

2. Planning Policy Context

2.1 The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, Section 75, as amended by the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006, contains provisions for planning authorities and developers to enter into planning obligations. Scottish Government Circular 3/2012 sets out government policy with regard to the use of such obligations. Obligations can be used to overcome obstacles to the grant of planning permission. In this way development can be permitted or enhanced and potentially negative impacts on land use, the environment and infrastructure may be reduced, eliminated or compensated for. Planning authorities may request a financial contribution, to be used towards the provision of infrastructure which they would not otherwise have had to provide. Where a planning obligation is considered essential, it must have a relevant planning purpose and must always be related and proportionate in scale and kind to the development in question.

2.2 Scottish Government advice also encourages planning authorities to make their requirements known at an early stage in the planning process, through identification of needs and the adoption of policies in the development plan. In this way site requirements may be reflected in land values prior to planning permission being granted. Provisions in the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006 require that planning obligations are publicised by Planning Authorities and that there is greater transparency in negotiating developer contributions. This SG should assist with these objectives.

2.3 The Proposed Falkirk Local Development Plan was published by Falkirk Council in April 2013. Policy INF02 Developer Contributions to Community Infrastructure sets out the strategic rationale for seeking developer contributions in appropriate circumstances. The accompanying Figure 5.2 lists the circumstances where developer contributions may be sought and this is reproduced below for guidance.

2.4

Figure 5.2 : Examples of Developer Contribution Requirements

Type of Provision	Circumstances Where Provision May Be Required
Environmental Infrastructure	
Woodland Planting & Management	Sites relating to Green Network locations, where opportunities exist to enhance/reinforce the network, to integrate a site into its landscape setting, or otherwise to mitigate its visual impact.
Habitat Creation & Management	Sites relating to existing wildlife sites or corridors, especially loss of habitat requiring mitigation/compensation or enhancement.
Sustainable Flood Management	Sites where opportunities exist to provide sustainable flood management measures as identified through flood risk assessments.
Outdoor Access Provision	Sites relating to Green Network locations and where opportunities exist to enhance the local access network.
Archaeological Investigation/Interpretation	Sites containing archaeological remains.
Historic Building Repair/Conservation	Sites containing buildings of historic or townscape importance.
Physical Infrastructure	
Road Improvements	Sites where improvements will be necessary as demonstrated by Transport Assessment in order to ensure mitigation of impact, including cumulative impact, of the proposed development.
Public Transport Facilities & Services	Larger sites where access by public transport needs to be secured to meet sustainability objectives.
Pedestrian/Cycling Facilities	Sites where pedestrian/cycle links into the wider network and to key community/public transport nodes need to be established.
Sewerage Improvements	Sites where additional sewerage infrastructure must be provided in order to serve the development.
Community Infrastructure	
Open Space Provision/Maintenance	All housing sites must provide for, or contribute to, open space on- or off-site, as well as maintenance.
Play Area Provision/Maintenance	All housing sites must provide for, or contribute to, play facilities on- or off-site, as well as maintenance.
School Capacity	Sites where school capacity/facilities are inadequate to cope with the proposed development.
Community/Sports Halls	Sites in areas where there is a recognised deficiency in the quantity or quality of provision.
Health Care Facilities	Sites in areas where there is a recognised deficiency in the quantity or quality of provision.

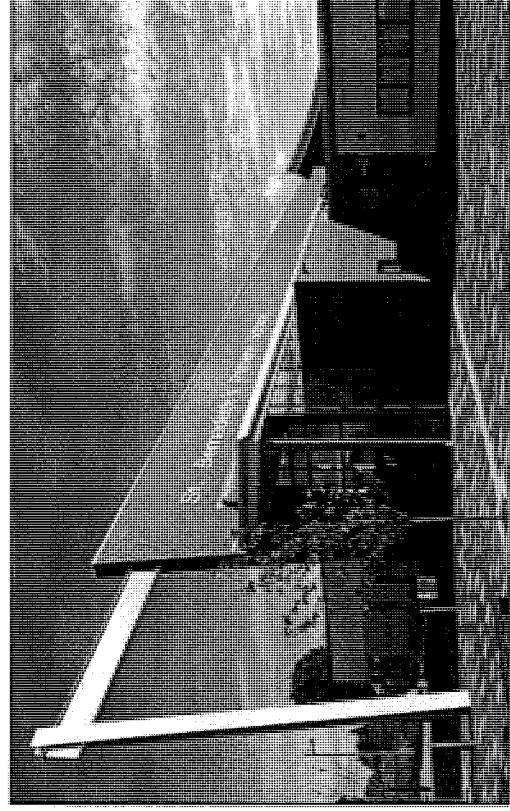
2. Planning Policy Context

- 2.5 The issue of school capacity is indicated in the Community Infrastructure section and specific policy on education provision related to new housing is contained in LDP policy INF05 Education and New Housing Development, which states:

Policy INF05 Education and New Housing Development

Where there is insufficient capacity within the catchment school(s) to accommodate children from new housing developments, developer contributions will be sought in cases where improvements to the school are capable of being carried out and do not prejudice the Council's education policies. The contribution will be a proportionate one, the basis of which is set out in Supplementary Guidance SG10 'Education and New Housing Development'. Where proposed development impacts adversely on Council nursery provision, the resourcing of improvements is also addressed through the Supplementary Guidance.

In circumstances where a school cannot be improved physically and in a manner consistent with the Council's education policies, the development will not be permitted.

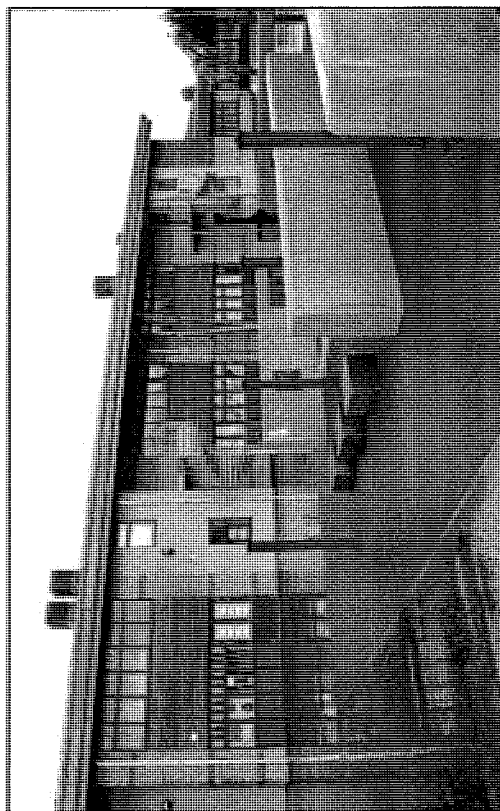


3. Key Principles

- 3.1 Falkirk Council will seek financial contributions from developers when new housing is proposed in the catchment areas of schools which will have inadequate or no capacity for additional pupils likely to be generated by such housing. In some situations it may be technically impossible to provide extra capacity and in these circumstances the Council will resolve the issue through the use of suspensive conditions to control the phasing of development or, in extremis, may refuse planning permission (see also para 3.3 below).
- 3.2 There are three situations when developer contributions are likely to apply;
- sites allocated for housing development in the Falkirk Local Development Plan where capacity problems may already be indicated in the Plan;
 - windfall infill proposals that come forward in the catchment areas of schools at or near capacity; and
 - sites allocated in Falkirk Local Development Plan where capacity issues in the school catchment may emerge after the Plan's adoption.
- 3.3 Proposals outwith the defined urban limits of a settlement and not allocated for development in the LDP are unlikely to be supported, irrespective of proposals put forward by developers to address school constraints.
- 3.4 The provisions of this SG will not apply to the following types of development;
- Sites proposing only one-bedroom flatted developments.
 - Sites of under 4 houses or 10 flats.
 - Sites of proposals for housing exclusively for the elderly.
- These types of development are exempt from making developer contributions as they would have no, or a negligible, impact on school capacity.
- 3.5 Large scale housing proposals may require specific education infrastructure provision and in such circumstances the scale of contribution will be calculated on an individual basis. Normally however, impacts from housing development will be cumulative, and no single site will cause the difficulty. In these circumstances a financial contribution based on the provision of temporary or permanent classrooms (whichever is appropriate) and applied on a per housing unit basis, would be required.
- 3.6 There may be school specific factors, e.g. space, quality of ancillary accommodation, etc that mean that increasing capacity is not a practical proposition. In such circumstances suspensive conditions or phasing of the development will be necessary.
- 3.7 The impact of development will be assessed on the available capacity at the schools affected, the school roll projections, and the ratio of pupils per housing unit from new housing developments that are applicable at the time of the planning application. This process is further elaborated in section 4 below. The pupil product ratios currently applied by the Council are shown in table B in the appendix. These ratios have been derived from studies of the number of children enrolling at schools from different types of new build housing developments and are reviewed regularly.
- 3.8 In the light of growing pressure on nursery provision within Falkirk Council area it has been agreed that a small, flat rate contribution should be made by all non exempt developments in the Council area. A flat rate rather than pro rata contribution is justified because nurseries have no catchment area and parents are able to choose to use nurseries in any part of the district, often near the workplace rather than the home. The rate of contribution is set out in Table C of the appendix.

4. Rates and Procedures

- 4.1 The level of contributions will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. The contributions are calculated from a combination of pupil product and classroom extension costs. The current build costs are as shown in table A of the appendix. These costs are reviewed in line with the Building Cost Information Service index or equivalent. Translating these pupil cost figures into a cost per house, results in the contribution rates shown in table C of the appendix for each type of school.
- 4.2 Where necessary, further (or separate) contributions towards ancillary accommodation may be applied on a case by case basis. Any planning obligation will specify how and where moneys should be spent. Provision shall be made for payment in stages and to specify payback periods for moneys to be returned should the Council not make use of them.
- 4.3 The Council has a procedure for handling developer contributions which involves Development, Law and Administration and Finance Services working closely to monitor the receipt of contributions' monies and its transfer to the Service which is to benefit, in this case the Education Service. Planning obligation details are recorded, with each service inputting information at the relevant time. All payments are to be made to Law and Administration Services, with Development Services responsible for monitoring the trigger points for staged payments.
- 4.4 It is anticipated that a Section 75 Obligation will be the usual arrangement for securing developer contributions. However Section 69 agreements, under the Local Government Act, may be the preferred legal instrument when the developer agrees to make full payment prior to planning permission being issued.



5. Justification

- 5.1 While school rolls across Scotland have fallen by 10% between 2001 and 2012, the reduction in Falkirk has been much more modest at -1.7%, the fourth smallest fall in rolls of all councils in Scotland. Indeed in the last two years the number of pupils has started to increase. This reflects the increase in the number of births, in the latter part of the 2000's, of children now approaching primary school age. Current birth figures suggest this increase in rolls will continue for several years. Even if the birth rate were to fall again, rolls are only like to fall in the longer term in areas that are not experiencing new house building. Areas where new house building has been taking place, or will be concentrated in future, will show a projected increase in school rolls commensurate with the number and type of development expected.
- 5.2 Each year Falkirk Council produces a school roll projection for the next 10 years for every school. This takes into account actual school enrolment figures, future Primary 1 intakes based on birth data, and new housing in the catchment. The new housing component is made up of sites with planning consent, sites allocated in the LDP, and sites where there is reasonable certainty of development coming forward in the medium term.
- 5.3 New housing sites allocated in the LDP will either already have been taken into account in the projections, or the allocation is conditional on addressing school capacity constraints. Any planning application for development on sites over and above existing commitments will therefore be tested by re-running the school roll projections for the relevant school. If these reveal capacity issues which can be technically overcome a financial contribution is likely to be sought.
- 5.4 For small to medium scale development this financial contribution will normally be related to the rates referred to in section 5 above and set out in Table C. Some very large scale development may require specific measures and these will be costed on an individual or bespoke basis.
- 5.5 It should be noted that school roll projections are based on a number of averages and trend based statistical techniques. Whilst the assumptions have proved generally reliable, the nature of the exercise means that they cannot be regarded as a prediction. They are therefore subject to annual review.
- 5.6 Where developer contributions are sought, or refusal is recommended, the background information and assumptions used will be made available by Education Services.

- 5.7 Developers are advised to have early discussions with Development Services prior to the submission of planning applications to understand and resolve any difficulties before design work has reached an advanced stage.
- 5.8 Developers should also be aware that there may be other issues affecting particular sites that will require development contributions for community infrastructure in addition to education provision, and these should be discussed with Development services at an early stage.
- 5.9 It will be for the developer to demonstrate to the Council's satisfaction that other developer contribution requirements, abnormal development costs and/or the prevailing economic circumstances in conjunction with the required education developer contribution will render the development unviable. These should be set out through a Development Viability Statement. The terms of the Development Viability Statement will be taken into account as a material consideration in determining the planning application.



6. Further Information and Contacts

Further Information

6.1 Advice on the use of planning obligations to secure developer contributions is provided by the Scottish Government in the following publications:

- SPP paragraph 27 (draft SPP paragraph 23)
- Scottish Government Circular 3/2012.

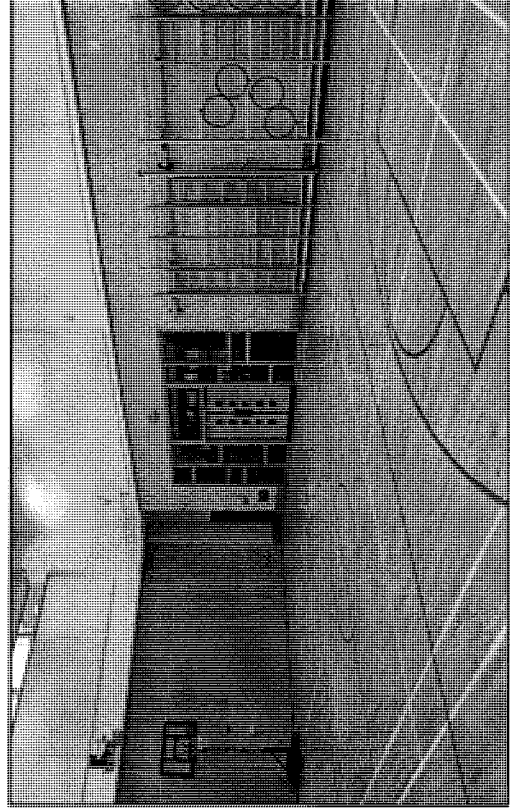
Contacts

6.2 For matters of planning policy in relation to education provision or to discuss the principle of development proposals contact:

Development Plans Team
Planning and Environment
Falkirk Council
Abbotsford House
David's Loan
Falkirk
FK2 7YZ
Tel: 01324 504720
Email: planenv@falkirk.gov.uk

For issues relating to specific planning applications contact:

Development Management Unit
Falkirk Council
Abbotsford House
David's Loan
Falkirk
FK2 7YZ
Tel: 01324 504748
Email: dc@falkirk.gov.uk



Appendix 1

Table A : Construction costs per pupil (2010 prices)

Costs Per Pupil	Primary	Secondary
Permanent Extension	£10,664	£16,068
Temporary Extension	£ 2,500	N/A

7.1

Table B : Pupil Product Ratios by Type of School and Housing Development

Ratios	ND Primary	RC Primary	ND Secondary	RC Secondary
House	0.25	0.09	0.14	0.06
Flat	0.10	0.05	0.07	0.06

7.2

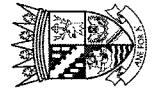
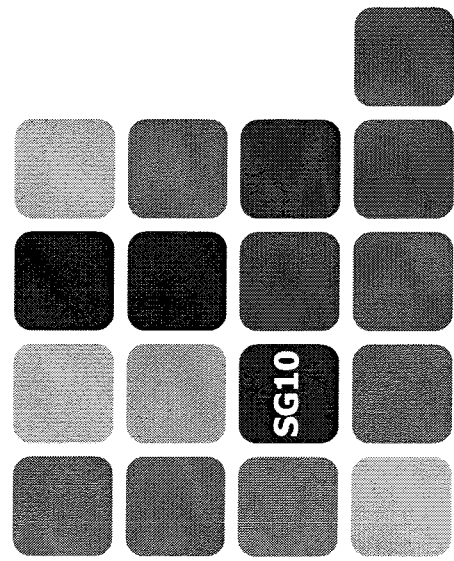
Table C : Developer Contribution Rates per Dwelling

