Rural North

4.50 Like the Rural South, the population of the Rural North area has remained stable and there has been limited housebuilding over the last five years. In LDP1, identified sites at Airth and Torwood are likely to be still active in the period 2020-30. There have been expressions of interest in Airth, Letham, Torwood and Skinflats. Further development at Airth is not considered appropriate due to the scale of previous and proposed growth and primary school capacity constraints. Letham and Torwood are small villages with very limited services where further growth would also be inappropriate. At Skinflats, a reassessment of the area subject to coastal flood risk has raised the possibility of an extension to the village which could help to sustain existing services.

4.51

Preferred Option

The preferred option is to promote an extension to Skinflats at Newton Avenue South (site 165), but to resist further development in the other Rural North villages.

Existing Housing Supply 2020-2030	Additional Housing 2020-2030	Growth Potential 2030-2040
140	80	Low

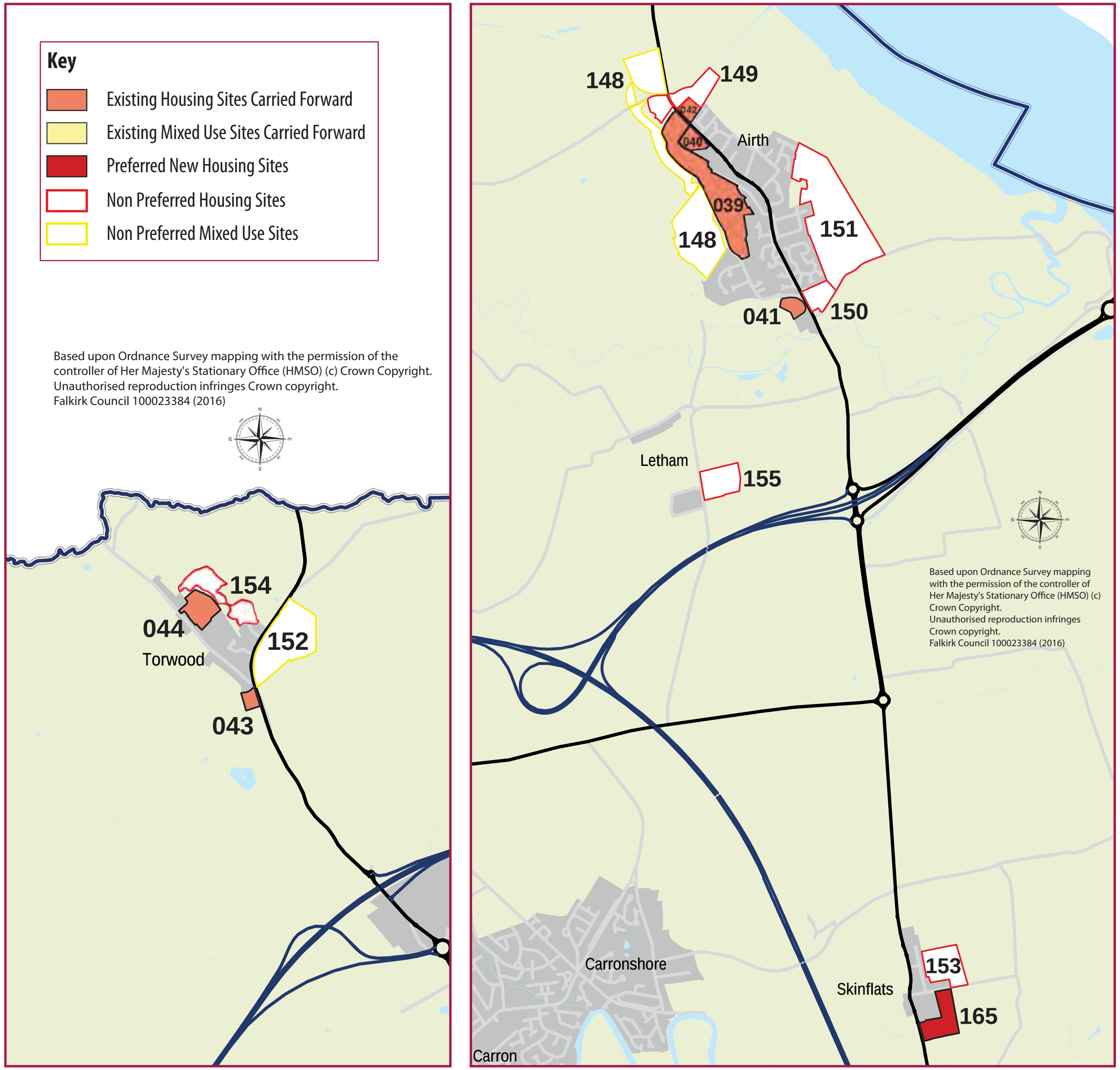
Alternatives

1. New Airth Strategic Growth Area, involving major greenfield release to the west of the village at Airth Mains Farm (site 148), or to the east at Eastfield Farm (site 151).
2. Moderate settlement expansion at Airth, involving small allocations at the Glebe to the north (site 149) or Eastfield to the south (150).
3. Moderate village extension to the east of Letham (site 155).
4. Moderate village extension to Torwood, involving greenfield release either at Castle Crescent (site 154), or Blairs Farm (site 152).
5. Alternative site for Skinflats growth at Newton Avenue (site 153).

How does this differ from LDP1?

The preferred option differs from LDP1 through the allocation of an additional housing site at Skinflats. The alternatives would involve further greenfield expansion of varying scales.

