

April 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**

# Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Designations

## 1. Introduction

## 2. Planning Policy, Guidance and Initiatives

## 3. Landscape Character Assessment and Guidelines

(see Appendix 1)

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(see Appendix 2)

## 5. National and Local Designed Landscapes

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- Appendix 1 Landscape Character Type and Local Landscape Character Area Descriptions
- Appendix 2 Statements of Importance and Descriptions for Special Local Landscape Areas
- Appendix 3 Further Guidance and Sources of Information for Developers

# 1. Introduction

## Why is Landscape Important?

- 1.1 The very varied rural landscape of the Falkirk area plays a vital role in providing a setting and backdrop for settlements, industry, transport routes and recreation. The key rural industries of farming and forestry make a major contribution to the appearance of this rural landscape. The rural landscape is a key element of the area's image and identity and is valued by local residents and visitors to the area.

Falkirk's natural rural landform ranges from flat land around the Forth coast, to river valleys, areas of lowland plateau, hill fringes and lowland hills. The rural landscape contains a range of different land uses and development. These include: open hill land, arable farmland, grazing land, broadleaf woodland, commercial forestry, agricultural buildings, equestrian centres, small rural industries, energy production and transmission, telecommunication apparatus, reservoirs, transport routes, minerals, former opencast areas, recreational land, water courses, water bodies, villages and dwellings. Increasing pressures for development in rural areas, together with other changes in land use and land management practices, can result in dramatic changes in the appearance of the rural landscape through the addition of new features and the loss of the defining landscape elements that may make a particular landscape locally distinct or valued.

The purpose of this supplementary guidance is to help developers, land managers and decision makers to take appropriate steps to protect, manage and enhance the rural landscapes of Falkirk. The guidance is intended to ensure that Falkirk's rural landscape is protected, enhanced and well managed for future generations as a place to live and work.

## 2. Planning Policy, Guidance and Initiatives

### Policy Context

- 2.1 This supplementary guidance document supports European and national policies and initiatives relating to landscape. It also supports policies in the Council's Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) together with associated strategy documents that relate to protection and enhancement of landscape character, landscape designations (Local Landscape Areas) and designed landscapes. The information below outlines the hierarchy of landscape policy guidance and initiatives.

### European Initiatives

- 2.2 **The European Landscape Convention (ELC)** is an initiative from the Council of Europe that highlights the importance of all landscapes and encourages further attention to their protection, management and planning. In 2006, the UK signed up to the convention; this now provides the framework for NatureScot's work on Scotland's landscapes. The ELC initiative is based on a set of principles that recognise:

- (1) people from all cultures and communities lie at the heart of work for landscape and that we all share an interest in and responsibility for its well being;
- (2) all landscapes are important, whether beautiful or degraded and not just in special places;
- (3) landscapes will continue to evolve in response to needs, but this change needs to be managed;
- (4) a better understanding and awareness of our landscapes and the benefits they provide is required, and
- (5) an inclusive, integrated and forward looking approach to managing landscapes we have inherited and in creating new landscapes, is required.

Specific measures cover: awareness raising of the value of landscapes, training and education in all aspects of landscape policy, protection, management and planning, the identification and assessment of all landscapes to improve knowledge, the defining of landscape quality objectives for identified landscapes and the implementation of landscape policies.

### National Policy and Initiatives

- 2.3 **The Scottish Planning Policy (2014)** recognises the importance of landscape. It highlights that the planning system should facilitate positive change while maintaining and enhancing distinctive landscape character. The policy document also affirms that the purpose of local landscape designations should be to (a) safeguard and enhance the character and quality of a landscape which is important or locally valued, (b) to promote understanding and awareness of the distinctive character and special qualities of local landscapes or (c) to safeguard and promote important local settings for outdoor recreation and tourism. In relation to development management, the policy requires that siting and design of development should take account of local landscape character and that decisions should consider the potential effects on landscapes and the natural and water environment, including cumulative effects. The importance of protection and expansion of woodland and the need to maximise green infrastructure are also issues covered in the SPP that relate to landscape. The policy also requires planning authorities to protect and seek to enhance gardens and designed landscapes of national and local importance.