	Rates per Dwelling	ND Primary	RC Primary	ND Secondary	RC Secondary	Nursery
House	Permanent Extension	£2,600	£850	£2,100	£900	£350
	Temporary Extension	£600	£200	N/A	N/A	N/A
Flat	Permanent Extension	£1,000	£500	£1,050	£900	£150
	Temporary Extension	£250	£100	N/A	N/A	N/A

7.3

Supplementary Guidance SG10

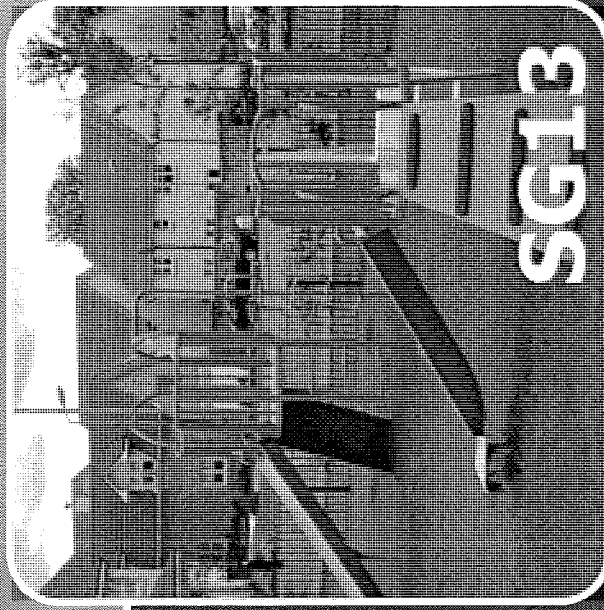
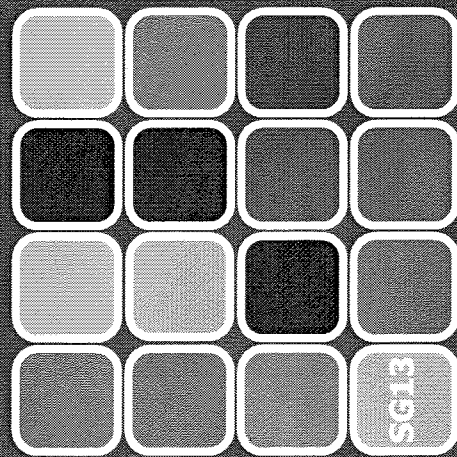
July 2015



Falkirk Council
Development Services

Open Space and New Development

Finalised Supplementary Guidance SG13



Falkirk Council
Development Services

Supplementary Guidance

A suite of supplementary guidance (SGs) is currently being produced by the Council. Most of these SGs are updated versions of previous Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) whilst others cover new topic areas (*denotes new SGs). There are 16 SGs in the series, all of which seek to provide more detailed guidance on how particular local development plan policies should be applied in practice.

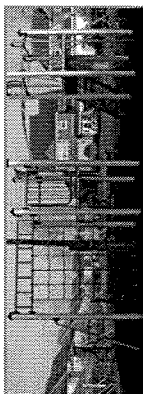
These SGs form a statutory supplement to the Local Development Plan, and are intended to expand upon planning policies and proposals contained in the proposed plan.

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

	Development in the Countryside *
	Neighbourhood Design
	House Extensions and Alterations
	Shopfronts
	Biodiversity and Development
	Trees and Development
	Frontiers of the Roman Empire (Antonine Wall) World Heritage Site
	Local Nature Conservation and Geodiversity Sites *
	Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Designations *
	Education and New Housing Development
	Healthcare and New Housing Development *
	Affordable Housing
	Open Space and New Development
	Spatial Framework and Guidance for Wind Energy Development
	Low and Zero Carbon Development *
	Design Guidance for Buildings in Conservation Areas *

Open Space and New Development

1. Introduction



2. Guidance on Provision of Open Space & Play Facilities



3. Public Open Space, Installation, Maintenance and Adoption Procedures



4. Worked Examples



5. Appendices



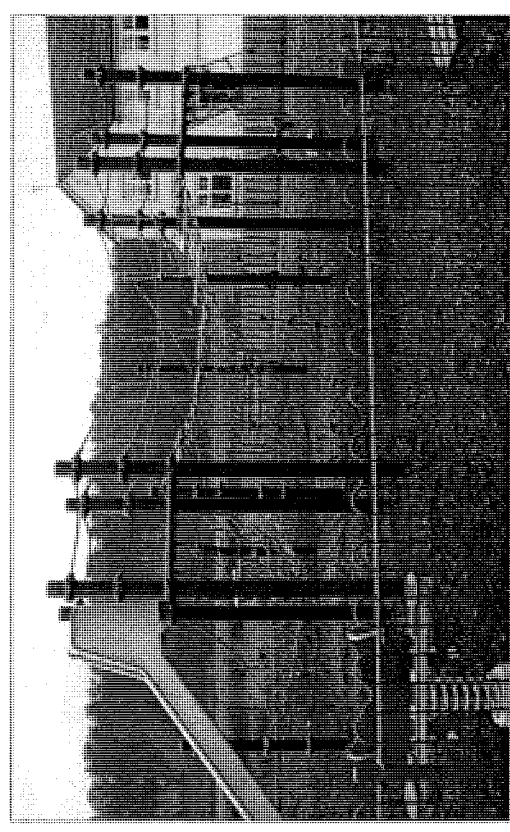
1. Introduction

Planning Strategy

- 1.1 The vision of the Falkirk Council Local Development Plan is for Falkirk 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 significance in the national context, providing an attractive and sustainable place in which to live, work, visit and invest.”
- 1.2 To support this vision the Proposed Plan makes provision for 7,964 new houses in the period between 2014 and 2024 distributed across the Council area. The spatial strategy takes into account the physical and environmental capacity and social and economic needs of each community, in order to ensure their future viability and a healthy level of self-containment.
- 1.3 The Council is firmly committed to ensuring that developers provide for the physical, environmental and community infrastructure which is required to serve new development and make it sustainable. This is particularly important in the context of a strategy of growth, where the impact of new households may place a serious burden on existing infrastructure in some areas. Such provision will normally be secured either through conditions or legal agreements.

The Value of Open Space

- 1.4 Play is a vital element of the physical and mental development of all children it helps them to learn, develop physical and social skills and is, of course, fun. However, open space and play areas are not solely for children. Open space is vital to the quality of the urban environment and the physical and mental health of its residents, it can also provide valuable wildlife habitat. It helps to define a sense of place within settlements, contributes to their landscape structure and provides areas for recreation and physical exercise. Open space, where linked into networks can be extremely valuable for active travel and can form corridors through which wildlife can migrate through the urban area.
- 1.5 It is the Scottish Government's and Falkirk Council's objective to encourage provision, through the planning system, of new open space and play areas, and to protect and enhance existing areas wherever possible. Construction of new development brings people into an area adding to the pressure on existing open spaces and creating the need for new ones. Developers will therefore be expected to contribute to enhanced provision.



1. Introduction

Terminology

1.6 Open space is the term used within this supplementary guidance to encompass all functional and publicly accessible greenspace and bluespace. Open space forms a key component of the wider green network.

Purpose of the Supplementary Guidance

1.7 This document provides the Council's guidance on the provision of open space in new development and its contribution towards the development of the Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN) within the Council area. Its status as statutory Supplementary Guidance will mean that it forms part of the Development Plan. Specifically it advises on:

- The overall standards for provision of open space within new development.
- How the requirements for open space for new development will be calculated.
- What types of open space should be provided.
- Whether the open space should be provided on-site or a financial contribution towards off-site provision will be sought.
- How financial contributions towards open space will be calculated.
- The process for the delivery and subsequent maintenance of new open space.

1.8 The guidance is intended to be used in tandem with the Council's open space audit and Open Space Strategy, which will be used to identify whether on-site or off-site open space provision is more appropriate and the areas where financial contributions towards off-site provision will be invested.

1.9 The document is structured as a step by step guide to provide developers with easy to follow advice on how to prepare their planning proposals for submission.

Planning Policy Context

1.10 National Policy Guidance

National policy guidance on open space and recreational facilities is contained in Planning Advice Note (PAN) 65: Planning and Open Space, Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) and Scotland's third National Planning Framework (NPF3). PAN 65 introduces a typology of open space, highlights the need for open space audits and suggests different approaches to assessing future requirements depending on the type of open space.

1.11 SPP indicates that planning should protect, enhance and promote green infrastructure, including open space and green networks as an integral component of successful placemaking. It also requires the preparation of up to date audits, strategies and action plans which cover the multiple functions of open space."

1.12 NPF3 identifies the Central Scotland Green Network as a national development with wide ranging environmental objectives. These include a well-planned increase in woodland cover to substantially improve the landscape settings of our towns and cities, bringing vacant and derelict land into beneficial use, improving biodiversity and amenity, and helping to absorb carbon dioxide. Enhancements are encouraged to networks of other habitats, including wetlands, to counter fragmentation and assist species migration. The development of footpath and cycleway networks and other facilities and attractions to create a more sustainable transport network and expand the range of recreational opportunities close to major centres of population, helping to encourage active travel and healthier lifestyles are also envisaged. NPF3 indicates that, during its lifetime, remediation of derelict land, prioritised action in disadvantaged communities and active travel should be priorities.

1. Introduction

1.13 Falkirk Local Development Plan

Policy INF04 "Open Space and New Residential Development" is the primary policy influencing this supplementary guidance. It states:

Policy INF04 Open Space and New Residential Development

Proposals for residential development of greater than 3 units will be required to contribute to open space and play provision. Provision should be informed by the Council's open space audit and accord with the Open Space Strategy and the Supplementary Guidance SG13 on 'Open Space and New Development', based on the following principles:

1. New open space should be well designed, appropriately located, functionally sized and suitably diverse to meet different recreational needs in accordance with criteria set out in Supplementary Guidance SG13 'Open Space and New Development'.

2. Where appropriate, financial contributions to off-site provision, upgrading and maintenance may be sought as a full or partial alternative to direct on-site provision. The circumstances under which financial contributions will be sought and the mechanism for determining the required financial contribution is set out in Supplementary Guidance SG13 'Open Space and New Development'.

3. Arrangements must be made for the appropriate management and maintenance of new open space.

1.14 Other policies within the LDP which have an influence on this supplementary guidance are:

- Policy GN01 "Falkirk Green Network" indicates that new development should contribute to the green network, where appropriate, through the integration of green infrastructure into masterplans or through enabling opportunities for green network improvement on nearby land;
- Policy INF02 "Developer Contributions to Community Infrastructure" indicates that developers will be required to contribute towards the provision, upgrading and maintenance of community infrastructure. It indicates that open space qualifies as community infrastructure under the terms of this policy;
- Policy INF03 "Protection of Open Space" indicates that the Council will protect all urban open space which is considered to have landscape, amenity, recreational or ecological value. It states that where the loss of open space is considered to be acceptable its release for development will need to be compensated for by qualitative improvements to other parts of the green network in the local area. Details of the appropriate value of compensation for the loss of open space are set out at paragraph 2.28 of this SG; and
- Policy INF07 "Walking and Cycling" indicates that pedestrian and cycle facilities in new development should offer appropriate links to existing networks in surrounding areas, in particular to facilitate school journeys and provide connections to public transport, as well as links to other amenities and community facilities.

1. Introduction

1.15 Falkirk Open Space Strategy

The Open Space Strategy recognises that the Council area is generally well endowed with open space (approximately 9.6 Ha/1000 people). Accordingly, the general thrust of the strategy is to seek to improve the quality of existing open spaces so that they can be considered to be fit for purpose and to ensure that communities have access to different types of open space within acceptable walking distances.

1.16 The strategy provides a robust basis for guiding investment into open space and is a key document in deciding what kind of open space is appropriate within new developments. It sets a standard of all development having access to 5 hectares per 1000 people of different types of open space.

1.17 The strategy includes an audit of the open space resource providing a snapshot of the quantity and quality of provision. The strategy indicates the priorities for investment in open space, setting out where there is a need to form new open spaces and where there is a need to upgrade the quality of existing open spaces. The strategy was formed through careful analysis of a quantitative audit and qualitative assessment of open spaces together with an analysis of their distribution throughout the Council area and an understanding of the needs and aspirations of the communities for their open spaces.

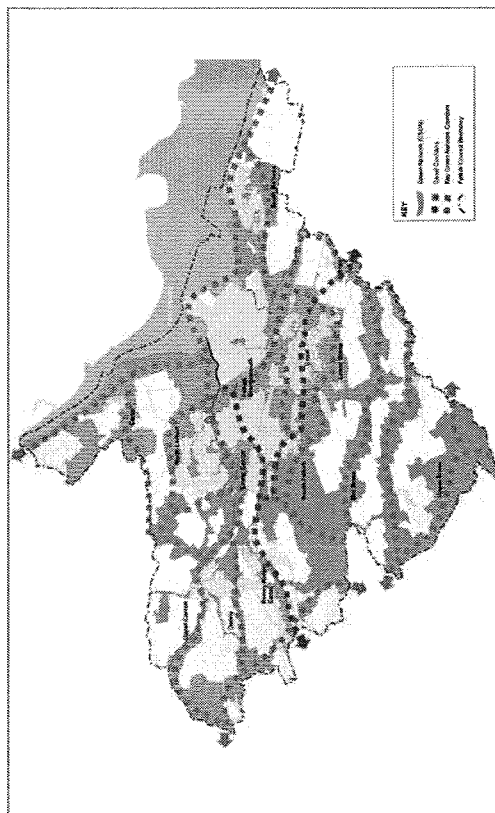
1.18 It is anticipated that the Open Space Strategy will be reviewed and updated in 2015. Dependant on the results of the review, this SG may need to be subsequently updated to reflect its aspirations.

1.19 Falkirk Greenspace

Falkirk's Green Network is known locally as Falkirk Greenspace and is spatially defined in the LDP at Map 3.5. It contains a number of inter-connected corridors and components within which distinct green network opportunities are identified.

1.20 Falkirk Greenspace - A Strategy for Our Green Network was approved by the Council in 2013, its strategic aims are:

- To promote the ongoing landscape-scale transformation across the Falkirk Council area;
- To develop a more co-ordinated approach to the broad range of activities that contribute towards a good quality green network; and
- To steer partnership activity and target investment to best deliver a good quality green network within the Council area.



2. Guidance on Provision of Open Space & Play Facilities

Which developments have to contribute to open space provision?

- 2.1 Residential developments of more than 3 units will be required to provide new open space or contribute financially towards the improvement of existing open space. In all cases, where the development forms part of a larger scheme within which open space provision has been already been assessed and conditioned at the planning permission in principle stage, there will be a requirement to comply with the terms of any agreement or condition.
- 2.2 Non residential development is still likely to be required to provide on site open space. The reason for this requirement is in order to ensure that the sustainable design principles and urban design objectives of the LDP (set out in policies D02 and D03) of the LDP are achieved. It is not considered appropriate to set out minimum requirements for open space provision in non residential development in this SG as this will be determined by the unique nature of each development and the characteristics of the site where development is to take place.

How much open space has to be provided?

- 2.3 The Open Space Strategy has set an aspirational standard of all development having access to 5ha of different types of open space /1000 people.
- 2.4 Following an analysis of existing levels of public open space within settlements and recognition that not all open space is functional open space, it is considered that a reasonable translation of the aspirational standard within the Open Space Strategy would be to require new housing developments to provide functional open space at a rate of 70m²/dwelling. Of this 70m², 30% should be active open space and 70% should be passive open space. A detailed explanation of the rationale for this open space requirement is contained within Appendix 1.

- 2.5 For planning permission in principle applications where the number or exact size of dwellings is not yet known, assumptions will have to be made in order to formulate an appropriate open space requirement. This may involve estimating the number of dwellings to be delivered on-site based on overall site area and an appropriate open space requirement per dwelling. In such circumstances the amount and type of open space to be provided on-site will be set out in a condition together with a requirement for a planning agreement setting out an appropriate 10 year maintenance charge for the on-site open space and/or an appropriate financial contribution per dwelling to off-site open space upgrading.