Figure 4.12 Rural North Housing



Issue 5: Sustainable Community Growth

Windfall Sites

4.52 Whilst most housing will be built on sites allocated in the LDP, a proportion of development will always occur on unallocated sites which become available for development unexpectedly during the life of the plan. Scottish Planning Policy states that an allowance can be made for output from such sites, and a policy permitting windfall sites within the urban area, subject to suitable criteria, will continue to be included in LDP2. Windfall development has always played a significant role in the Falkirk area and evidence of the level of windfall over the last five years suggests that an allowance of **50 homes per year** would be appropriate. Over the initial 10 year period of the plan, this would contribute some 500 homes.

4.53 **Preferred Option**

Include an allowance of 50 homes per year for windfall sites which come forward outwith the plan process.

Alternative

No windfall allowance would be made, with output from such sites contributing extra flexibility to the supply.

How does this differ from LDP1?

LDP1 does not include a windfall allowance.

Effective Housing Land Supply

4.54 As well as meeting the overall housing land requirement for the plan period, planning authorities are required to maintain a minimum of five years' effective land supply at all times. Where this is not achieved, Scottish Planning Policy states that the presumption in favour of development which contributes to sustainable development will be a significant material consideration. LDP1 has a policy which states that, where a shortfall in the effective land supply is identified, the Council will consider supporting sustainable housing proposals that are effective. Such an 'alternative sites' policy allows for shortfalls potentially to be addressed through granting planning permission for non-allocated sites which meet specified criteria.

4.55 **Preferred Option**

Continue to include an 'alternative sites' policy to deal with any future shortfalls in the effective housing land supply, but revise the criteria to give a clearer indication of where proposals would meet the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Alternative

The policy could be retained with the current wording.

How does this differ from LDP1?

The preferred option would differ from LDP1 in the detailed wording of the policy.

Green Belt

4.56 Green belt will continue to used as a planning tool to manage urban growth, promote regeneration, and safeguard the identity and landscape setting of settlements. Its location and extent are shown in Figure 4.5. A major review of the strategic options for green belt was carried out through LDP1, which largely endorsed its continuing role. The preferred strategy for housing would require the release of one significant green belt site, at Crawfield Road, Bo'ness, in order to ensure that housing land requirements can be met for the initial 10 year period of the plan.

Housing in the Countryside

4.57 Policies on housing in the countryside were revised through LDP1 and supplementary guidance produced to assist in the interpretation of the policy and secure good design in new rural buildings. The policy identifies the circumstances in which housing in the countryside is considered appropriate, including housing required to support a rural business, restoration/conversion of existing buildings and steadings, certain forms of infill development, enabling development to secure restoration of historic buildings, and small gypsy traveller sites. In terms of Scottish Planning Policy, the rural area of Falkirk may be classified as 'accessible or pressured', and the continuing approach whereby most development is directed to existing settlements remains appropriate and in line with national policy.

Issue 6: Business Locations

Key Question: What should the vision be for our major business locations?

5.01 Falkirk's economy has slowly recovered from recession. Although the economic climate remains challenging, the area's traditional sectoral strengths such as chemicals, logistics and manufacturing, allied to its growing visitor economy, provide the basis for growth and investment in the future. This is reflected in the Council's new Economic Strategy for 2015-25.

5.02 There is a substantial portfolio of business sites in LDP1, with the principal opportunities grouped into four Strategic Business Locations:

- **Falkirk Investment Zone**
- **Grangemouth Investment Zone**
- **Larbert Gateway**
- **Eastern Gateway**

5.03 Collectively, these and other smaller sites provide a supply of some 290 hectares of business land. Over the last five years, around 25 hectares of business land have been developed, or are in the process of being developed, averaging out at 5 hectares per year. The business land supply therefore appears to be very generous. However, in reality, only a proportion of the land supply is immediately available for development. Some sites are 'stalled', due to high development costs coupled with low demand and land values. There is a need to review the key employment locations and the vision for these sites, so as to understand their future role and how they can contribute to the area's growth and prosperity in its widest sense.

Issue 6: Business Locations

Falkirk Investment Zone

5.04 At the heart of the Falkirk Investment Zone are the **Falkirk Gateway** and **Falkirk Stadium** sites. Previously, the masterplan for the Falkirk Gateway was built around a large household retail park and extensive office quarter, a model which is no longer viable or realistic.

5.05 The Helix and the proposed new Forth Valley College campus have provided the impetus for a new vision for the Falkirk Gateway, whilst the Council's Tax Increment Finance (TIF) initiative is addressing some of the infrastructure issues which have constrained development to date. A Preliminary Development Framework has been prepared which envisages a different mix of uses, with a focus on 'green' business, tourism, food and drink, recreation, and residential use. This reflects an aspiration to create an attractive, vibrant, mixed use place with a high quality environment. With large scale retail no longer proposed, the site would cease to be classified as a commercial centre within the network of centres. Retail use could still feature, but with a more local focus, and subject to demand and assessment against 'town centre first' policies.

5.06 Within the wider Falkirk Investment Zone, Abbotsford and Caledon Business Parks will continue to provide a more conventional format of business/industrial park for Class 4, 5 and 6 users.

5.07

Preferred Option

Amend the mix of uses proposed at the Falkirk Gateway and Falkirk Stadium sites (sites 80, 81) to focus on business, tourism, food and drink, and recreation, with an element of residential use. Proposals for large scale retail use would be deleted, with any retailing reduced to a local scale.

Alternative

Residential use could be excluded from the proposed menu of uses.

How does this differ from LDP1?

The preferred option differs from LDP1 in that it excludes large scale retail but permits residential use.