

Design and Place Making

- 3.44** The Falkirk area has undergone enormous physical change over the last forty years. Industrial decline has been followed by a sustained period of regeneration. The successful redevelopment of many former industrial sites, the regeneration of Falkirk Town Centre in the 1980s and 1990s, the Millennium Link in 2002, the Falkirk Greenspace Initiative and recent regeneration work in our town centres, have helped to re-establish the area's identity and confidence. A growing body of contemporary design, such as the Falkirk Wheel, Forth Valley Royal Hospital and the Kelpies, has also helped to foster a dynamic and forward looking image.
- 3.45** The focus for placemaking in the future will be the strategic growth areas and business locations, which present unique opportunities to influence the urban form at a strategic level, and other locations which are particularly crucial to the image and sense of place of the area. Town and village centres will continue to require reshaping and repair, whilst the quality of urban road corridors needs to be raised. The canal corridor is a key placemaking asset connecting communities across the area, whose full potential has still to be realised. The Central Scotland Green Network aims to build up the 'green' elements of place, enhancing river, road, open space and urban fringe corridors, and enhancing the setting of existing and new development.

3.46

Policy D01 Placemaking

The following locations are regarded as key opportunities for placemaking within the area, within which there will be a particular emphasis on high quality design and environmental enhancement:

1. Strategic Housing Growth Areas & Business Locations
2. Town and Village Centres
3. Town Gateways and Major Urban Road Corridors
4. Canal Corridor
5. Central Scotland Green Network



Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows

- 5.86 Woodland cover, and the proportion of woodland brought under management, has increased in the Falkirk area over recent years, contributing significantly to the green network and bringing multiple benefits. As well as being of commercial value, trees contribute to landscape, placemaking, biodiversity, recreation, carbon fixing, and flood management. The Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal Policy includes a presumption in favour of protecting woodland resources. Control is exercised over felling by the Forestry Commission Scotland. A number of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) are in force across the Council area, as shown on the Proposals Map.

5.87

Policy GN04 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows

The Council recognises the ecological, landscape, economic and recreational importance of trees, woodland and hedgerows. Accordingly:

1. Felling detrimental to landscape, amenity, nature conservation or recreational interests will be discouraged. In particular ancient, long-established and semi-natural woodlands will be protected as a habitat resource of irreplaceable value;
2. In an area covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) or a Conservation Area, development will not be permitted unless it can be proven that the proposal will not adversely affect the longevity, stability or appearance of the trees. Where necessary, endangered trees and woodlands will be protected through the designation of further TPOs;
3. Development which is likely to affect trees should comply with Supplementary Guidance SG06 'Trees and Development', including the preparation where appropriate of a Tree Survey, Constraints Plan, and Tree Protection Plan. Where development is permitted which will involve the loss of trees or hedgerows of amenity value, the Council will normally require replacement planting appropriate in terms of number, size, species and position;
4. The enhancement and management of existing woodland and hedgerows will be encouraged. Where the retention of a woodland area is integral to a development proposal, developers will normally be required to prepare and implement an appropriate Management Plan; and
5. There will be a preference for the use of appropriate local native species in new and replacement planting schemes, or non-native species which are integral to the historic landscape character.

Outdoor Access

- 5.88 The Council is committed to promoting outdoor access through the provision of strategic and local path networks, and has prepared a Core Paths Plan identifying a network of key routes. In considering new development, the protection of established paths and rights of way, and the securing of appropriate new access opportunities to enhance the network, will be given priority.

5.89

Policy GN05 Outdoor Access

The Council will seek to safeguard, improve and extend the network of outdoor access routes, with particular emphasis on the core path network, and routes which support the development of the Green Network. When considering development proposals, the Council will:

1. Safeguard the line of any existing or proposed access route affected by the development, and require its incorporation into the development unless a satisfactory alternative route can be agreed;
2. Seek to secure any additional outdoor access opportunities which may be achievable as a result of the development; and
3. Where an access route is to be temporarily disrupted, require the provision of an alternative route for the duration of construction work and the satisfactory reinstatement of the route on completion of the development.



5. SUPPORTING POLICIES

Housing

Affordable Housing

- 5.1 Housing affordability emerged as an issue in the area following the significant house price rises in the early 2000s. The 2011 Housing Need and Demand Assessment has confirmed the broad pattern of affordability and need across the area, highlighting an overall annual need of 233 units and a spatial distribution of need focused on the Larbert/Stenhousemuir, Polmont, Rural South and Rural North areas.
- 5.2 There has been increasing activity in recent years by social housing providers, including housing associations and the Council itself. However, availability of funding remains a critical constraint, and there is an increasing emphasis from the Government on finding ways of delivering affordable housing at lower cost.
- 5.3 In order to contribute to meeting housing need, and ensure mixed communities, the Council will continue to seek the provision of a proportion of affordable housing from private housing sites in accordance with Policy HSG02.