- 2.6 For all planning applications there will be a different open space requirement for houses and for flats, this is set out in table 1 below:

Table 1 : Residential Open Space Requirement

Type of Dwelling	Active Open Space	Passive Open Space	Total Open Space Requirement
Flat	10.5 m ²	24.5 m ²	35 m ²
House	21 m ²	49 m ²	70 m ²

2. Guidance on Provision of Open Space & Play Facilities

When should open space be provided on-site and when will financial contributions to off-site provision be sought?

2.7

In residential developments of more than 3 houses, open space should be provided on-site except in the following circumstances:

- 1) Generally in residential developments of under 20 houses or under 40 flats except in locations where the Open Space Strategy indicates an under provision of open space;
- 2) There is sufficient open space of different types nearby which are able to serve the development through suitable upgrading. This will involve the identification of the range of open spaces within the vicinity of the development site, an assessment of their quality and an indication of their relative size in relation to the catchment they serve. The following table shows the Council's accessibility standards for different types of open space:

Table 2 : Open Space Type Maximum Walking Distances

Type of Open Space	Maximum Walking Distance
Playspaces, Public Parks and Gardens, Informal Recreation Space	400m
Sports Areas	800m
Natural/Semi Natural Space and Green Corridors	1200m

- 3) It is not practical, reasonable or desirable to provide the open space on-site:

- Where the size of the residential development site cannot physically accommodate the amount of open space required. This may particularly be the case in high density residential developments, such as those in Falkirk Town Centre, due to the density and mix of uses.
- Where site constraints dictate that it is not physically or financially viable, or where it is functionally inappropriate to accommodate all of the required open space on-site.
- Where the open space requirement generated by a development is not big enough to allow an open space above the functional minimum size shown in the table below:

Table 3 : Open Space Type Minimum Functional Size

Open Space Type	Minimum Functional Size
Equipped Playspace	400m ²
Informal Play/ Recreation Space	1000m ²
Sports Area*	600m ² MUGA 8000m ² Full size sports pitch (excluding run off areas and parking/ changing facilities)
Allotments/ Community Garden	500m ²
Parks	2000m ²
Civic Space	No minimum size
Semi Natural Space	25m width
Green Corridor	25m width

* SportsScotland have a range of design guidance on pitch and court markings which includes recommended pitch dimensions for a number of pitch sports. This is available in the facilities section of the SportsScotland website.

- 4) Where provision of open space which would serve the needs of new residents can be made off-site on land in the developer's control.
 - 5) In masterplanned development where a centralised open space facility is planned.
 - 6) There is a green network opportunity nearby which investment from the proposed development would assist in delivering.
- The open space audit has identified all of the open spaces within towns and villages and within 1200m of a settlement boundary, it can be interrogated to identify how far a development site is from each type of open space identified above. This will help to quickly identify where there is a need for open space to be provided on-site and where the site is close enough to an existing facility to provide the opportunity for investment in that facility.

2.8

2. Guidance on Provision of Open Space & Play Facilities

What type of on-site open space facilities should be provided?

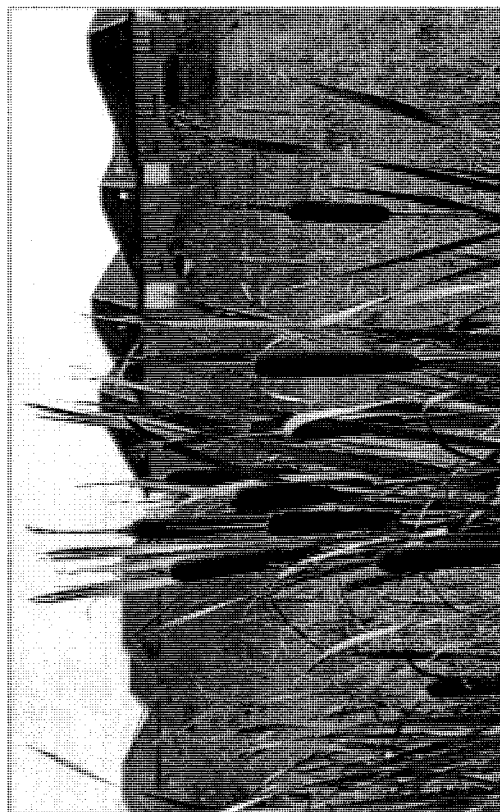
2.9 Functional and Non Functional Open Space

Open space can serve many functions. In addition to meeting the recreational needs of its users, open space can also have a role in climate change mitigation and adaptation, natural disaster risk mitigation, protection against flooding and erosion as well as biodiversity conservation.

2.10 As noted previously at paragraph 2.4, the open space requirement per dwelling relates only to functional open space. To be considered functional, open space provided as part of a new development must either serve the recreational needs of its users or provide a valuable habitat to local biodiversity. Open space which has a role in climate change mitigation and adaptation, natural disaster risk mitigation, or protection against flooding and erosion will not be considered to be functional open space as defined by this Supplementary Guidance unless it also serves the recreational needs of its users or provide a valuable habitat to local biodiversity. In addition it must be appropriately sited, designed (having regard to the minimum functional sizes set out in table 3) and maintained and must also be fit for purpose.

2.11 Not every piece of open ground can contribute towards meeting a development's open space requirement; the following are not considered to be functional and will not be considered to contribute towards meeting a development's open space requirement:

- Above ground SUDS features with low amenity and biodiversity value which are not linked to the surrounding green network;
- Structure planting with low amenity and biodiversity value which is not linked to the surrounding green network;
- Small areas of landscaping; and
- Road verges.



2. Guidance on Provision of Open Space & Play Facilities

2.12 Active and Passive Open Space

Open space has been split into two distinct categories: passive and active open space. New residential development is required to contribute towards both active and passive open space.

2.13 Active open space is that which tends to be used for vigorous physical exercise and includes the following sub-categories:"

- Informal play / recreation space - including multi use games areas, kick about pitches, skate parks, climbing areas;
- Children's equipped play areas - generally equipped for children of primary school age and toddlers;
- Sports Areas - Large and generally flat areas of grassland or specially designed surfaces, used primarily for designated sports i.e. playing fields, golf courses, tennis courts, bowling greens; areas which are generally bookable.



2.14

Passive open space tends to be used for less vigorous activity such as walking, dog walking, picnics; nature appreciation etc. It includes the following sub-categories:

- **Amenity greenspace** - Landscaped areas providing visual amenity or separating different buildings or land uses for environmental, visual or safety reasons e.g. road verges or greenspace in business parks, and used for a variety of informal social activities such as sunbathing or picnics;
- **Other functional greenspaces** - allotments, churchyards and cemeteries;
- **Parks** - Areas of land normally enclosed, designed, constructed, managed and maintained as a public park or garden;
- **Green corridors** - Routes including canals, river corridors and old railway lines, linking different areas within a town or city as part of a designated and managed network and used for walking, cycling or horse riding, or linking towns and cities to their surrounding countryside or country parks. These may link green spaces together;
- **Natural/ semi natural space** - Areas of undeveloped or previously developed land with residual natural habitats or which have been planted or colonised by vegetation and wildlife, including woodland or wetland areas; and
- **Civic space** - Squares, streets and waterfront promenades, predominantly of hard landscaping that provide a focus for pedestrian activity and make connections for people and wildlife, where trees and planting are included.

2.15

There may be instances where certain types of open space display both active and passive qualities e.g. parks and accessible woodlands. Where there is doubt over whether a certain element of open space is to be considered as active or passive open space, this should be discussed and agreed with Council Officers.

2. Guidance on Provision of Open Space & Play Facilities

2.16

Opportunities to link into the green network and the core path network

Wherever possible, developers will be encouraged to put together an open space proposal which maximises opportunities to link the development into the Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN) and the Core Path network. Developers are encouraged to refer to the Open Space Strategy, Core Path Plan and Falkirk Greenspace: A Strategy for our Green Network when developing open space proposals for their site.

2.17

Green network corridors and components are identified in Map 3.5 of the LDP and green network opportunities are identified on the LDP Proposals Map. Methods of linking the development into the CSGN can include the following:

- Providing path links to existing adjacent components of the green network;
- Undertaking habitat enhancement works on site which improve the biodiversity value of the adjacent component of the green network or link different parts of the existing habitat network;
- Introducing robust structure planting which helps to improve the landscape setting of the adjacent component of the green network;
- Introducing functions on site which enhance the recreational value of the adjacent component of the green network;
- Implementing one of the green network opportunities identified in the LDP.

2.18

Evidence has shown that the closer people are to their nearest accessible greenspace, the more likely they are to use it. Evidence has also shown that there is a link between how close people are to their nearest accessible greenspace and relative levels of deprivation. Linking open spaces through the active travel network can help to reduce the distances people have to travel to their nearest accessible greenspace. Linking development sites to the active travel network can also reduce the distance new residents need to walk to access different functions of open space.

2.19

Falkirk Council's Core Paths Plan shows a network of nearly 400km (250 miles) of paths. These are the most important routes identified by land managers, walkers, cyclists, horse riders and local residents. Methods of linking open spaces within new development to the Core Path network can include the following:

- Locating on site open space to be as close as possible to the existing core path network;
- Providing path links between on site open space and the adjacent core path network;
- Carrying out off site access improvements and constructing missing links to ensure that the distance to the core path network is reduced as far as is practical.



2. Guidance on Provision of Open Space & Play Facilities

2.20

Open Space as part of a mixed use scheme

Where a planning application is made for a mixed use scheme there may be some doubt as to whether all of the open space provided as part of the overall application should be considered as counting towards meeting the open space requirement. For example a mixed use scheme with distinct residential and commercial elements may provide substantial amenity open space to provide a landscape setting for the commercial units; however, it is debatable how well this space is likely to be used by occupants of the residential element of the scheme.

2.21

In such cases, planning officers will have to use their professional judgment to decide whether the open space should count towards meeting the development's overall open space requirement. Key issues influencing the final decision will be:

- What function is the open space intended to provide?
- Is the open space close enough to the scheme's residents to encourage its use?
- Is the space appropriately designed to encourage wider public use?

2.22

Non - standard Residential Development

There are a number of circumstances where residential developments are only expected to provide certain categories of open space. These are as follows:

- **Rest homes and nursing homes** - these types of development will only be expected to provide for informal amenity open space as other forms of open space are clearly not reasonably related to such proposals.
- **Single bedroom dwellings and student accommodation** - these types of development will not be expected to provide children's play areas, since it is unlikely that a significant number of children will reside in such dwellings.
- **Houses in multiple occupation** - these types of development will need to be considered individually, taking account of the estimated number of people residing in such properties.

2.23

Planning Application Requirements for Developers

Functional open space of a certain type should only be provided on-site where it can be built to the minimum functional size shown in Table 3. The Council would rather see new development contributing to the improvement in quality of existing open space than the provision of new areas which are not large enough to be fit for purpose. The only exception to this is where there are no equipped playspaces within a safe walking distance of the development, in such a circumstance an equipped playspace could be provided at less than the minimum functional size.

2.24

The combination of open space types provided on-site should be steered by the Open Space Strategy, should respond to local open space needs and should be agreed in consultation with Council officers. The decision will be dictated by:

- The scale, type and needs of the development;
- The provision of open space in the vicinity of the development; and
- The priorities the open space strategy has identified for the area.

2.25

To assist in calculating the area of open space provided by new development planning applications will be required to be accompanied by a plan and schedule of proposed open space provision setting out how much open space of the types outlined above is proposed. Areas should be expressed in square metres. An example of a schedule of proposed open space provision is shown in appendix 2.

2. Guidance on Provision of Open Space & Play Facilities

What level of financial contributions will be required towards improvement of off-site open space?

2.26 Where the entire open space requirement generated by a development is not provided on-site, a commuted sum towards the qualitative improvement of nearby open space, or towards provision of new open space will be required.

Active Open Space: £42/m²
Passive Open Space: £21/m²

2.27 These figures, have been up-rated from those contained within the Public Open Space, Falkirk Greenspace and New Development SPG (which was published in June 2011) using the BIS construction output price (All New Construction) index published for quarter 3 of 2013 and rounded to the nearest pound. These figures include proposed maintenance costs and were calculated based on what is asked for by other local authorities around the UK.

2.28 Where a proposed development involves the loss of existing open space compensation will be sought at a level equivalent to the commuted sum per square metre of the type of open space lost. For example, if a development involved the loss of an 1000m² amenity greenspace then the commuted sum would be equivalent to 1000m² of passive open space i.e. £21,000. The commuted sum compensating for the loss of existing open space is additional to the open space requirement generated by the development itself.

2.29 Where a proposed development involves the loss of a playing field or sports pitch the primary consideration should be whether the commuted sum is enough to ensure that bullet point 3 of policy INF03(2) is met i.e. the replacement or upgraded playingfield is of comparable or greater benefit for sport and in a location convenient for its users. Where this is achievable for a sum less than £42/m², consideration should be given to whether the replacement or upgraded facility meets both the formal sports pitch function and the informal active open space function of the lost playing field or sports pitch before deciding whether to settle for any discounted figure.

2.30 Table 4 below shows the indicative commuted sum payments required in residential developments where no open space is provided on site.

Table 4 : Residential Open Space Commuted Sum Requirement

Type of Dwelling	Active Open Space	Passive Open Space	Total Commuted Sum Per dwelling
Flat	£441	£514.50	£955.50
House	£882	£1029.00	£1911.00

2.31 The value of play equipment proposed for installation on-site will be discounted against the commuted sum payment for active open space. Where no commuted sum is required for active open space, developers will still be expected to provide an appropriate standard of play equipment on-site (see worked example 2 & 4 in section 4).

2.32 Where a developer proposes to provide more active open space on-site than is required for the size of the development, the over provision can be discounted against any passive open space requirement (see worked example 3 in section 4).

2.33 Commuted sum payments will be secured by a Section 75 Agreement or a Section 69 Agreement or by condition. In most situations, the commuted sum payment will be made towards upgrading existing provision. However, in situations where commuted sum payments are to be made for the provision of new open space, appropriate land values at the time of determining the planning application would need to be considered in addition to the figures shown in table 4 above, to allow for the purchase of new land.

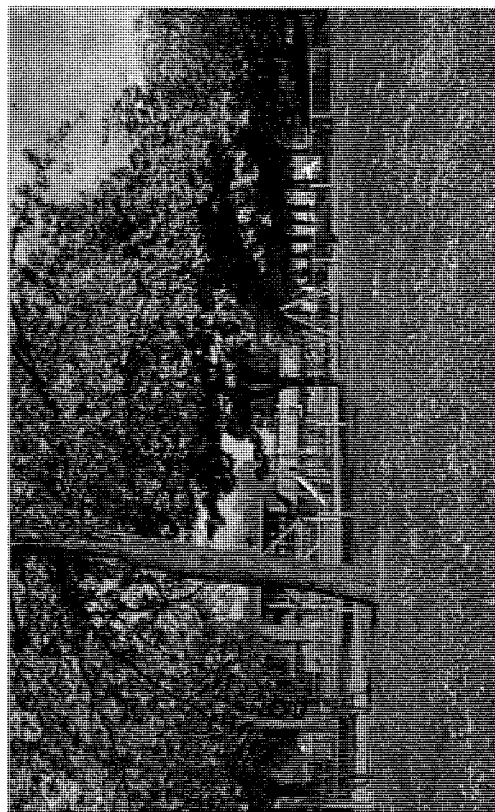
2.34 Where financial contributions towards the creation of new open space or towards the upgrading of existing open space are taken as part of a planning agreement, the Council will endeavour to spend the money for those purposes. Where money collected is unspent after a period of 10 years, the money will be repaid in full to the developer including interest at the lowest bank rate.

2. Guidance on Provision of Open Space & Play Facilities

Where will the financial contribution be invested?