**Scotland's Landscape Charter (2010)** encourages action from everyone to fulfil its vision to ensure that all Scotland's landscapes are protected for future generations. Individuals and organisations are encouraged to sign it to demonstrate their concern and responsibility for Scotland's distinctive landscapes and to put into practice the actions suggested.

## 2. Planning Policy, Guidance and Initiatives

### Local Policies and Strategies

#### 2.4 Falkirk Local Development Plan 2

This supplementary guidance has been prepared specifically to provide further detail on the application of the following LDP2 policies:

##### PE18 Landscape

1. The Council will seek to protect and enhance landscape character and enhance landscape quality throughout the Council area in accordance with Supplementary Guidance SG09 'Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Designations';
2. Development within Local Landscape Areas should be designed to minimise any adverse effects on the landscape character and scenic interest for which the area is designated ; and
3. Development proposals which are likely to have significant landscape and visual effects must be accompanied by a landscape and visual assessment demonstrating that, with appropriate mitigation, a satisfactory landscape fit will be achieved.

##### PE10 Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes

1. There will be a presumption against development which would adversely affect the character, condition, integrity or setting of sites identified in the 'Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes in Scotland', as identified on the Proposals Map;
2. The value of other historic gardens and designed landscapes not listed in the Inventory will be given due weight in the planning process, having regard to their historical significance, integrity and condition, and relationship to other associated historic buildings or structures. Non-inventory sites will be identified within Supplementary Guidance SG09 'Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Designations';
3. Where development is within or adjacent to any historic garden or designed landscape, developers will be required to provide an assessment of the effects of their proposals on the character and setting of these sites and demonstrate how they will be protected and managed in conjunction with the development; and
4. The Council will seek to encourage sensitive restoration and management of historic gardens and designed landscapes.

## 2. Planning Policy, Guidance and Initiatives

- 2.5 In addition to the core landscape policies above, a number of other LDP2 policies and proposals support the promotion and development of the green network in Falkirk, under the banner of the Central Scotland Green Network, of which landscape improvement is a key part. **Falkirk Greenspace - A Strategy for our Green Network** develops the core objectives of the Falkirk Greenspace Initiative and expands on priorities identified in the LDP and the Council's Open Space Strategy. The guidelines relating to tree and woodland planting for landscape mitigation, existing woodland management and new planting in this landscape supplementary guidance are also intended to meet the Priority Actions detailed in the Falkirk Greenspace Strategy. A 'Forestry and Woodland Strategy' has also been prepared for the Falkirk Council area which sets out the priorities for woodland expansion and management, with descriptions of the opportunities and constraints that should be taken into account in new planting and restocking. This 'Forestry and Woodland Strategy' document accords with the landscape sensitivities and guidelines covered in this Landscape Character and Landscape Designations supplementary guidance.
- 2.6 The **Supplementary Guidance SG01 'Development in the Countryside'** elaborates on key countryside policies in LDP2 and provides detailed site design guidance to developers and others on matters to be taken into account when considering development in the countryside. SG09 'Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Designations' (this document) deals with the broader issues relating to the rural landscape and designations and details steps to protect, manage and enhance the landscapes of Falkirk.

### Assessment of Effects on the Landscape

- 2.7 All development and changes in land use and land management will have some effect on the landscape. In accordance with Policy PE18, development proposals which are likely to have a significant landscape and visual effect must be accompanied by a **Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment**. This can either be as part of an Environment Impact Assessment or as part of the appraisal of a development. **Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)** is a tool used to identify and assess the significance of and the effects of change resulting from development on both the landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people's views and visual amenity. Such assessments should be in accordance with the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' 3rd Edition, produced by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment. The Council would normally expect LVIA's to be carried out by a chartered landscape architect.

