

Open Space

5.22 Open space is vital to the quality of the urban environment, providing areas for active and passive recreation and contributing to the landscape structure of settlements. Where linked into networks they provide routes for safe walking and cycling and corridors for wildlife.

5.23 In accordance with the SPP, the Council has undertaken an open space audit, and has formulated an open space strategy to allow a more strategic approach to planning for open space in the area. This sets out appropriate standards, assesses provision in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility, and identifies priorities for improving the open space resource.

5.24 Whilst the overall quantity of open space and range of recreation facilities within the Council area is generally good, there are problems of quality, management and accessibility, as well as localised deficiencies in the quantity and distribution of facilities.

5.25 Policy INF03 provides detailed criteria for assessing proposals involving the loss of open space. The principal open spaces and playing fields within communities are shown on the Proposals Map. However, the policy will apply to other smaller, incidental areas of open space as well.



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Policy INF03 Protection of Open Space

The Council will protect all urban open space, including parks, playing fields and other areas of urban greenspace, which is considered to have landscape, amenity, recreational or ecological value. Accordingly:

1. Development involving the loss of urban open space will only be permitted where:
 - There is no adverse effect on the character or appearance of the area, particularly through the loss of amenity space planned as an integral part of a development;
 - There will be no significant adverse effect on the overall recreational amenity of the local area, taking account of the Council's open space standards (defined within the Open Space Strategy) and its release for development will be compensated for by qualitative improvements to other parts of the green network in the local area;
 - The area is not of significant ecological value (this can include areas that are not specifically designated for ecological features, but which are important in supporting the qualifying features of Natura 2000 sites); and
 - Connectivity within, and functionality of, the wider green network is not threatened and public access routes in or adjacent to the open space will be safeguarded.
2. Where development would also involve the loss of playing fields or sports pitches, it must additionally be demonstrated that:
 - The proposed development is ancillary to the principal use of the site as a playing field; or
 - The proposed development involves a minor part of the playing field which would not affect its use and potential for sport and training; or
 - The playing field which would be lost would be replaced by a new playing field of comparable or greater benefit for sport and in a location which is convenient for its users, or by the upgrading of an existing playing field to provide a better quality facility either within the same site or at another location which is convenient for its users and which maintains or improves the overall playing capacity in the area; or
 - The Council's pitch strategy has shown that there is a clear excess of sports pitches to meet current and anticipated future demand in the area, and that the site could be developed without detriment to the overall quality of provision.

5.27 New developments must contribute meaningfully to the provision of open space and play facilities in the local area, taking account of the various quantitative, qualitative and accessibility standards set out in the Council's Open Space Strategy. Traditionally, the requirement has been met through on-site provision, and this will continue to be the case with most larger developments. However, in certain circumstances, financial contributions to off-site provision or upgrading may be a more appropriate alternative.

5.28 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.

Education Capacity

5.29 Notwithstanding improvements to the school estate over recent years, housing growth in certain locations will require further new or extended schools. In allocating sites for development the Council has taken account of the capacities of schools in the same catchment. Where school capacity is an issue improvements will be facilitated through development phasing and appropriate developer contributions, as highlighted against relevant sites in the Site Schedule.

5.30 Windfall sites may also raise issues concerning school capacity. Such proposals will be assessed against Policy INF05 and the accompanying Supplementary Guidance SG10 'Education and New Housing Development', as set out below. Where capacity problems exist, contributions will be sought unless increases in capacity are not possible or will prejudice the Council's education policies. In cases where no further capacity enhancements are possible and there are no other management solutions the proposed development will not be supported.

5.31 In recent years demand for nursery places has increased significantly and in certain localities nursery capacity is under pressure and enhancements will be required. Shortfalls in nursery capacity will also be addressed through appropriate developer contributions also set out in Supplementary Guidance SG10 'Education and New Housing Development'.

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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.

Transport Impacts of New Development

- 5.47** New developments impact on the local and strategic road network through the introduction of new journeys. Air quality can also be adversely affected, and increased emissions contribute to climate change. As part of the development management process, the Council will require the submission of transport assessments, including travel plans, safety audits and other appropriate studies to identify likely impacts on the transport network and the mitigation measures required.
- 5.48** Travel plans will be integral to the transport assessment process. Appropriately scoped travel plans, focussing on the use of public transport, cycling and walking, will be central to the completion of transport assessments, and used in support of the mitigation measures proposed to address the issues identified in the assessment. Council guidance on the preparation of travel plans is available.