- 2.35** Where an open space improvement project for investment has not been identified at the planning application stage, the Council's planning obligations monitoring group will determine priorities for investment. In general it will be appropriate for this group to decide how to spend open space contributions in line with the Council's strategic aims for improving the open space resource as set out in the Open Space Strategy, Core Paths Plan and Falkirk Greenspace Strategy without the need for further consultation with the public.
- 2.36** The Open Space Strategy and Audit sets out where there are quantitative and qualitative deficiencies in open space for each settlement and sets out the priorities for investment to improve the overall provision of open space. The strategy will be the principal document guiding where financial contributions will be spent.
- 2.37** Active open space contributions can generally be used to provide or improve play and sports facilities but can also be used to provide better path networks which enable opportunities for walking, cycling and running.
- 2.38** Passive open space contributions can generally be used to enhance the design and aesthetic quality of open spaces; improve their biodiversity and nature conservation value as well as upgrading the facilities which enhance the visitor experience of the open space (e.g. improved paths, street furniture, signage, interpretation facilities etc.)
- 2.39** In general, the financial contributions will be put towards improving the quality of open space within the minimum walking distances of the site set out in Table 2. The improvement of existing open space which is not fit for purpose will be prioritised over the improvement of open space which is currently fit for purpose. Investment in more strategic open space provision outside the minimum walking distances set out in table 2 may be appropriate where it complies with the policy tests set out in planning circular 3/2012 in relation to: necessity; planning purpose; relationship to proposed development; scale and kind; and reasonableness.
- 2.40** If there are no appropriate open spaces within the minimum walking distances, then money will either be put towards: the creation of a new open space as close to the site as is practicable; or improving the quality of open space as close to the site as is practicable. Alternatively, where the new development is close to a green network opportunity, investment may be directed towards its implementation.

- 2.41** Where developers have provided financial contributions towards the improvement of off site open space, they are encouraged to inform their potential house purchasers of this community investment.



2. Guidance on Provision of Open Space & Play Facilities

What if the requirement for financial contributions affects the viability of the development?

2.42 With reference to the prevailing economic conditions and circumstances, if it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Council that the benefits of developing a site which is financially marginal, outweighs the requirement for open space provision or contributions, then this will be a material consideration in determining any planning application.

2.43 Checklist for Developers

Step 1: Determine whether your development will be required to contribute towards open space provision using the guidance contained within this document.

Step 2: Determine how much open space will be required and of what type.

Step 3: Put together a proposal for open space provision based on the scale, type and needs of your development. This should involve:

- Analysis of your site to identify opportunities for providing on-site open space;
- Analysis of the Open Space Strategy and the area surrounding your site to identify opportunities for improving nearby existing open space;
- Identification of opportunities to link the development to the existing green network and core path network

Step 4: Approach the Council to discuss your proposal with relevant officers and agree appropriate split between on and off-site open space provision.



3. Public Open Space, Installation, Maintenance and Adoption Procedures

Installation

- 3.1 There are three ways in which developers can achieve the necessary standards in public open space and play areas:
- The developer or a specialist agent designs and installs the new open space and play areas to the satisfaction of the Council;
 - The developer pays an agreed sum to the Council or to a mutually acceptable third party to design and install the new open space and play areas. If a third party is used the location and design of the play area must be to the satisfaction of the Council;
 - The developer pays an agreed sum to the Council to implement improvements to existing public open space and play areas nearby.
- 3.2 Where a developer designs and installs the new open space, a bond will be required from developers to ensure open space is installed satisfactorily. The value of the bond will be set at 100% of the agreed cost of installation. This will be returned when the open space is in place and of a satisfactory standard. If the Council is required to undertake any works to bring the open space up to a satisfactory standard, then the cost of those works will be deducted from the bond before it is returned to the developer.

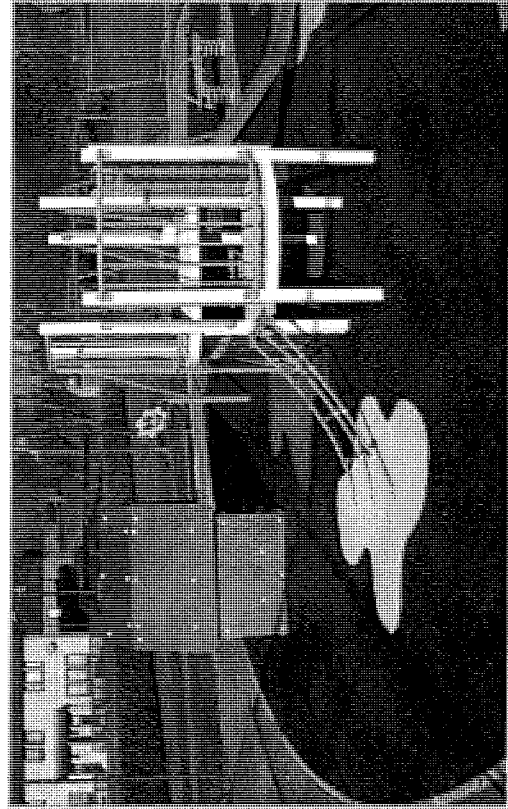
Adoption and Maintenance

- 3.3 The Council will expect the development and ongoing maintenance/upkeep of all open space and play areas within developments to be satisfactorily provided for by, for instance, robust and certain factoring arrangements. The Council, where it is not satisfied with such arrangements, reserves the right, at its discretion, to require that the Council takes over responsibility for such maintenance and upkeep of open space and play areas within developments such adoption of responsibility being subject to:-
- All such open space and play areas having been constructed to the relevant British and/or European standard prior to the Council taking on any maintenance responsibility;
 - Payment of a sum equivalent to ten times the annual maintenance cost of the open space and play area being made to the Council prior to the Council taking on any maintenance responsibility.

- 3.4 In certain circumstances, the Council, at its discretion, may seek transfer of the ownership of such open space and play areas to the Council at no cost to the Council and with payment to the Council of a sum equivalent to ten times the annual maintenance cost of the open space and play area concerned. The developer should come to an agreement with Council Officers as to the annual maintenance cost of the open space to be maintained or adopted by the Council.
- 3.5 For residential developments with on-site open space provision which remains with the developer or managing agency, applicants will be expected to enter into a Section 75 Agreement ensuring that the open space is maintained for the lifetime of the development to guarantee that any open space provided becomes established and is not neglected.
- 3.6 For employment, retail or leisure uses with open space provision it is expected that maintenance will remain with the freeholder to arrange maintenance of the open space. As these will not normally transfer to Falkirk Council, a commuted payment would not be required. Applicants will be expected to enter into a Section 75 Agreement ensuring that the open space is maintained for the lifetime of the development to guarantee that any open space provided does not become neglected.
- 3.7 It is crucial that high quality levels can be sustained in new open space, this has bearing on both the plants and materials selected. This means designing to reduce the maintenance burden and allowing for ongoing costs (e.g. use of wildflower meadows within parks which do not require intensive grass cutting). It also presupposes that management regimes are set up to take on future maintenance responsibilities which can take the form of a development trust or a management company.

4. Worked Examples

- 4.1 Five hypothetical developments of differing scales have been worked through to illustrate the variety of ways the guidance will work and how the type of open space a development should provide is determined by:
- The scale, type and needs of the development;
 - The provision of open space in the vicinity of the development; and
 - The priorities the open space strategy has identified for the area.
- 4.2 The first, second and fifth worked examples relate to detailed applications for residential development. The third example relates to a residential planning permission in principle application. The fourth example relates to a detailed application for a mixed use development comprising, retail, business, leisure and housing. Both the first and fifth examples relate to developments on existing open space which has been deemed surplus to recreational requirements."



Finalised SG13 Open Space and New Development



4. Worked Examples

Worked Example 1

4.3 A block of 20 flats is proposed to be built in the middle of Falkirk on a 0.2ha area of underused amenity open space.

Step 1: Determine if the development will have to contribute towards open space provision.

All residential developments have to contribute towards open space provision. In addition where open space is lost as a consequence of development, compensation will be sought to make qualitative improvements to other open space in the local area.

Step 2: Determine how much open space will be required and of what type.

$$\text{Active Open Space: } 20 \times 10.5\text{m}^2 = 210\text{m}^2$$

$$\text{Passive Open Space: } 20 \times 24.5\text{m}^2 = 490\text{m}^2$$

Step 3: Put together a proposal for open space provision based on the scale, type and needs of your development.

Q. Should contributions be on-site or off-site?

A. At 20 flats, the development falls below the 20 housing unit equivalents threshold and contributions should be directed towards improvement of off site open space. The development is in the middle of Falkirk and is built at a high density, the developer has indicated that it is not financially viable to provide the entirety of the required open space contribution on-site. The nearest children's equipped play area is over 500m from the site which is over the 400m threshold but as there would be no safety concerns from children walking from the site to that play area and the likelihood of large numbers of children living in the new flats is relatively low, it is not considered appropriate to ask for any on-site open space. The entirety of the open space contribution will be required to be paid as a commuted sum towards off-site improvements.

Q. What level of financial contribution will be required?

$$\text{A. Active Open Space: } £42\text{m}^2 \times 210 = £8,820$$

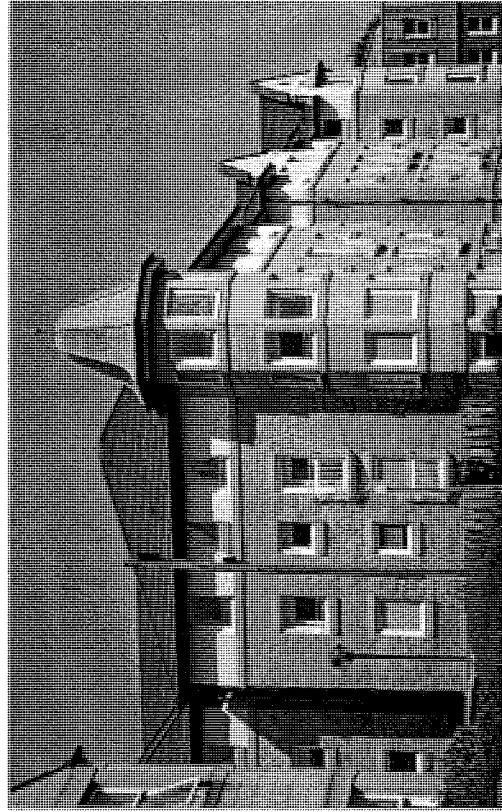
$$\text{Passive Open Space: } £21\text{m}^2 \times 490 = £10,290$$

$$\text{Compensation for loss of Open Space: } £21\text{m}^2 \times 2000 = £42,000$$

$$\text{Total Open Space Contribution: } = £61,110$$

Q. Where will the financial contribution be spent?

A. Investment should be directed towards the upgrading of the nearest active and passive open spaces which the Open Space Strategy has identified as having a qualitative deficiency. The active open space payment is relatively small and it would be hard to make meaningful improvements to a nearby play area or sports area with this money alone. The money will therefore be held by the council and added to the pot of money being collected to upgrade the sports pitches 700m from the site. The quality of civic space in Falkirk Town Centre has been highlighted by the Open Space Audit as being in need of investment, the passive open space contribution will therefore be put added to the funds being put together to upgrade civic space.



4. Worked Examples

Worked Example 3

4.5 A Planning Permission in Principle application is submitted for a greenfield residential development of approximately 200 houses and a 70 bed nursing home to the east of Bonnybridge. The site is bounded to the north by the Bonny Water, to the south by the Forth and Clyde Canal and is near to a Local Park.

Step 1: Determine if the development will have to contribute towards open space provision.

All residential developments have to contribute towards open space provision.

Step 2: Determine how much open space will be required and of what type. As this is a PPP application with no indication of the on site split between houses and flats assumptions will need to be made to calculate the necessary open space requirement. In discussion with the applicant it has been assumed that 75% of the dwellings will be houses and 25% of the housing will be flats. The nursing home is only required to provide passive open space, it seems reasonable that the nursing home should provide 49m² of passive open space per 5 beds.

Active Open Space:	50 x 10.5m ²	=	525m ²
	+ 150 x 21m ²	=	3,150m ²
		=	3,675m²
Passive Open Space:	50 x 24.5m ²	=	1,225m ²
	+ 150 x 49m ²	=	7,350m ²
	+ (70÷5) x 49m ²	=	<u>686m²</u>
		=	9,261m²

Step 3: Put together a proposal for open space provision based on the scale, type and needs of your development.

Q. Should contributions be on-site or off-site?

A. The developer is particularly keen to provide substantial areas of sports pitches (10,000m²) as part of his development, however the Open Space Strategy has also identified opportunities: for upgrading the green corridor along the Forth and Clyde Canal; upgrading the green corridor along the Bonny Water which is identified in the Local Plan as an environmental enhancement opportunity; and upgrading the nearby Local Park. On-site and off-site contributions seem the most appropriate way forward in this respect.

Q. What level of financial contribution will be required?

A. The application proposes to provide 10,000m² of playing fields. This is over and above the active open space requirement. Given that playing fields also have a passive function it seems reasonable in this circumstance to discount over provision of active open space against the passive open space requirement. The development also proposes 2500m² of amenity open space.

Active Open Space Contribution:	£42m ² x 3675m ²	=	£154,350
	- £42m ² x 10000m ²	=	£420,000
		=	£0
Residual Active Open Space:	10000m ² - 3675m ²	=	6325m ²
Passive Open Space Contribution:	£21m ² x 9261m ²	=	£194,481
	- £21m ² x 2500m ²	=	£52,500
Residual Active:	- £21m ² x 6325m ²	=	<u>£132,825</u>
		=	£9,156

The on-site open space has been passed to the Council for adoption and maintenance. There is a requirement therefore for a commuted sum to be paid towards the maintenance of the open space. The annual maintenance costs of the sports areas and amenity open space has been agreed between the applicant and the Council at £11,500.

10 year Maintenance Cost:	£11,500 x 10	=	£115,000
Total Open Space Contribution:		=	£124,156

Q. Where will the financial contribution be spent?

A. Financial contributions are in lieu of a passive open space contribution therefore it would not be appropriate to put money towards the upgrading of sporting or play facilities at the nearby local park. A £9,156 contribution will go towards implementing green network opportunity GN12 for habitat enhancement along the Rowan Tree Burn.

4. Worked Examples

Worked Example 4

4.6 A mixed use development on a 12 hectare site of retail, business and leisure use, and 150 houses is planned on a brownfield site in the urban fringe near a recreation ground.

Step 1: Determine if the development will have to contribute towards open space provision.

All residential developments have to contribute towards open space provision.

Step 2: Determine how much open space will be required and of what type.

Residential (Active Open Space): $150 \times 21\text{m}^2 = 3150\text{m}^2$

Residential (Passive Open Space): $150 \times 49\text{m}^2 = 7350\text{m}^2$

Step 3: Put together a proposal for open space provision based on the scale, type and needs of your development.

Q. Should contributions be on-site or off-site?

A. The site is utilising an old brownfield site, there are substantial areas where ground conditions dictate that development on that part of the site would be inappropriate. The Open Space Strategy has identified that the development sits in an area which has a lack of provision of public parks and play spaces within an acceptable walking distance. The Open Space Strategy also reveals that the site is within 800m of a sports area and 1200m of a community woodland, both of which are in need of qualitative improvement.

Given the proposed scale of the residential use on-site, the fact that there is limited local provision of open space and there are areas of the site which would lend themselves to being used as open space, provision of on-site open space is appropriate. As there is a sports area and a community woodland within acceptable walking distance of the site, both of which are in need of qualitative improvement, a financial contribution towards their improvement would be more appropriate than on-site provision of sports areas or natural/semi natural open space.

The development is large enough to be able to provide a new 4000m² public park with a 1000m² active play area and a 1000m² community garden to serve the needs of future residents. £80,000 of play equipment is proposed to be provided on-site. To improve the attractiveness of the setting for the business, retail and leisure uses 4000m² of amenity open space is planned within that part of the site. However this amenity space is located approximately 10 minutes walk from the nearest residential unit within the scheme so it is not considered to contribute towards meeting the site's overall open space requirement.

Q. What level of financial contribution will be required?

A.