### 3. Landscape Character Assessment and Guidelines

#### Introduction

3.1 The aim of this section of the landscape Supplementary Guidance is to:

- Provide assistance to developers, land managers and decision makers on appropriate actions to ensure the local landscape is effectively protected and enhanced. It also provides assistance to the Council in planning decisions, commenting on land management proposals and monitoring of landscape change;
- Explain **Landscape Character, Landscape Character Assessment, Landscape Character Types, Local Landscape Character Areas** and the **Local Landscape Area** designation (Local Landscape Areas are fully detailed with guidelines in section 4).;
- Explain the purpose of revising the relationship between **Local Landscape Character Areas (LLCA's)** and **Local Landscape Areas (LLA's)**.

#### Terminology

3.2 **Landscape Character** is the distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another. The Falkirk Council area, as with every part of Scotland, has a number of different landscapes of distinctive character. It is recognised that protection and, where appropriate, enhancement of our existing local landscape character is vitally important. To achieve this, guidelines are required to ensure Falkirk's landscape is not eroded by development and changes in land management practices.

**Landscape Character Assessment** is defined as the process of identifying and describing variation in the character of the landscape and using this information to assist in managing change in the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features that make landscapes distinctive. The process results in the production of a Landscape Character Assessment document for a specific area.

**Landscape Character Types (LCTs)** are the distinctive types of landscape that are relatively homogeneous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas in different parts of the country, but wherever they occur they share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation and historical land use and settlement pattern, and perceptual and aesthetic attributes.

**Local Landscape Character Areas (LLCAs)**<sup>1</sup> are single unique areas which are the discrete geographical areas of a particular Landscape Character Type. Names of the LLCAs normally reflect the names of local topographic features, settlements or water courses so that they are locally identifiable and unique.

**Local Landscape Areas (LLAs)**<sup>1</sup> are locally valued special landscapes with particular qualities and characteristics relative to the surrounding area that merit designation by the local authority. Local authorities in Scotland have adopted different names for their local landscape designations; the term 'Area of Great Landscape Value' (AGLV) has been used historically for these designations in Falkirk, and latterly 'Special Landscape Areas'. However, the Scottish Government and NatureScot are encouraging a standardisation for the name of local landscape designations to avoid confusion. The term 'Local Landscape Area' is now being used.

<sup>1</sup>Within this Supplementary Guidance document, where the term 'wildness' is used, it is a descriptive term, distinct from wild land areas set out in Scottish Planning Policy (2014).

### 3. Landscape Character Assessment and Guidelines

#### Purpose of Landscape Character Assessment

- 3.3 **Landscape Character Assessments** provide detailed descriptions of landscapes and give guidelines (based on forces for change and sensitivities) for landscape protection and enhancement. These were originally undertaken in the 1990s in partnership with Scottish Natural Heritage and local authorities. They identified, mapped and described the landscape character of all of Scotland. These studies have been used widely by local authorities in Scotland, but have recently been superseded by a single digital map-based data set created by SNH in 2019. This shows Landscape Character Types (LCT's) which are areas of consistent and recognisable landscape character, and can be viewed within the Scottish Landscape Character Types Map and Descriptions on NatureScot's website ([www.nature.scot](http://www.nature.scot))
- 3.4 This section of the Supplementary Guidance document provides a description of the key characteristics for each landscape character area and provides practical guidelines based on likely future forces for change and landscape sensitivities.
- 3.5 A summary of key characteristics of each Local Landscape Character Area within the Falkirk Council area is detailed in Appendix 1.