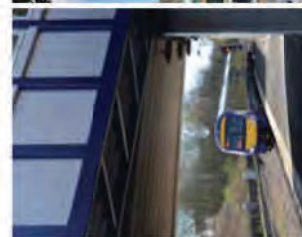
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Policy INF10 Transport Assessments

1. The Council will require transport assessments of developments where the impact of the development on the transport network is likely to result in a significant increase in the number of trips, and is considered likely to require mitigation. The scope of transport assessments will be agreed with the Council and in the case of impact on trunk roads, also with Transport Scotland.
2. Transport assessments will include travel plans and, where necessary, safety audits of proposed mitigation measures and assessment of the likely impacts on air quality as a result of proposed development. The assessment will focus on the hierarchy of transport modes, favouring the use of walking, cycling and public transport over use of the car.
3. The Council will only support development proposals where it is satisfied that the transport assessment and travel plan has been appropriately scoped, the network impacts properly defined and suitable mitigation measures identified.

Parking

- 5.50** Parking is a critical element in the consideration of the use of the car for journeys and as such can be used as an effective management tool in the control of car use.
- 5.51** Falkirk Town Centre remains the primary location of pressure on parking capacity at peak times. Given the constrictions of space in the town centre and along its feeder radial routes the Council will continue to operate a presumption against new public parking in the town centre, and will resist changes in provision as long as the vitality and viability of the centre is maintained. Park and ride facilities will be promoted where these can act to offset travel demand and suitable sites can be identified.
- 5.52** Outside Falkirk Town Centre there are more localised parking issues at some District and Local Centres and around some railway stations. The Council will continue to tackle these through a mixture of management and new provision, where appropriate.
- 5.53** More generally parking in new development should conform to the maximum parking standards in the SPP. Falkirk Council will apply these new standards as appropriate in the transport assessment process. The Council's minimum standards, set out in the National Roads Development Guide will also be relevant.



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Policy INF11 Parking

The Council will manage parking provision as an integral part of wider transport planning policy to ensure that road traffic reduction, public transport, walking, cycling and safety objectives are met.

1. The scale of public parking provision in Falkirk Town Centre will be maintained broadly at its current level and any proposed change to parking provision will be assessed against its effect on the vitality and viability of the centre.
2. The feasibility of promoting Park and Ride facilities on the road corridors into Falkirk Town Centre will continue to be investigated.
3. Parking in District and Local Centres will be managed to promote sustainable travel and the role of the centres.
4. New parking will be provided to support the strategic role of railway stations, with priority given to new provision at Falkirk High. Where possible, the provision of new off street parking facilities will be associated with traffic management and other measures to reduce uncontrolled on-street parking.
5. The maximum parking standards set out in the SPP will be applied to new development, where relevant, in tandem with the Council's minimum standards. Where the minimum standards cannot be met, developer contributions to enhance travel plan resources may be required in compensation.

Water and Drainage Infrastructure

5.55 Scottish Water is responsible for the provision of water supplies, waste water treatment works and the sewerage network. In the Falkirk Council area, water supply can be managed to provide for growth. However the adequacy of capacity at waste water treatment works is more varied, with several of the rural works currently unable to accommodate all planned growth. While two are programmed for growth before 2015, the reminder will continue to be a potential brake on development in their catchments. In addition, there are capacity issues with the sewer network in some localities which have experienced sustained housing growth in recent years.

5.56 Falkirk Council continues to engage with Scottish Water is addressing these pinch points but it remains the case that proposals for development in the constrained localities will have to be considered cautiously by the Council. The Council's approach is set out in Policy INF12 below.

5.57 The use of sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) is now a requirement for the majority of development types, the only exceptions to this are single house developments and where the discharge is to coastal waters.

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Policy INF12 Water and Drainage Infrastructure

1. New development will only be permitted if necessary sewerage infrastructure is adopted by Scottish Water or alternative maintenance arrangements are acceptable to SEPA.
2. Surface water management for new development should comply with current best practice on sustainable urban drainage systems, including opportunities for promoting biodiversity through habitat creation.
3. A drainage strategy, as set out in PAN61, should be submitted with planning applications and must include flood attenuation measures, details for the long term maintenance of any necessary features and a risk assessment.