Active Open Space Contribution:	$£42\text{m}^2 \times 3150\text{m}^2$	=	£132,300
	$£42\text{m}^2 \times 1000\text{m}^2$	=	£42,000
	=	=	£90,300
Installed Play Equipment Discount	-	=	£80,000
	=	=	£10,300

Passive Open Space Contribution:	$£21\text{m}^2 \times 7350\text{m}^2$	=	£154,350
	$£21\text{m}^2 \times 3000\text{m}^2$	=	£63,000
	=	=	£91,350

The public park, active play area and community garden have been passed to the Council for adoption and maintenance. There is a requirement therefore for a commuted sum to be paid towards the maintenance of those areas of active open space. The developer and the Council have agreed that the annual maintenance cost of the open space to be passed to the Council is £10,000.

10 year Maintenance Cost:	$£10,000 \times 10$	=	£100,000
Combined Total Open Space Contribution:		=	£191,350

The ownership of the amenity open space planned to serve the business retail and leisure uses will remain with the freeholder. Applicants will be expected to enter into a Section 75 Agreement ensuring that the open space is maintained for the lifetime of the development to guarantee that any open space provided does not become neglected.

Q. Where will the financial contribution be spent?

A. Investment should be directed towards the upgrading of nearby open spaces which are in need of qualitative improvement. The £10,300 active open space contribution will therefore be put towards planned upgrading at the nearby sports area and the £91,350 passive open space contribution will be spent on managing and extending the nearby community woodland.

4. Worked Examples

Worked Example 5

4.7 A housing development of 8 houses and 16 flats is proposed on 5000m² of a wider 7500m² amenity open space in Falkirk which has been deemed to be surplus to recreational requirements.

Step 1: Determine if the development will have to contribute towards open space provision.

All residential developments are required to contribute towards open space. In addition where open space is lost as a consequence of development compensation will be sought to make qualitative improvements to other parts of the green network in the local area.

Step 2: Determine how much open space will be required and of what type.

Active Open Space:	16 x 10.5m ²	=	168m ²
+	8 x 21m ²	=	168m ²
		=	336m ²
Passive Open Space:	16 x 24.5m ²	=	392m ²
+	8 x 49m ²	=	392m ²
		=	784m ²

Step 3: Put together a proposal for open space provision based on the scale, type and needs of your development.

Q. Should contributions be on-site or off-site?

A. The development site is within 400m of a park and playspace and within 1200m of a semi natural open space. The development site is further than 800m from a sports area but the active open space requirement is not big enough to warrant on site provision of such a facility. The Open Space Audit indicates that the open spaces in the vicinity of the site are not all fit for purpose and could benefit from investment. Off site contributions are most appropriate in these circumstances.

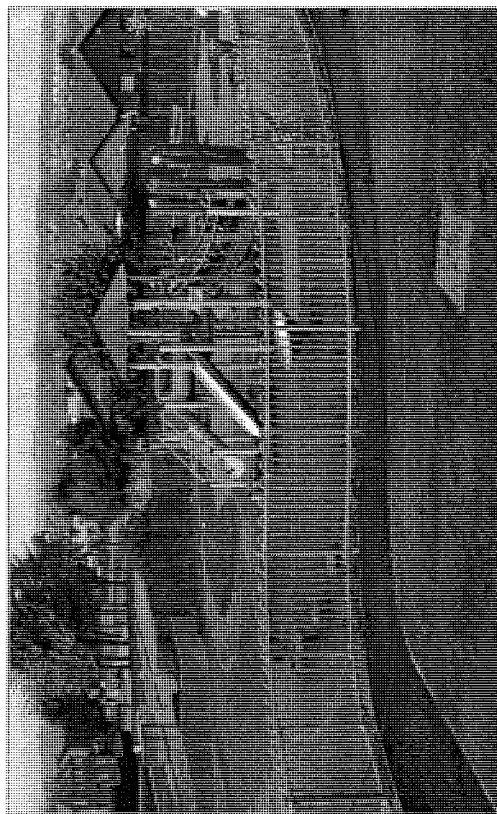
Q. What level of financial contribution will be required?

A.	Active Open Space Contribution:	£42m ² x 336m ²	=	£14,112
	Passive Open Space Contribution:	£21m ² x 784m ²	=	£16,464
	Compensation for loss of amenity open space:	£21m ² x 5000m ²	=	£105,000

Total Open Space Contribution: = **£135,576**

Q. Where will the financial contribution be spent?

A. The residual area of amenity open space following development of housing can be improved following development. £50,000 will be invested there. The development site lies close to the Forth and Clyde Canal towpath which is in need of investment, £25,000 will be directed towards this project. The site is adjacent to a large semi natural open space which is in need of intensive woodland management and path improvement, the remaining £60,576 will be invested here.



5: Appendix 1 : Calculating the Open Space Requirement

5.1

The 2007 open space quantitative audit measured the amount of public open space within urban or village limits (as defined in the Local Plan). It identified that there was, on average: 9.88 hectares of open space; and 7.93 hectares of publicly usable open space per 1000 people across the towns and villages of the Falkirk Council area.

	Within Urban Limits	Within 500m of Village Limits	Within 1200m of village limits
Open Space	9.88 ha	27.28 ha	38.33 ha
Publicly Usable Open Space	7.93 ha	23.52 ha	33.89 ha

The 2010 Open Space Strategy set an aspirational standard of all development having access to 5ha of different types of open space /1000 people.

Falkirk Council considered options on how to translate this aspirational standard into an open space requirement for new residential development.

The quantitative audit of open space revealed the respective proportions of public open space that existed within settlement boundaries as follows:

Table 1 : Breakdown of overall public open space by open space type

Open Space Type	Proportion of Overall Public Open Space
Public Parks and Gardens	30%
Amenity Greenspace	36%
Sports Areas	5%
Natural/Seminatural	27%
Other Open Space	2%

A detailed breakdown is shown in the spreadsheet overleaf.

If this is applied to the 5ha standard set out in the open space strategy then this would deliver the following open space standards:

Table 2 : Amount of Open Space/1000 people by Open Space Type

Open Space Type	Amount of Open Space/ 1000 people	Functional Open Space	Active Open Space	Passive Open Space
Public Parks and Gardens	1.5 ha	1.5 ha	0.5 ha	1.0 ha
Amenity Greenspace	1.8 ha	0.6 ha	0.2 ha	0.4 ha
Sports Areas	0.25 ha	0.25 ha	0.25 ha	0 ha
Natural/Semi Natural	1.35 ha	0.45 ha	0 ha	0.45 ha
Other Open Space	0.1 ha	0.33 ha	0 ha	0.33 ha
Total	5 ha	3.13 ha	0.95 ha	2.18 ha

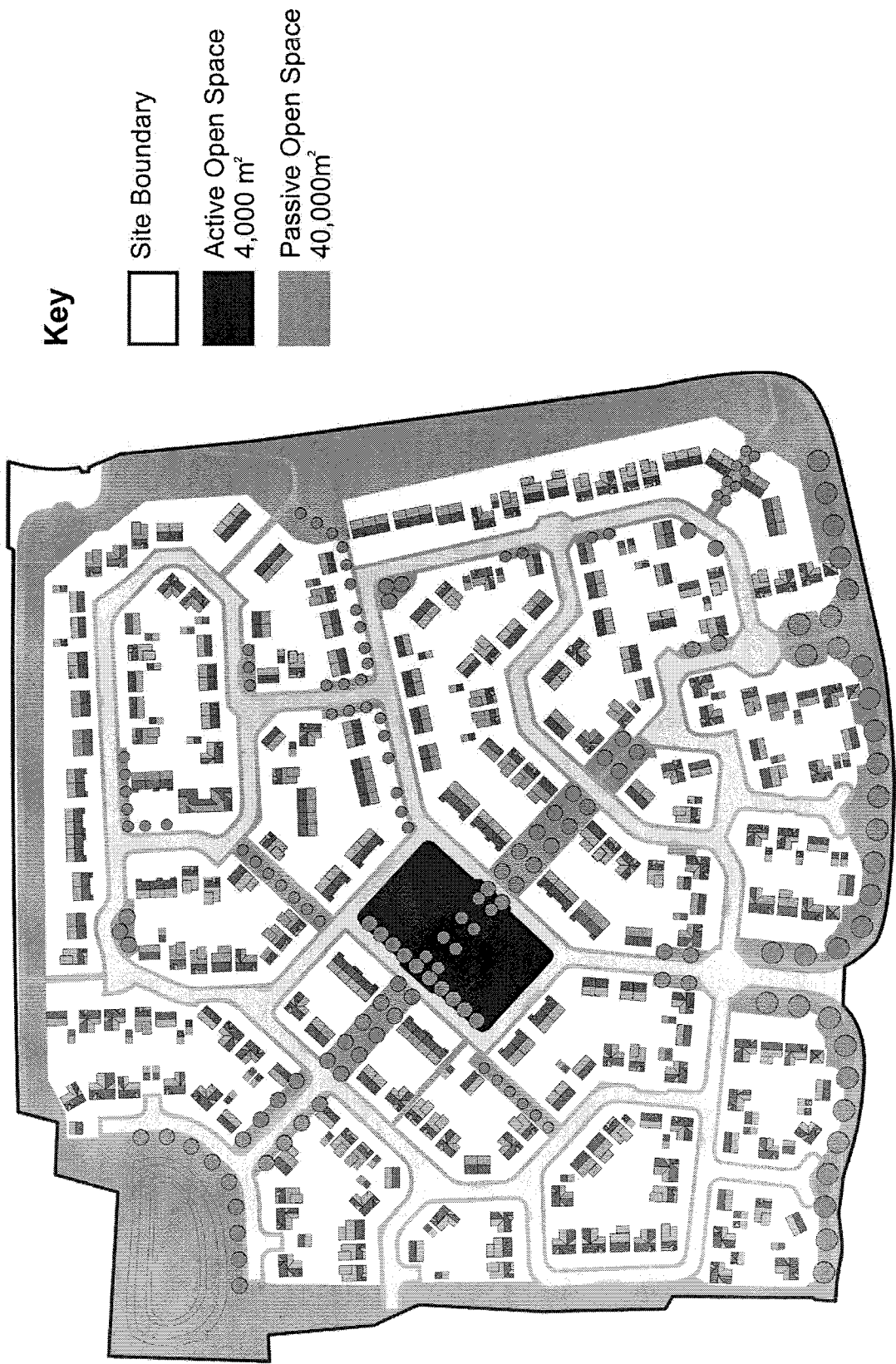
Not every piece of open ground is functional open space. The open space audit does not distinguish between functional and non functional open space. It seemed reasonable therefore to make some allowance for areas of non functional open space in the overall 5ha standard. For the purpose of this exercise it has been assumed that the entirety of public parks and gardens and sports areas are functional but only one third of Amenity Greenspace, Natural/Semi Natural Open Space and Other Open Space is likely to be functional. This would leave an overall requirement for 3.13ha of open space per 1000 people. The 2011 Census revealed that Falkirk Council had an average household size of 2.24 people per house. Based on an assumption that each dwelling will accommodate on average 2.24 people this equates to 70.11m² per dwelling. It seems reasonable therefore to require that new housing development provide open space at a rate of 70m² per dwelling. If this were applied to a 1ha housing site of 25 units the open space requirement would equate to 0.175ha (1750m²) or 17.5% of the total site area.

It should be noted that the type specific standards above do not allow an analysis to be made of how many areas within Public Parks and Gardens or Amenity Greenspace are playspaces or kick about areas (active open space). To allow for this it has been assumed that approximately one third of public parks and gardens and amenity greenspaces are suitable for active purposes. This suggests that overall approximately 70% of open space is passive and 30% is active.

5: Appendix 1 : Calculating the Open Space Requirement

Open Space Type	Bonnybridge and Banknock										Total	Hectares Per 1000 People	Sha Standard	%age of total
	Bonnybridge and Banknock	Bo'ness	Denny	Falkirk	Grangemouth	Larbert & Stenhousemuir	Polmont	Villages	Towns					
6.1 Public Parks and Gardens	7.98	99.79	22.08	117.87	52.07	48.10	66.15	9.24	414.04	423.28	2.86	1.49	29.71%	
6.2 Private Gardens/Grounds	132.06	146.29	143.32	354.21	141.95	264.23	262.01	137.17	1444.07	1581.24	10.69	N/A		
6.3 Amenity Greenspace	28.84	38.98	35.59	129.89	150.94	60.57	56.57	13.22	501.37	514.59	3.48	1.81	36.12%	
6.4 Playspace for Children and Teenagers	0.45	0.30	0.52	0.30	0.41	0.25	0.17	0.11	2.40	2.51	0.02	0.01	0.18%	
6.5 Sports Areas	1.14	2.52	6.34	5.63	8.29	43.41	5.34	1.17	72.68	73.84	0.50	0.26	5.18%	
6.6 Green Corridors	1.31	0.00	2.20	9.82	0.88	0.04	1.33	0.03	15.57	15.60	0.11	0.05	1.10%	
6.7 Natural/ Semi Natural Greenspace	13.13	42.64	46.07	61.16	99.89	32.90	64.20	8.79	359.99	368.78	2.49	1.29	25.89%	
6.8 Other Functional Greenspace	0.57	6.03	4.75	1.92	1.37	5.90	1.20	2.46	21.74	24.20	0.16	0.08	1.70%	
6.9 Civic Space	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.32	0.35	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.67	1.67	0.01	0.01	0.12%	

5: Appendix 2 : Schedule of Proposed Open Space Provision

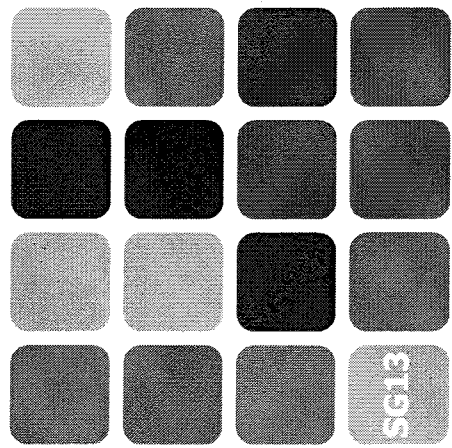


Finalised SG13 Open Space and New Development



Finalised Supplementary Guidance SG13

August 2014



Falkirk Council
Development Services

Falkirk Local Development Plan

Supplementary Guidance
SG13 – Open Space and New Development

Environmental Report
March 2014

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NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

SG13 - Open Space and New Development Supplementary Guidance (SG)

The SG provides the Council's guidance on the provision of open space in conjunction with new development. Specifically it advises on:

- The overall standards for provision of open space within new development
- How the requirements for open space for new development will be calculated.
- What types of open space should be provided
- Whether the open space should be provided on-site or a financial contribution towards off-site provision will be sought.
- How financial contributions towards open space will be calculated.
- The process for the delivery and subsequent maintenance of new open space.

The guidance is intended to be used in tandem with the Council's open space audit and Open Space Strategy, which will be used to identify whether on-site or off-site open space provision is more appropriate and the areas in which financial contributions towards off-site provision will be invested.

Falkirk Council Area

The Falkirk Council area extends to some 300 sq. km. and is located in the middle of Scotland's Central Belt. Despite its relatively small geographical extent, the area exhibits a considerable variety of landforms and habitats. This is in turn influenced by the its underlying geology, comprising mainly sedimentary rocks from the Carboniferous period, and the effects of glaciation, which deposited a range of drift materials and a characteristic landscape of mounds, ridges, terraces and raised beaches.

The northern part is characterised by the relatively flat and fertile carseland adjoining the Forth Estuary, supporting arable farming and some improved pasture. The adjacent estuarine mudflats and salt marsh form part of the Firth of Forth SPA, which is of international importance for wintering birds. To the east a rolling landscape of good quality agricultural land is bisected by the scenic Avon Valley. The centre of the area, which is dominated by the river valleys of the Carron and the Bonny Water, is the most urbanised, and is traversed by the Forth and Clyde and Union Canals. To the south and west, the land rises up to the more remote and less populous Slamannan Plateau and the Denny and Kilsyth Hills where rough grazing predominates with some commercial forestry.