#### Local Landscape Areas

- 3.6 There are three long standing Local Landscape Areas (formerly AGLVs/ SLAs) in Falkirk Council area. These are fully detailed in Section 4 with guidelines:
- Denny Hills Local Landscape Area;
  - Slamannan Plateau/Avon Valley Local Landscape Area;
  - South Bo'ness Local Landscape Area.
- 3.7 A '**Statement of Importance**' for each LLA has been developed in accordance with SNH's 'Guidance on Local Landscape Designations' and is provided in Appendix 3. The 'Statement of Importance' provides an overview of the designated area, describes the key landscape characteristics along with information on other natural heritage, cultural heritage and recreational interests; it also defines the boundary of the designation and details the designation's special qualities.
- 3.8 It is recognised that landscapes are dynamic and that further reviews of this landscape supplementary guidance may highlight the need for extensions to the current LLAs or designation of new LLAs in the future. Each LLA has been assessed for new predicted pressures for change and sensitivity to development to enable guidelines to be produced.

### 3. Landscape Character Assessment and Guidelines

#### Relationship between Local Landscape Character Areas and Local Landscape Areas

- 3.9 The relationship between Local Landscape Character Areas and Local Landscape Areas is set out below:

| Local Landscape Character Areas   | Local Landscape Areas   |
|---|---|
| <p>Unique, discrete geographical areas of a particular Landscape Character Type which are mapped and described to cover the whole of the local authority area. Used to distinguish between different landscape areas and identify landscape sensitivity. Based on defined and described landscape features.</p> <p>Determined by a systematic assessment and description of the full local authority area through the process of Landscape Character Assessment.</p> <p>Boundaries of Local Landscape Character Areas are normally transitional in nature and are not necessarily distinct on the ground or defined by distinct landscape features.</p> <p>Used to help to inform general landscape policies and provide guidelines for an entire local authority area.</p> | <p>Local landscapes in the local authority area which are discrete areas that are locally valued due to particular qualities and characteristics, relative to the surrounding areas and that merit designation. They may cover a combination of different local landscape character areas.</p> <p>Determined through an assessment of an area's local importance, value and special qualities.</p> <p>The boundaries of a landscape designation are generally more precise and defined by visual envelopes, topographic and other landscape features as well as the general landscape character.</p> <p>LLA designation results in specific planning policy or guidance to ensure enhanced protection and management of an identified area.</p> |

#### Guideline Terminology

- 3.10 The following terms used in the guidelines for Local Landscape Character Areas and Local Landscape Areas are defined below for clarification:

**Sensitive Design:** precise detailed design of a building or structure to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the local landscape character, landscape quality, landscape elements, important viewpoints and surrounding habitats.

**Sensitive siting/locating:** positioning of a building or structure in a location that avoids or minimises adverse impacts on landscape character, landscape quality, landscape elements, important viewpoints and surrounding habitats.

**Sensitive forest/woodland management:** detailed level of forest management to avoid adverse impacts on landscape character, landscape quality, landscape elements and on the surrounding and internal important viewpoints and habitats; enhancement of the landscape and biodiversity value of the woodland is also an element of sensitive management.

**Sympathetic Design:** design that is in accord with the local landscape context and with the scale, layout, design and appearance of other development in the area.

**Sympathetic Siting/Locating:** siting that is in accord with the local landscape context and with the scale, layout, design and appearance of other development in the area.

### 3. Landscape Character Assessment and Guidelines

#### Structure of Information on Landscape Character Assessment and Guidelines

- 3.11 Information is structured for each Local Landscape Character Area as follows:

**1. A map showing the location and boundaries of the Local Landscape Character Area.** It is important to note that the transition between one Local Landscape Character Area and another is often very gradual and boundaries are rarely effectively represented by a single narrow line on a map.

**2. Likely future forces for change.** The predicted types of future development and land management operations which are likely to impact on landscape character. These are based on current local knowledge, recent planning applications and known national factors that could influence landscape change. Since future development cannot be predicted, the listed forces for change are unlikely to be exhaustive.

**3. Sensitivities within Local Landscape Character Area.** These are based on specific features and characteristics identified in the landscape character area descriptions and from fieldwork.

