strategic location at the heart of central Scotland. It has long been a rich and important agricultural area, hosting the huge Tryst cattle market in former times, and was changed dramatically by the industrial revolution. The legacy of this history is seen today in tower houses, dovecots, castles, large country mansions set in designed landscapes, estate villages, modest farmhouses, miners' cottages, and industrial buildings and structures such as canals, aquaducts, viaducts, bridges and mills.
- 5.11 Many of these buildings and structures have been designated listed buildings on the basis of their architectural or historic interest. Notable examples include Avondale House, Lathallan House, Torwood Castle, Kinnaird House and Dunmore Estate (including the Pineapple, an outstanding idiosyncratic folly built c 1776 by the 4th Earl of Dunmore whose family provided Dunmore Model village for estate workers in the mid 19th century).
- 5.12 The distinctive local character of buildings in the countryside is derived from a combination of factors including fit with context, materials and design. From the simple but robust buildings associated with farm steadings to ornamented cottages in estate villages and formal country mansions in landscaped estates, there is a design vigour and strength of character which sets a quality standard for new development to emulate.



Kinningars Park Dovecot a Category "B" Listed Building



Torwood Castle a Category "A" Listed Building



## 5. Design Guidance



Storage Huts, Causewayend



Typical Farm Steading



Case Study : Cottage Extension  
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Typical vernacular farm buildings

## 5. Design Guidance

### (c) Villages and Building Clusters

- 5.13 The layout and building styles of the area's small rural settlements reflect their varying origins and histories. Two particularly distinctive types which are of architectural or social significance are the estate village and the miners' row.
- 5.14 Dunmore and Muirhouses are examples of estate villages. Dunmore was built by the Earl of Dunmore in the 19th century as a model village for estate workers, comprising pretty one and two storey semi-detached houses and terraced cottages arranged around a central green. Key features include pedimented bays and dormers, sandstone walls, slated roofs, overhanging purlinned eaves, finials and ridge ventilators. Muirhouses, to the east of Bo'ness is a settlement of attractive mid nineteenth century estate workers houses, designed in the cottage ornee style with decorative detailing to porches, roofs and windows.
- 5.15 Coal and fireclay mines once covered the Falkirk landscape, and small groups of miners' cottages grew up adjacent to the collieries. Letham is one of the few examples of a community exclusively based around a colliery. The mine commenced operation in 1912 and Letham Cottages, immediately to the south, was built the following year, the last complete example of a miners' row in the district. Letham Terraces, on the northern side of the colliery, was built circa 1923. Carron Company owned and built the mine, the houses and the railway which supplied coal to its world famous iron foundry.



**Moss Cottages a Category "B" Listed Range of terraced cottages arranged around a central green in Dunmore Conservation Area**



**Entrance Detail : Muirhouses Conservation Area**



## 5. Design Guidance

### (d) Farm Steadings

- 5.16 Due to the diversity of Falkirk's countryside, the siting of farm steadings within the Council area varies according to landscape character. Siting can range from nestling against hill slopes to straddling hill tops and sitting prominently on wide plains. In general terms, farm steadings comprise a tight grouping of small to medium scale ancillary buildings, sheds and barns arranged around a farmhouse to form a courtyard.
- 5.17 Some of the older farmhouses dating back to the late 17th and early 18th century have been listed for their architectural and historic character.
- 5.18 Traditionally farm steadings comprised a mix of one and two storey buildings with regular fenestration patterns, generally with a low window to wall ratio and short gables in keeping with lowland farm building traditions. Horse driven engine houses known as horse "gangs" feature on some older steadings, consisting of a separate circular unit with conical roof; they are generally attached to cart bays and barns.
- 5.19 External finishes consist of unpainted natural sandstone to walls, with random rubble to barns and other outbuildings and coursed ashlar to the main elevation of the farm house. Although not a dominant feature of the area, some farm buildings also have harling or render with a lime wash finish. Roof coverings range from natural slate and pantiles to pre-formed industrial metals on more modern outbuildings.



**Typical Farm Steading :**  
Simple arrangement of compact buildings set around a courtyard



**Typical Farmhouse :**  
Mix of one and two storey buildings with regular fenestration pattern

## 5. Design Guidance

### (e) Buildings and Country Estates

- 5.20 The area was once peppered with country estates, the remnants of which are still in evidence. Typically, the components of the estate would be a large house set in the midst of a wooded estate with designed elements such as parkland, ornamental loch and ha-ha ditches. Lodge houses sit at driveway entrances. Stables and walled gardens are further common built elements. Many country houses in rural Falkirk have been designated as listed buildings by Historic Scotland on the basis of their architectural or historic interest. Some examples are described below.
- 5.21 Avondale House is a 16th century mansion with an 18th century 'gothic' symmetrical plan and elevation with pinnacled turrets and battlements. It is surrounded by expansive grounds containing a sizeable stable block designed to complement the main building at the main entry point.
- 5.22 Larbert House, built in 1822 and designed by David Hamilton was a grand Georgian mansion with "ornate" tower, curved linking loggia and portecochere". It was extended by later Victorian additions and was set within designed landscaped grounds which included a pond, walled garden and stable block.
- 5.23 Dunmore Park is included in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes owing to the significance of the surviving historic landscaped setting; while the grand mansion of Dunmore Park, 1820 - 1822 is now ruinous, the surviving Pineapple is an outstanding, idiosyncratic architectural folly linked with the walled garden and pavilion.
- 5.24 Lathallan House, designed in the Tudor style by Thomas Hamilton, was constructed 1826 - 1828 with a late 19th century wing; the policies of the estate include a Walled Garden, Ivy Cottage and Power House.



Avondale House a Category "B" Listed Building



The Pineapple in Dunmore Park a Category "A" Listed Building