The population of c.156,000 is focused within a network of small to medium sized towns. The principal town of Falkirk, with a population of around 38,000, is centrally located and serves as the main shopping, service and employment centre for the area. Separated from Falkirk by a narrow Green Belt are the

urban areas of Larbert/Stenhousemuir, Polmont and Grangemouth. The former two are largely residential in character, whilst Grangemouth is home to the largest petrochemical complex in Scotland. In the western reaches of the area lie the settlements of Denny/Dunipace, Bonnybridge and Banknock, whilst to the east, overlooking the Forth, sits the town of Bo'ness. Some 18 smaller village communities are scattered across the rural part of the area.

Consultation Process

In accordance with Section 15 (3) of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act, Falkirk Council have agreed an 6 week Statutory Consultation period for Statutory responses (Scottish Ministers/ Historic Scotland (HS)/ The Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) and Scottish Natural Heritage). The public consultation period will also run for a period of 6 weeks from 7th March 2014 until 18th April 2014.

Purpose of Environmental Report

A Strategic Environmental Assessment is required under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 to assess the likely significance of the Open Space and New Development SG on the environment. The assessment indicates the environmental benefits and potential environmental impacts of implementing the SG.

The SEA informs the SG as part of an iterative process to ensure that environment is considered within all tiers of the SG. This approach ensures that environmental issues are identified and resolved at a Strategic Level.

State of the Environment

Baseline environmental information for the Falkirk Council area is provided Section 4 of the Environmental Report. This SG has been prepared with a full understanding of its potential effects on the environment. The environmental baseline provides a benchmark for the current environmental 'capacity' of the plan area and will inform monitoring and individual developer proposals for the area.

Likely Significant Environmental Effects of SG and Proposed Mitigation

The implementation of the SG has the potential to have significant positive environmental effects on biodiversity, population and human health, material assets and landscape through:

- Increasing the amount of open space of value to biodiversity;
- Increasing the biodiversity value of existing open space;
- Expanding and linking up habitat networks;
- Increasing recreational opportunity;
- Increasing the health and wellbeing value of new open spaces;
- Improving accessibility to fit for purpose open space of different types;

- Increasing the proportion of open spaces connected to the core path network;
- Improving townscape quality;
- Increasing the amount of open space;
- Increasing the fitness for purpose of existing open space; and
- Increasing the fitness for purpose of new open spaces.

The assessment of environmental effects of the SPG is presented in full in Section 7 of the Environmental Report.

Alternatives Considered

It is a statutory requirement of an SEA to consider alternatives to achieve the desired outcomes of the SG. The scope for considering alternatives within the SG is rather narrow as the most significant environmental choices have already been made by the Falkirk Local Development Plan and the Falkirk Open Space Strategy, both of which have undergone separate SEA procedures. The main alternatives considered were: different methods of applying the quantitative open space standards to new development; different approaches to the ownership and maintenance of open space coming forwards as part of new development; and different ways of deciding where to spend financial contributions towards the improvement of open space provided in lieu of on site open space provision. Assessment of alternatives is detailed in Section 9 of the Environmental Report.

Monitoring

Following adoption of the SG, the effects on the environment will need to be monitored. This will ensure that any unforeseen negative environmental impacts are identified and appropriate action taken. Falkirk Council will determine a suitable monitoring framework with specific indicators in liaison with the statutory consultees. Section 10 of Environmental Report sets out the proposed monitoring framework.

Next Steps

Responses received to the Environmental Report will be analysed alongside consultation responses to the consultative draft SG. If necessary changes will be made to the SG before a finalised version is presented to committee for approval and then submitted to Scottish Ministers for adoption as statutory Supplementary Guidance. Once adoption has taken place a SEA Post Adoption Statement will be issued and environmental monitoring will be agreed and implemented.

1.0 SG13 - OPEN SPACE AND NEW DEVELOPMENT - SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE (SG)

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This document has been produced to provide guidance to planners and developers on the Council's requirements for the provision of open space in new development; it is intended to provide advice on:

- The overall standards for provision of open space within new development;
- How the requirements for open space for new development will be calculated;
- What types of open space should be provided;
- Whether the open space should be provided on-site or a financial contribution towards off-site provision will be sought;
- How financial contributions towards open space will be calculated; and
- The process for the delivery and subsequent maintenance of new open space.

Key Facts

Name of Responsible Authority	Falkirk Council
Reason for PPS	The preparation of the SG is a requirement of the Falkirk Local Development Plan and supported by Scottish Planning Policy
Plan Subject	Land Use Planning/Supplementary Planning Guidance
Period Covered by Plan	The SG will cover a five year period from adoption of the LDP in early 2015
Frequency of Updates	Updates will be needed at least every 5 years to coincide with LDP preparation and may be needed more often dependent on the timing of reviews of the Open Space Strategy
Plan Area	The Falkirk Council Administrative Area
Plan Purpose	To provide guidance to planners and developers on the Council's requirements for the provision of open space in new development
Key Contact	Danny Thallon Planning Officer Falkirk Council Development Services Abbotsford House, David's Loan, Falkirk. FK2 7YZ Tel:01324 504927 Email: danny.thallon@falkirk.gov.uk

Table 1: Key Facts

2.0 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 A Strategic Environmental Assessment is required under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 to assess the likely significance of environmental effects of the SPG.

2.1.2 The Environmental Report follows the guidance from the Scottish Government on undertaking SEA:

- Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005
- Scottish Executive SEA Toolkit, September 2006
- SEA Guidance, August 2013

2.1.3 The SEA Environmental Report has been produced by Falkirk Council.

2.2 SEA Stages

2.2.1 There are a number of stages of SEA as shown in Table 2 below:

SEA Stage	SEA Process	Progress
Screening	Screening report submitted to the SEA Gateway. Determination of the requirement of SEA by Responsible Authority.	Screening report submitted to SEA Gateway on 22 May 2013
Determination	Determination is made by the Responsible Authority as to the likelihood of significant environmental effects occurring	Determination made, and submitted to the SEA Gateway on 31 July 2013, determination advertised on Council website on 15 August 2013 and in Falkirk Herald on 22 August 2013
Scoping	Identification of the environmental issues to be addressed, the scope and the level of detail required for presentation within the scoping report.	Scoping Request submitted to the SEA Gateway on 31 July 2013
Scoping Consultation	The Consultation Authorities (CA's) advise on the scope of the Environmental Report. At this stage the timescale for	Responses to Scoping Request received from Consultation

	consultation on the Environmental Report following receipt of consultation responses is determined.	Authorities via SEA Gateway on 2nd September 2013. Responses to comments received during the scoping stage are outlined at appendix 1 of this report.
Environmental Report	The consultative draft SG is assessed against the SEA Objectives and Indicators. Assessment of alternatives to the consultative draft SPG are also assessed. Requirements for mitigation and monitoring are reported.	This report
Environmental Report Consultation	The Consultation Authorities will provide a response on the Environmental Report via the SEA Gateway within 6 weeks of receipt. The CA's will advise on the content of the Environmental Report and the acceptability of the SPG. This consultation includes public consultation.	To Follow
Adoption	The SPG and the Environmental Report will be finalised taking into account the consultation responses. Once finalised, the Development Framework will be formally adopted.	To Follow
Post-Adoption SEA Statement	The SEA Statement summarises the assessment of the SPG and how the consultation responses have been taken into account.	To Follow
Mitigation and Monitoring	Following adoption, Falkirk Council will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the SPG.	To Follow

Table 2: SEA Stages and Progress

3.0 RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER PLANS, PROGRAMMES AND STRATEGIES

3.1 National PPS

3.1.1 The Open Space and New Development SG is informed broadly by national planning policy on open space contained within the SPP at paragraphs 154 and 155.

3.1.2 National Planning Framework 2 identifies the Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN) as a National Development. The SG will provide an important tool in ensuring that new open space coming forward as part of new development links in with the CSGN wherever possible or contributes towards the enhancement of the CSGN where appropriate.

3.1.3 The Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN) aims to change the face of Central Scotland, by restoring and transforming the landscape of an area stretching from Ayrshire and Inverclyde in the west, to Fife and the Lothians in the east. This SG will help to integrate Falkirk's new and existing urban open space into the CSGN.

3.2 Local PPS

3.2.1 The SG is informed by the Falkirk Local Development Plan and provides further detail about the implementation of Policy INF04 Open Space and New Residential Development and policy INF03 Protection of Open Space and, as statutory supplementary guidance, will form part of the Development Plan as defined by the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006.

3.2.2 The SG is informed by The Falkirk Open Space Strategy which sets a number of council wide standards in relation to the quantity, quality and distribution of open space.

3.2.3 This SG is also informed by the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, Falkirk Greenspace: A Strategy for our Green Network and the Core Path Plan

3.2.4 Falkirk Council's Single Outcome Agreement sets a 20-year vision for the Council area. Part of this vision is that: "We will be healthier and live longer". This SG can help contribute towards meeting this vision.

3.2.5 Falkirk's Core Path Plan and the Local Transport Strategy (providing adequate walking and cycling links to open spaces and key facilities will help achieve the aims of the CSGN, Falkirk's SOA and this supplementary guidance).

3.2.6 The SG will replace the Public Open Space, Falkirk Greenspace and New Development Supplementary Planning Guidance which was adopted by the Council in June 2011 and currently forms a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

3.2.7 The SG will be used to inform future Development Frameworks, Masterplans and Planning Briefs produced by the Council.

3.2.8 Section 6 of this report seeks to discuss in greater detail those environmental protection objectives established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the preparation of the Supplementary Guidance.

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE

4.1 Legislative Requirement

4.1.1 Schedules 3 (2) and (3) of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 requires that the Environmental Report includes a description of the current state of the and the environmental characteristics likely to be significantly affected by the Plan, Programme or Strategy. Detailed environmental baseline in relation to the SG is provided according to SEA topic below and is supported by graphics where required.

4.2 Biodiversity – Flora & Fauna

Current State of the Environment

Habitats

4.2.1 The Falkirk Council area has a rich diversity of habitats considering the relatively small land area. Habitats include: rivers and streams, ponds, lochs, canals and other wetlands; estuarine habitats; woodlands; farmland; grassland and meadows; heaths and upland areas; rocky outcrops, quarries and spoil heaps; peat bogs; brownfield sites and urban greenspace.

4.2.2 The most extensive habitats within Falkirk Council area are improved grasslands, arable and horticultural land, built up areas and gardens. This reflects the area's intensive human occupation. Despite this, Falkirk still supports 24 of the 65 UK BAP priority habitats.

4.2.3 Habitats that have a disproportionately high representation within the area are: neutral grasslands, lowland dry acidic grassland, lowland raised and intermediate bog, mudflats, upland oakwoods, upland mixed ash woods, wet woodlands, saltmarsh, canals, and open mosaic habitat on previously developed land (brownfield sites).

4.2.4 Falkirk Council has recently updated its phase 1 habitat survey of the entire Council area. This provides up to date information about the relative extent of different habitat types and an indication of recent changes to habitat cover.

4.2.5 The priority habitat types most likely to be significantly affected by the SG are Urban Greenspace; Urban Wildlife Corridors; and Open mosaic habitat on previously developed ground (including bings); Broad-leaved & mixed woodland; and Lowland wood pastures & parkland.

Habitat Networks

4.2.6 For this area Integrated Habitat Networks have been identified for woodland, wetland, and grassland habitats. A more detailed analysis of integrated habitats in the Council area is contained within the "Falkirk

Integrated Habitat Networks” report June 2008. Table 1 below shows the 500m dispersal distance habitat networks which exist within the Falkirk Council area:

Network type	Number of networks identified	Total area of networks (hectares)	Percentage of less favoured habitat in network
Woodland generalist	2097	17460	34.8%
Broadleaved specialists	1928	6701	53.3%
Ancient broadleaved specialists	395	2961	61.6%
Wetland	2648	3434	31.1%
Grassland generalist	90	1407	28.8%
Lowland acid grassland specialist	57	1252	49.9%
Lowland grassland specialist	13	101	34.9%
Raised bogs	56	1122	17.7%

Table 1: Landscape Metrics for 500m dispersal distance habitat networks within the Falkirk Council area.

4.2.7 With appropriate habitat creation and management there is scope to increase the connectivity of these habitat networks. This would result in a reduction in the overall number of discrete networks and an increase in the average network size and ideally a decrease in the average percentage of unfavourable habitat within a network.

4.2.8 Forest Enterprise carried out a separate Integrated Habitat Network study for the Clackmannanshire, Falkirk and Stirling Council areas using slightly different categorisations of network type. Networks are split into core and non core areas and defined using the following habitat types: broadleaved and yew woodland; fen, marsh and swamp; and neutral grassland. The spatial position and extent of functional integrated habitat networks were determined through a landscape ecology model from the BEETLE (Biological and Environmental Evaluation Tools for Landscape Ecology) suite of tools. Table 2 below shows the quantity of habitat and extent of close and wide habitat networks for each of the broad habitat types within the Falkirk Council area.

Habitat Type	Area of Habitat (Ha)	Number of separate habitat blocks	Area of close network (Ha)	Number of close networks	Area of wide network (Ha)	Number of wide networks
Broadleaved and Yew Woodland	3231	6614	10,604	735	57,069	123
Fen/ Marsh/ Swamp	592	514	1209	197	11,377	54
Neutral Grassland	334	287	544	121	5,110	77

Table 2: Forest Research Habitat Networks

Woodland

4.2.9 Woodland covers about 33.6km² (10.7%) of the Council area. Of this, 12.6km² are broadleaved, 13.2km² are conifer and 7.8km² are mixed woodland.

4.2.10 There are limited, but significant, areas of ancient or long-established woodland as follows:

- 27 Ancient Woodlands
- 5 Long established woodlands (semi-natural origin)
- 26 Long established woodlands (plantation origin)

4.2.11 Parkland and scattered trees cover 2km² of the area. While the nature and quality of these areas will be very variable, longer established areas of scattered trees can have significant biodiversity benefits.

4.2.12 In addition dense, continuous scrub covers about 3.2km² and can also be of significant benefit to biodiversity depending on the extent, species and location.

4.2.13 The Central Scotland Forest covers the entire Council area, and while tree coverage is presently small in area, more coverage is actively promoted. Between 1997 and 2012 approximately 1.4 million trees have been planted on an area covering 584.32ha of land within the Council area. It is worth noting that since 2008 the rate of new woodland planting has slowed to an average of approximately 5.8ha per year. This is compared to a rate of 50.5ha per year between 1997 and 2007.

Species Biodiversity

4.2.14 There are 45 UK priority species (almost 4% of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species) known to occur within the Falkirk Council area. Above and beyond these there are 19 other species which feature on the

Scottish Biodiversity List. Appendix 2 of the Falkirk Area Biodiversity Action Plan 2011-2013 sets out a list of priority species and their species status¹.

4.2.15 Invasive, non-native species known to occur within the Council area include:

- American mink
- Giant Hogweed
- Grey squirrel
- Himalayan Balsam
- Japanese Knotweed
- New Zealand pygmy weed
- Rhododendron ponticum
- Zebra Mussel

4.2.16 Other non-native, invasive species are likely to occur within the area.

4.2.17 The presence of invasive plant species (Japanese knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and Giant Hogweed) has been mapped along the Rivers Avon and Carron and their tributaries. Data on the extent and distribution of these species elsewhere is limited at present, although instances of invasive species are being recorded when reported. A pilot project started in 2011 to treat Japanese Knotweed on several tributaries of the River Carron and River Avon, is ongoing. It is anticipated that a strategic programme of invasive plant species control on the Carron Catchment within the Falkirk Council area will be developed by the Forth Fisheries Trust during 2013-14. Falkirk Council sprays Japanese Knotweed where it is identified on Council owned land. A survey of mink will be undertaken on the River Avon in March 2013 and mink control is ongoing or planned on the Rivers Carron and Avon. Rhododendron ponticum has been controlled in a number of key woodland wildlife sites but there is no strategic control of this species across the Falkirk Council area. The Falkirk Invasive Species Forum continues to work to progress local action to control invasive non-native species and to raise awareness of the problem of invasive non-native species.

Protected Sites

4.2.18 Falkirk Council area has a number of local, national and internationally designated sites for nature conservation.