**4. Guidelines.** These relate to new and existing development, permitted development and land management operations (e.g. forestry and agriculture); they are intended to mitigate adverse effects on the landscape and enhance the existing landscape. Guidelines beginning with 'ensure' generally relate to actions affecting the landscape where there would be a level of statutory control, whereas guidelines commencing 'encourage' relate to actions that are generally considered voluntary, but would still make a positive contribution to the landscape. Due to the unpredictability of future development, the guidelines may not cover all eventualities. Guidelines for the LLCAs have also been used to inform the guidelines for the Special Landscape Areas in Section 4. There are specific landscape guidelines for wind energy detailed in the 'Renewable and Low Carbon Energy' Supplementary Guidance.

The key characteristics of each of the 16 Local Landscape Character Areas and the six generic Landscape Character Types are detailed in Appendix 1.

#### Structure of Information on Local Landscape Areas and Guidelines (Section 4)

- 3.12 The structure of information for each Local Landscape Area in Section 4 is also provided here for ease of reference and understanding:

**1. A map showing the location and boundaries of the Local Landscape Area.** Boundaries remain the same as the originally designated AGLVs for the Falkirk Council area and these are defined by visual envelopes, topography and landscape features which encompass an area of high local landscape merit. The boundaries are generally more clearly defined on the ground than the gradual transitional boundaries of Local Landscape Character Areas.

**2. Likely future forces for change.** These are the predicted types of future development and land management which may impact on the quality and local importance of the designated landscape. Forces for change are based on current local knowledge, recent planning applications and known national factors that could influence landscape change. The likely future forces for change listed are not exhaustive.

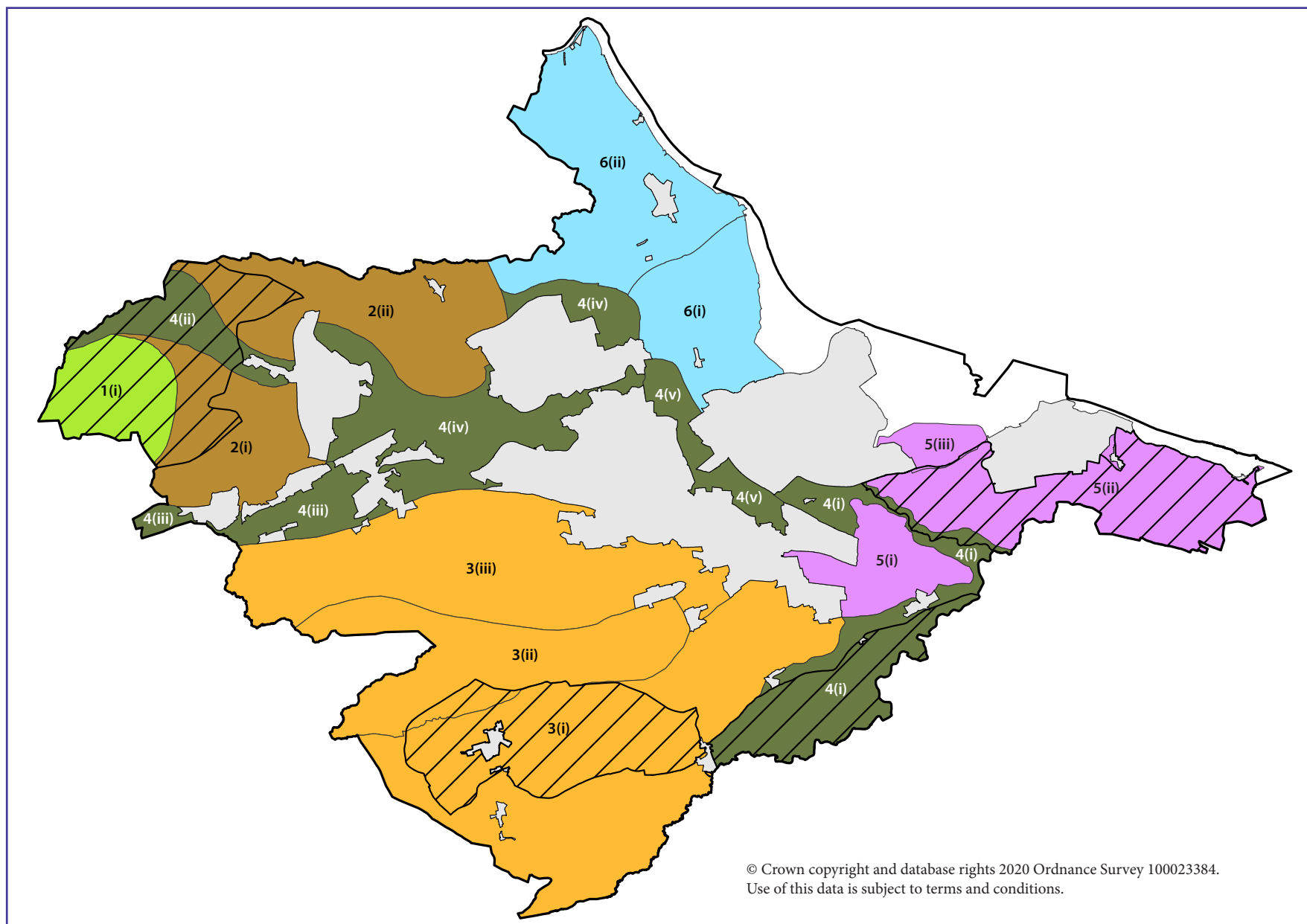
**3. Sensitivities within Local Landscape Area.** These are based on specific features and characteristics of the LLA identified in the statements of importance and from fieldwork.