4.2.19 International designations:

- 1 Ramsar site Firth of Forth
- 1 Special Area for Conservation Black Loch Moss
- 2 Special Protection Areas: Firth of Forth, Slamannan Plateau

¹

http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/services/development/planning/planning_and_environment/biodiversity/biodiversity%20pdfs/action_plan/BAP2011-2014.pdf

4.2.20 National designations:

- 10 SSSI: Avon Gorge; Bowmains Meadow; Black Loch Moss; Carron Dams; Carron Glen; Darnrigg Moss; Denny Muir; Firth of Forth; Howierig Muir; Slamannan Plateau

4.2.21 Local designations:

- 62 Wildlife Sites
- 24 SINC
- 3 Local Nature Reserves

4.2.22 A relatively small number of the local sites are currently under active management.

Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Value of Open Spaces

4.2.23 The Open Space Audit of 596 sites undertaken in 2013 included an assessment of the biodiversity and nature conservation quality those open spaces. Of the 596 open spaces, biodiversity and nature conservation value was considered to be a primary factor affecting fitness for purpose in 137 sites. Table 3 below outlines the results of the assessment.

Hierarchy Level	Number of Spaces	Average Score (Out of 5)	Percentage of sites with Good or better Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Value
National	7	4.14	100%
Regional	25	4.56	100%
Settlement	53	3.49	90.6%
Neighbourhood	52	3.19	82.7%
Sub - Total	137	3.63	89.8%
Residual open spaces	459	1.85	21.1%

Table 3: Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Value of sites were this is a primary factor influencing fitness for purpose

4.2.24 Table 3 shows that all national and regional level open spaces have good or better biodiversity and nature conservation value. There are a small number of settlement and neighbourhood level open spaces (14 in total) which are not achieving good or better biodiversity and nature conservation value (10.2%) of the total number of open spaces where biodiversity and nature conservation value is a primary factor affecting fitness for purpose.

4.2.25 Of those open spaces where biodiversity and nature conservation value is not a primary factor affecting fitness for purpose only 21.1% (97 sites) achieved a score of good or better for biodiversity and nature conservation value in the Open Space Audit.

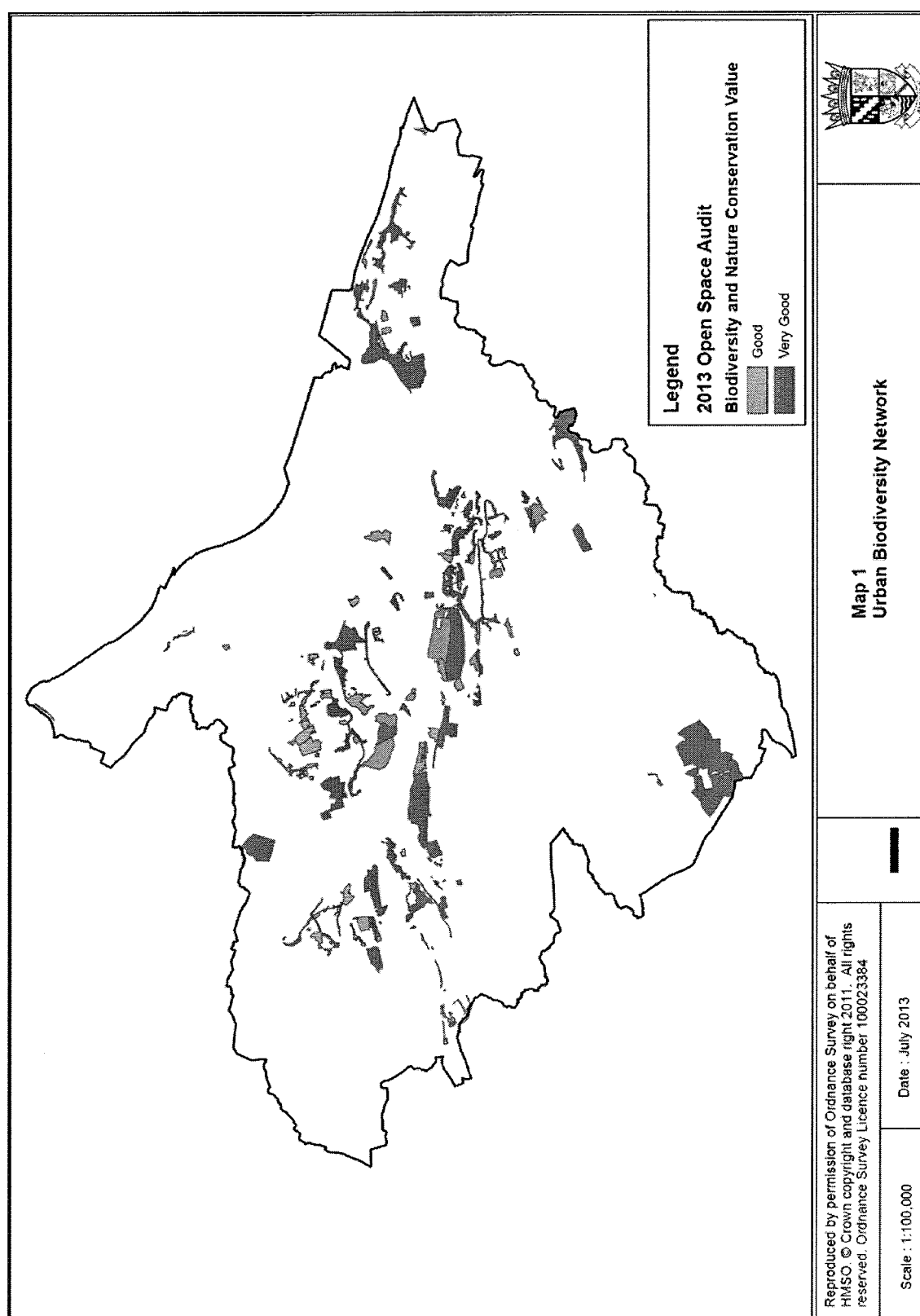
4.2.26 There are 220 open spaces which scored good or better for biodiversity and nature conservation value in the Open Space Audit. These sites could be

considered as contributing towards an urban biodiversity network and are shown in map 1 overleaf.

4.2.27 Of the 596 open spaces surveyed as part of the 2013 audit 169 of them had previously been surveyed as part of the 2007 Open Space Audit. Of those 169 sites surveyed as part of the 2007 audit, biodiversity and nature conservation value was considered to be a primary factor affecting fitness for purpose in 67 sites. Table 4 below shows that the average biodiversity and nature conservation value score for those 67 sites has improved by a third of a point since 2007 with 27 sites improving their scores and only 4 deteriorating.

Average score 2007	3.66
Average score 2013	3.99
Sites improving	27
Sites deteriorating	4

Table 4: Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Value 2007 audit comparison.



4.3 Population and Human Health

Current State of the Environment

Quality of Accessibility within Open Space

4.2.1 The Open Space Audit of 596 sites undertaken in 2013 included an assessment of the quality of accessibility within those open spaces. The quality of accessibility was considered to be a primary factor affecting the fitness for purpose in all 596 sites. Table 5 below the results of the assessment.

Hierarchy Level	Number of Spaces	Average Score (Out of 5)	Percentage of sites with Good or better Quality of Accessibility
National	7	3.71	100%
Regional	28	3.04	71.4%
Settlement	159	2.79	62.3%
Neighbourhood	402	2.47	47.5%
Total	596	3.63	53.2%

Table 5: Quality of Accessibility

4.3.2 The table above shows that the higher an open space is in the hierarchy, the more likely it is to score good or better for quality of accessibility and that over half of all sites score good or better for quality of accessibility.

4.3.3 Of the 596 open spaces surveyed as part of the 2013 audit 169 of them had previously been surveyed as part of the 2007 Open Space Audit. Table 6 below shows that the average quality of accessibility score for those sites has improved by 0.14 since 2007 with 40 sites improving their scores and 38 deteriorating.

Average score 2007	2.64
Average score 2013	2.78
Sites improving	40
Sites deteriorating	38

Table 6: Quality of Accessibility 2007 audit comparison.

Accessibility to Open Space

4.3.4 The accessibility to Open Space of different types was previously analysed as part of the preparatory work for the 2010 Falkirk Open Space Strategy. The Strategy sets a number of accessibility targets for different types of open space. The following table shows how the Council area performed at the time.

Walking distance target	Percentage of population who meet this target (Overall)	Percentage of population who meet this target (Towns)	Percentage of population who meet this target (Villages)
Within 400m of a fit for purpose open space	56.6	57.3	46.9
Within 400m of a park	42.2	43.0	30.6
Within 400m of a playspace	47.3	46.7	56.4
Within 800m of a sports area	66.0	64.9	82.2
Within 1200m of a Natural/Semi Natural Open Space	78.1	79.2	61.6

Table 7: Accessibility to different types of open space

4.3.5 It is worth noting that the analysis of accessibility above was based on the 179 sites surveyed as part of the 2010 Strategy. This accessibility analysis will be re-run in early 2014 based on the 596 sites which were surveyed as part of the 2013 open space audit.

Health and Wellbeing Quality of Open Space

4.3.6 The Open Space Audit of 596 sites undertaken in 2013 included an assessment of the quality of accessibility within those open spaces. The health and wellbeing quality was considered to be a primary factor affecting the fitness for purpose in all 363 sites. Table 8 below the results of the assessment.

Hierarchy Level	Number of Spaces	Average Score (Out of 5)	Percentage of sites with Good or better Health and Wellbeing Quality
National	7	4.43	100%
Regional	28	3.75	96.4%
Settlement	157	3.10	81.5%
Neighbourhood	170	2.62	57.1%
Sub-Total	362	2.95	71.5%
Residual open spaces	234	2.00	17.1%

Table 8: Health and Wellbeing Quality of sites were this is a primary factor influencing fitness for purpose

4.3.7 The table above shows that the higher an open space is in the hierarchy, the more likely it is to score good or better for health and wellbeing quality and that over two thirds of sites which have health and wellbeing quality as a primary factor affecting their fitness for purpose score good or better for health and wellbeing quality.

4.3.8 Of the 596 open spaces surveyed as part of the 2013 audit 169 of them had previously been surveyed as part of the 2007 Open Space Audit. Of those 169 sites surveyed as part of the 2007 audit, health and wellbeing quality was considered to be a primary factor affecting fitness for purpose in 155 sites. Table 9 below shows that the average health and wellbeing score for those 155 sites has improved by 0.44 since 2007 with 62 sites improving their scores and only 11 deteriorating.

Average score 2007	2.73
Average score 2013	3.17
Sites improving	62
Sites deteriorating	11

**Table 9: Health and Wellbeing Quality 2007 audit comparison.
Landscape**

4.4 Material Assets

Current State of the Environment

Active travel links

4.4.1 Falkirk Council maintains some 400km of paths throughout the area. A further 14.2 km are maintained by Callendar Estate. Falkirk Council has signed 291 km of its core path network.

4.4.2 These are mainly core paths, and include the local path networks developed around many of the area's communities (e.g. Denny, Tamfourhill, Stenhousemuir, Airth, Dunmore, Skinflats, Maddiston, Westquarter, California and Bo'ness). There are also good networks around key visitor attractions such as Callendar House, Park and Woods, Bo'ness and Kinneil Railway, Bo'ness waterfront, Antonine Wall, Falkirk Wheel and Roughcastle. A good network of linkages between communities has also been established. Routes along the Union and Forth & Clyde Canals, the Rivers Carron and Avon, the Forth Estuary, old railway lines and quiet country roads, currently form the main spines of these linkages.

4.4.3 Table 10 below shows the number of open spaces which are connected to the core path network.

	Number of open spaces
Are crossed by the core path network	184
Within 50m of the core path network	366
Within 100m of the core path network	448

Table 10: Open Spaces connected to the core path network

Participation in outdoor recreation

4.4.3 The Scottish Household survey monitors how often people make visits to the outdoors and how often people visit their nearest usable greenspace. There is no disaggregation of the figures to a local authority level so it is difficult to discern what local participation in outdoor recreation actually is.

4.4.4 If the Falkirk area is similar to the overall Scottish average then participation in outdoor recreation will be as indicated in the tables below:

Frequency of visits made to the outdoors	Percentage
One or more times a week	42
At least once a month	19
At least once a year	20
Not at all	20

Table 11: Participation in outdoor recreation

Frequency of how often uses nearest useable greenspace	Percentage
Every day / Several times a week	28
Once a week	14
Once a month	12
Less often	14
Not at all	32

Table 12: Use of nearest usable greenspace

Green Infrastructure in Open Space

4.4.5 The Scottish Government's 'Green Infrastructure & Place-making' document indicates that green infrastructure can deliver on functions and services such as shelter, access and travel, sustainable urban drainage, pollution mitigation, biodiversity conservation and food production – as part of a wider ecosystem.

4.4.6 No study has been yet been undertaken to ascertain what extent Falkirk's open space resource delivers these functions

Townscape Quality

4.4.7 General quality of the urban environment is very variable. Whilst there are some areas of high quality that project a positive image (e.g. Falkirk Town Centre, Callendar Park), the area's industrial background, insensitive past development and road improvements have all contributed to a level of fragmentation and neglect in the townscape.

4.4.8 This variability in quality has made it more difficult to raise standards of design in new development. However, some key recent developments (e.g. Falkirk Wheel, Falkirk Stadium, Drum Farm) have set a new benchmark for quality in design and landscaping.

4.4.9 As elsewhere there is a problem with "volume builder" housing which does not aid settlement identity or distinctiveness. Again, the recent development at Drum Farm, Bo'ness may set a new benchmark.

4.5 Landscape

Current State of the Environment

Quantity of Open Space

4.5.1 The quantitative audit of Open Space (which was last carried out in 2009 using aerial photography from 2006) categorised all open space within 1200m of a settlement according to the typology set out in Planning Advice Note 65 and identifies, in table 13, the following amount of open space in the Falkirk Council area:

Open Space Type	Area (Hectares)	Hectares/1000 people
Public Parks and Gardens	840.66	5.62
Private Gardens or Grounds	1827.57	12.21
Amenity Greenspace	928.09	6.2
Playspace for children and teenagers	3.08	0.02
Sports Areas	353.88	2.36
Green Corridors	52.04	0.35
Natural/Semi Natural Greenspace	4036.83	26.97
Other Functional Greenspace	76.67	0.51
Civic Space	4.64	0.03
Total	8123.46	54.27
Population (2006 estimate):	149,680	

Table 13: Quantity of open space Falkirk Council wide

4.5.2 Of 596 sites surveyed as part of the open space audit in 2013 the following amounts of open space are available within each settlement area:

Settlement Area	Area of Open Space (Hectares)	Population (2011 mid year estimate)	Hectares of open space/1000 people
Bo'ness	243.7	14528	16.8
Bonnybridge & Banknock	124.8	12739	9.8
Denny	154.3	13484	11.4
Falkirk	729.8	38311	19.0
Grangemouth	83.0	16990	4.9
Larbert & Stenhousemuir	223.3	24698	9.0
Polmont	273.7	21743	12.6
Urban Area	1832.5	142492	12.9
Rural Area	525.0	11888	44.2
Falkirk Council	2357.6	154380	15.3

Table 14: Quantity of Open Space within different settlement areas

Village Name	Area of Open Space (Hectares)	Population (2011 mid year estimate)	Hectares of open space/1000 people
Airth	8.9	1696	5.2
Allandale	1.5	276	5.4
Avonbridge	1.2	667	1.8
Blackness	11.7	147	79.6
California	2.4	750	3.2
Dunmore	0.3	70	4.3
Greenhill	1.9	50	38
Letham	2.7	181	14.9
Limerigg	283.1	229	1236.2
Muirhouses	40.9	236	173.3
Shieldhill	10.1	2265	4.5
Skinflats	1.3	293	4.4
Slamannan	10.2	1358	7.5
South Alloa	2.6	98	26.5
Standburn	21.0	152	138.2
The Loan	2.8	35	80
Torwood	55.1	201	262.4
Whitecross	2.6	783	3.3

Table 15: Quantity of Open Space within different villages

4.5.3 At 15.3 hectares per 1000 people the 2013 Open Space Audit has identified a significant increase in the rate of open space per 1000 people from that identified in the 2007 audit (9.6 ha per 1000 people). This change is methodological rather than representative of a sea change in open space provision across the Council Area. The 2007 audit measured the amount of public open space within urban or village limits (as defined in the Local Plan), whereas the 2013 audit allocated all surveyed open spaces to a settlement. This change in methodology was made to ensure that spaces such as Callendar Park or Kinneil Estate which serve a function as urban open space but are outside the urban limit can influence the overall figure.