**4. Guidelines.** These relate to steering new development, permitted development and land management practices to ensure landscape quality is protected; they also highlight opportunities for enhancement of the LLA designation through land management operations. The guidelines are divided into different categories of development and land management. Although the guidelines for each Local Landscape Area have been determined separately on the basis of the relevant sensitivities and forces for change specific to the LLA, they have also been informed by LLCA guidelines. They are frequently similar to guidelines of the component Local Landscape Character Areas that fall within the boundary of the LLA.

### 3. Landscape Character Assessment and Guidelines

#### Local Landscape Character Areas: Likely Future Forces for Change, Sensitivities and Guidelines









3.13 Figure 1: The location of the Local Landscape Character Areas and the generic Landscape Character Types with Local Landscape Areas.



### 3. Landscape Character Assessment and Guidelines

3.14 The following pages provide detailed location maps, details of forces for change, sensitivities and guidelines for each of the 16 Local Landscape Character Areas covering Falkirk Council area:

#### Landscape Character Types

|   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
|  | Lowland Hills         |
|  | Lowland Hill Fringes  |
|  | Lowland Plateau       |
|  | Lowland River Valley  |
|  | Coastal Farmlands     |
|  | Carselands            |
|  | Urban/Village Limit   |
|  | Local Landscape Areas |

#### Landscape Character Areas

- 1 (i) Kilsyth/Denny Hills
- 2 (i) Denny Hills Fringe
- 2 (ii) Touch Hills Fringe
- 3 (i) Slamannan Plateau
- 3 (ii) Darnrig/Gardrum Plateau Moorland
- 3 (iii) Castlecary/Shieldhill Plateau Farmland
- 4 (i) Avon Valley
- 4 (ii) Carron Glen
- 4 (iii) Bonny Water
- 4 (iv) Lower Carron/Bonny Water
- 4 (v) Falkirk - Grangemouth Urban Fringe
- 5 (i) Manuel Farmlands
- 5 (ii) Bo'ness Coastal Hills
- 5 (iii) Grangemouth/Kinneil Flats
- 6 (i) Skinflats
- 6 (ii) Carse of Forth