4.5.4 It is worth noting that the open space audit surveyed approximately 30% of the total open space resource within 1200m of a settlement boundary this is partly because the total amount of open space within 1200m of a settlement boundary does not represent the total amount of open space which is publicly accessible. During preparatory work for the open space audit Council officers identified 834 individual open space sites. These sites were sieved using the following criteria for inclusion in the audit:

- All open spaces classified as public park or garden;
- All open spaces classified as play space;
- Amenity open spaces where there is no secondary function and the site area is above 0.1 hectares;

- All public sports areas – Private sports areas have been excluded e.g. Grangemouth Rugby Club, Stenhousemuir Cricket Club;
- Natural/Semi Natural/Green Corridors where there is no secondary function (unless that secondary function is an amenity open space of over 0.1Ha) and the site area is above 1 hectare;
- All churchyard/cemeteries;
- School Grounds/Institutional Grounds with a secondary function; and
- All allotments.

Design and Aesthetic Quality of Open Space

4.5.5 The Open Space Audit of 596 sites undertaken in 2013 included an assessment of the design and aesthetic quality of those open spaces. Of the 596 open spaces, design and aesthetic quality was considered to be a primary factor affecting fitness for purpose in 434 sites. Table 16 below the results of the assessment:

Hierarchy Level	Number of Spaces	Average Score (Out of 5)	Percentage of sites with Good or better Design and Aesthetic Quality
National	3	4.3	100%
Regional	5	3.6	100%
Settlement	76	2.6	56.6%
Neighbourhood	350	2.0	23.4%
Sub - Total	434	2.2	30.1%
Residual open spaces	162	2.4	46.3%

Table 16: Design and Aesthetic Quality of sites where this is a primary factor influencing fitness for purpose

4.5.6 It can be seen in the table above that the vast majority of open spaces where design and aesthetic quality is a primary factor affecting fitness for purpose are neighbourhood open spaces and that a small proportion of these sites are achieving a score of good or better for design and aesthetic quality. Indeed the average score for neighbourhood level open spaces where design and aesthetic quality is a primary factor affecting fitness for purpose is lower than the average score for those open spaces where design and aesthetic quality is not a primary factor affecting fitness for purpose.

4.5.7 Of the 596 open spaces surveyed as part of the 2013 audit 169 of them had previously been surveyed as part of the 2007 Open Space Audit. Of those 169 sites surveyed as part of the 2007 audit, design and aesthetic quality was considered to be a primary factor affecting fitness for purpose in 89 sites. Table 17 below shows that the average design and aesthetic quality score for those 89 sites has improved by 0.51 since 2007 with 41 sites improving their scores and only 4 deteriorating.

Average score 2007	2.02
Average score 2013	2.51
Sites improving	41
Sites deteriorating	4

Table 17: Design and Aesthetic Quality 2007 audit comparison.

Fitness for Purpose of Open Space

4.5.8 The ultimate quality of a site relates to how it serves the needs of the community i.e. its fitness for purpose. The characteristics of an open space and, therefore, what it is judged against are very different depending on where it sits in a hierarchy of importance and what type of open space it is; e.g. the factors determining the fitness for purpose of a public park of national importance and an amenity greenspace of neighbourhood importance are very different. A more detailed explanation of the methodology used is contained within the 2013 Open Space Audit Report. The 2013 audit has made an assessment of the fitness for purpose of 596 open spaces across the Falkirk Council area shown in table 18 below:

Hierarchy Level	Number of sites surveyed	Average Score	Area covered by sites in hectares	Percentage of total sites scored "good" or better fitness for purpose	Percentage of total area which scored "good" or better fitness for purpose.
National	7	3.9	196.7	100%	100%
Regional	28	3.4	1116.2	78.6%	82.1%
Settlement	159	2.8	655.2	42.1%	50.8%
Neighbourhood	402	2.3	289.5	15.7%	18.5%
Total	596	2.5	2357.6	26.7%	63.6%

Table 18: Fitness for purpose

4.5.9 The table above shows that although only 26.7% of the sites surveyed scored good or better fitness for purpose, they represent 63.6% of the total area of open space surveyed. This table also shows that generally the higher an open space is in the hierarchy, the more likely it is to score good or better fitness for purpose.

4.5.10 The quality of open space is not uniform across the Council area. The following table shows the percentage of open spaces which scored good or better fitness for purpose across the hierarchy in different settlement areas.

Hierarchy	National	Regional	Settlement	Neighbourhood	Total Area
Settlement Area					
Bo'ness		100%	40%	23.3%	69%
Bonnybridge and Banknock	100%	33.3%	18.2%	8.1%	42.7%
Denny		50%	50%	9%	48%
Falkirk	100%	85.7%	52.9%	15.9%	70%
Grangemouth		100%	28.6%	22%	39.8%
Larbert and Stenhousemuir		66.7%	33%	14%	40.5%
Polmont	100%	100%	45.2%	13%	66.6%
Rural Area	100%	80%	41.9%	21.4%	73.8%
Urban Area	100%	78%	42.2%	15%	61%
Falkirk Council	100%	78.6%	42%	16%	63.6%

Table 19: Quality of Open Space across different settlement areas

4.5.11 This table shows that in Bo'ness, Falkirk, Polmont and the Rural Area over two thirds of the open space resource scored good or better fitness for purpose, however in Bonnybridge and Banknock, Denny, Grangemouth and Larbert and Stenhousemuir only between 39.8% and 48% of the open space resource scored good or better fitness for purpose. The Rural area has the highest percentage of the total area of open space which scored good or better fitness for purpose (73.8%) whereas Grangemouth has the lowest percentage (39.8%)

4.5.12 Bo'ness, Grangemouth and Polmont have the highest percentage (100%) of regional level open space which scored good or better fitness for purpose, whereas, Bonnybridge and Banknock has the lowest percentage (33.3%)

4.5.13 Falkirk has the highest percentage (52.9%) of settlement level open space which scored good or better fitness for purpose, whereas, Bonnybridge and Banknock has the lowest percentage (18.2%)

4.5.14 Bo'ness has the highest percentage (23.3%) of neighbourhood level open space which scored good or better fitness for purpose, whereas, Bonnybridge and Banknock has the lowest percentage (8.1%)

4.5.15 Of the 596 open spaces surveyed as part of the 2013 audit 169 of them had previously been surveyed as part of the 2007 Open Space Audit. Table 20 below shows that the average fitness for purpose score for those 169 sites has improved by 0.19 since 2007 with 90 sites improving their scores and 46 deteriorating. The percentage of the 169 sites which achieved good or better fitness for purpose increased from 29.6% in 2007 to 39.5% in 2013. The percentage of the total area covered by sites audited in 2007 which achieved good or better fitness for purpose has increased from 54.5% in 2007 to 68.7% in 2013.

Average score 2007	2.60
Average score 2013	2.79
Percentage of total number of sites "good" or better fitness for purpose 2007	29.6%
Percentage of total number of sites "good" or better fitness for purpose 2013	39.5%
Percentage of total area of sites audited in 2007 with "good" or better fitness for purpose in 2007	54.5%
Percentage of total area of sites audited in 2007 with "good" or better fitness for purpose in 2013	68.7%
Sites improving	90
Sites deteriorating	46

Table 20: Fitness for Purpose 2007 Audit Comparison

4.6 Summary of likely future changes to environment without the Supplementary Guidance

4.6.1 In the absence of this SG, the Public Open Space, Falkirk Greenspace and New Development SPG will continue to be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

4.6.2 Whilst the current SPG seeks to tackle many of the same environmental problems which the new SG will tackle it does so based on the understanding of environmental problems which flowed from the 2007 Open Space Audit. This Audit data was not as comprehensive as the recently completed 2013 audit and is now also nearly 7 years old.

4.6.3 This SG will have a statutory status and will form part of the Development Plan rather than a material consideration. This will improve the weight given to open space matters in planning decisions. In its absence therefore, the weight given to open space matters in planning decisions will not be enhanced.

5.0 EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS WHICH ARE RELEVANT TO THE SPG

5.1 Biodiversity – Flora & Fauna

Habitats

5.1.1 Management of parks and other open spaces do not always take account of biodiversity and works to benefit it.

5.1.2 Developer contributions in lieu of provision of on-site open space are not routinely being used to enhance the value of priority habitats in and around the urban area.

Habitat Networks

5.1.3 Open space in new development is not always planned to the benefit of wider habitat networks which may surround the development site.

5.1.4 Open space which forms part of a wider habitat network is being lost to development.

Woodland

5.1.5 The rate of new woodland planting in the Falkirk Council area has reduced significantly in recent years.

Species Biodiversity

5.1.6 Key actions of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan are under funded to the detriment of priority species and species of conservation concern.

Protected Sites

5.1.7 Management plans for protected sites are not implemented fully due to lack of funding to the overall detriment of the conservation status.

Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Value of Open Spaces

5.1.8 The Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Value of Open Spaces where this is not a primary factor affecting fitness for purpose (Settlement and Neighbourhood level Parks and all Sports Areas, Play Spaces, Amenity Open Spaces, School Grounds, Church Grounds, Cemeteries and Allotments) is generally very low with only 21.1% of 459 sites achieving a score of good or better.

5.2 Population and Human Health

Quality of Accessibility within Open Space

5.2.1 The quality of accessibility within neighbourhood level open spaces is of particular concern with only 47.5% of sites scoring good or better for quality of accessibility.

Accessibility to Open Space

5.2.2 Existing open spaces are distributed disproportionately around the area meaning that some places are not within an acceptable walking distance of different types of open space.

5.2.3 Based on analysis of the 2007 open space audit less than half of the population was within 5 minutes walk of a park.

5.2.4 The analysis of accessibility to open space is based on an incomplete dataset of 179 sites. Further network analysis will be undertaken to understand the scale of the problem and results are expected in the spring of 2014.

Health and Wellbeing Quality of Open Space

5.2.5 The health and well being quality of neighbourhood level open spaces where this is a primary factor affecting fitness for purpose (Public Parks, Play Spaces, Sports Areas, Natural/Semi Natural Greenspaces and School Grounds) is of concern with only 57.1% of sites scoring good or better for health and wellbeing quality.

5.2.6 The Health and Wellbeing Quality of open spaces where this is not a primary factor affecting fitness for purpose (Amenity Open Spaces and Allotments) is generally very low with only 17.1% of 234 sites achieving a score of good or better.

5.3 Material Assets

Active travel links

5.3.1 In some areas there are still inadequate walking and cycling links to good quality, usable open space and this will need to be addressed. Ensuring good walking and cycling links to open space, and in particular open space near where people live, can make a significant contribution towards targets to, (1) get more people participating in outdoor recreation, and (2) get more people travelling by active modes.

Participation in outdoor recreation

5.3.2 Stated levels of participation in outdoor recreation in Scotland is not particularly high. Levels of participation in outdoor recreation in Falkirk are

unknown.

Green Infrastructure in Open Space

5.3.3 Existing open space may not be functioning as effectively as it might be as green infrastructure.

Townscape Quality

5.3.4 Open space within new development has an important role to play in defining townscape quality. Opportunities to provide open space in new development which helps to deliver the Scottish Governments policy as stated in Designing Streets may not presently be being explored as rigorously as they should.

5.4 Landscape

Quantity of Open Space

5.4.1 Although there is generally an abundance of open space across the Council area (15.3 hectares per 1000 people), there are localities where this is not the case, most notably in Grangemouth (4.9 hectares per 1000 people).

Design and Aesthetic Quality of Open Space

5.4.2 The design and aesthetic quality of neighbourhood level open spaces where this is a primary factor affecting fitness for purpose (Public Parks, Amenity Open Spaces and School Grounds) is notably low with only 23.4% of them achieving a score of good or better.

5.4.3 The design and aesthetic quality of settlement level open spaces where this is a primary factor affecting fitness for purpose (Public Parks, Amenity Open Spaces and School Grounds) is a little better with 56.6% of them achieving a score of good or better, however it is still a cause for concern.

Fitness for Purpose of Open Space

5.4.4 The majority of settlement and neighbourhood level open spaces across the Council area are not fit for purpose at 57.9% and 84.3% respectively.

5.4.5 There is a significant disparity in the fitness for purpose of open space across different settlements within the Council Area. There is a significantly higher percentage of fit for purpose open space within Bo'ness, Falkirk, Polmont and the Rural Area (66.6% - 73.8%) than there is in Bonnybridge and Banknock, Denny, Grangemouth and Larbert and Stenhousemuir (39.8% - 48.0%).

6.0 CURRENT ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION OBJECTIVES,

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 This section seeks to identify those environmental protection objectives established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the preparation of the SPG and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation.

6.2 Biodiversity - Flora & Fauna

Environmental protection objectives

Habitats

6.2.1 The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 was passed by the Scottish Parliament on 5 May 2004 and effective from November 2004 it introduces a wide range of protection and enforcement measures to safeguard and enhance wildlife. In addition to new measures to protect wildlife and habitats, under this Act biodiversity is identified as a responsibility of public bodies and they have a duty to conserve biodiversity whilst exercising their functions.

Habitat Networks

6.2.2 The Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) is usually thought of in connection with the implementation of a series of protected sites - Special Areas of Conservation or Natura 2000 sites. However, both Article 3 and Article 10 of the European Habitats Directive make reference to improving the 'ecological coherence' of that series of sites. For a site to be ecologically 'coherent' it needs to have links outside its designated area, in order to ensure that all habitats and species can be maintained in favourable conservation status in the long term.

6.2.3 Scottish Planning Policy states that authorities should take: *"A strategic approach to natural heritage in which wildlife sites, landscape features and other areas of open space are linked together in an integrated habitat network can make an important contribution to the maintenance and enhancement of local biodiversity. Planning authorities should seek to prevent further fragmentation or isolation of habitats and identify opportunities to restore links which have been broken."*

Woodland

6.2.4 The vision of the Scottish Forestry Strategy is that, by the second half of the 21st century, woodlands will have expanded to around 25% of Scotland's land area. In 2007 this figure stood at 17%. This will mean the creation between 10000ha and 15000ha of new woodland per year.

Species Biodiversity

6.2.5 There is a legal obligation to ensure that species-specific surveys are undertaken for European and UK Protected Species to ensure that no wildlife laws are broken by any development proposals.

6.2.6 The United Kingdom Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) implements the Government's commitment to the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It identifies priority habitats and species for the UK.

6.2.7 The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy is a Scottish Government initiative to provide a long term framework for protecting and enhancing biodiversity in Scotland. It targets the Scottish Biodiversity List. www.biodiversityscotland.gov.uk.

6.2.8 Falkirk Local Biodiversity Action Plan delivers the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and Scottish Biodiversity Strategy at local level.

6.2.9 Natural Heritage Futures-East and West Central Belt was recently published by SNH and provides a vision of sustainable land use and development. It seeks to reverse trends in decreasing diversity, loss of habitat and loss of local character. The key priorities are an integrated approach to all land-uses and the need for dialogue to ensure this co-ordinated approach.

6.2.10 The Population Status of Birds in the UK: Birds of Conservation Concern 2002-2007 is newly published by the RSPB and identifies UK bird species in terms of conservation concern with Red List species being of highest concern.

Protected Sites

6.2.11 There are a number of European and UK designated sites within the Falkirk Council area. Further regional protection is provided by the non-statutory Wildlife Sites and Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation.

Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Value of Open Spaces

6.2.12 Scottish Planning Policy (2010) indicates that linking green spaces in and around settlements through green networks can deliver benefits for people and nature. By encouraging connectivity between habitats, green networks can improve the viability of species and the health and viability of previously isolated habitats and ecosystems, supporting adaptation to climate change. It also states that lochs, ponds, watercourses and wetlands also form valuable landscape features, recreational resources and wildlife habitats and should be protected and enhanced wherever possible both as part of developments and green networks.

6.2.13 One of the strategic objectives of the Falkirk Open Space Strategy is to ensure that Falkirk's parks and open spaces are of a sufficient diversity,