5.4

Policy HSG02 Affordable Housing

New housing developments of 20 units and over will be required to provide a proportion of the units as affordable or special needs housing as set out in Figure 5.1. The approach to provision should comply with Supplementary Guidance SG12 'Affordable Housing'.

5.5 Figure 5.1 Affordable Housing Requirements in Settlement Areas

Settlement Area	Proportion of total site units required to be affordable
Larbert/Stenhousemuir Polmont Area Rural North Rural South	25%
Bo'ness Bonnybridge & Banknock Denny Falkirk Grangemouth	15%

Windfall Housing

- 5.6 Appropriate opportunities for housing development in addition to those sites specifically identified in the LDP may arise within urban and village limits over the period of the plan. Historically, such windfall sites have made a significant contribution to housing supply in the area, and although the incidence of vacant and brownfield sites has generally been reducing in the area, they will continue to provide additional flexibility over and above the allocations set out in the spatial strategy. The criteria for assessing proposals for windfall housing development are set out in Policy HSG03.

5.7

Policy HSG03 Windfall Housing

Housing development within the Urban and Village Limits, in addition to proposals identified within the LDP, will be supported where:

1. The site is brownfield, or is open space whose loss can be justified in terms of Policy INF03;
2. The proposed housing use is compatible with neighbouring uses and a satisfactory level of residential amenity can be achieved;
3. The site enjoys good accessibility by public transport, walking and cycling to shopping, recreational and other community facilities;
4. Existing physical infrastructure, such as roads and drainage, sewage capacity, and community facilities, such as education and healthcare, have the capacity to accommodate the increase in use associated with the proposed development, or can be upgraded through appropriate developer contributions as required by Policy INF02;
5. The site is not at significant risk of flooding in the terms of Policy RW06;
6. In the case of small gap sites and sub-divided plots, Policy HSG05 is satisfied; and
7. It complies with other LDP policies.



Housing Design and Residential Amenity

- 5.8 The scale of residential growth planned for the area over the period of the plan will have a significant impact on how communities look and feel. It is important that new housing is well designed so that this impact is a positive one. Smaller scale change in residential neighbourhoods, whether through small infill developments, proposals for non-residential uses or simple extensions or alterations to properties, must also be managed so as to maintain residential amenity.

5.9

Policy HSG04 Housing Design

The layout, design and density of the new housing development should conform with any relevant site-specific design guidance, Supplementary Guidance SG02 'Neighbourhood Design' and the Scottish Government's policy on 'Designing Streets'. Indicative site capacities in the site schedules may be exceeded where a detailed layout demonstrates that a high quality design solution, which delivers the requisite level of residential amenity, has been achieved.

5.10

Policy HSG05 Infill Development and Subdivision of Plots

Proposals for the erection of additional houses within the curtilage of existing properties or on small gap sites will be permitted where:

1. The scale, density, disposition and design of the proposed houses respect the townscape character of the area;
2. Adequate garden ground can be provided to serve the proposed houses without an unacceptable impact upon the size or functioning of existing gardens;
3. Adequate privacy will be afforded to both the proposed houses and neighbouring properties;
4. The proposal would not result in the loss of features such as trees, vegetation or walls, such that the character or amenity of the area would be adversely affected;
5. The proposed vehicular access, parking and other infrastructure is of an adequate standard for both proposed and existing houses; and
6. The proposal complies with other LDP policies.

5.11

Policy HSG06 Non-Residential Uses in Residential Areas

Within established residential areas, the introduction of uses which would be incompatible with the residential character and amenity of the area will generally not be permitted. Proposals for appropriate community services (e.g surgeries, day nurseries and neighbourhood shops), homeworking or other compatible business uses (e.g. guest houses) will be supported where it can be demonstrated that the quality of the residential environment would be safeguarded, the type and location of the property is suitable, and satisfactory access and parking can be provided.

5.12

Policy HSG07 Residential Extensions and Alterations

Extensions and alterations to residential properties will be permitted where:

1. The scale, design and materials are sympathetic to the existing building;
2. The location and scale of the extension or alterations will not significantly affect the degree of amenity, daylight or privacy enjoyed by neighbouring properties; and
3. It will not result in overdevelopment of the plot, thereby giving rise to adverse impacts on the functioning of garden ground, unacceptable loss of off-street parking, or road safety issues.

Proposals should comply with the detailed guidance on these criteria set out in the Supplementary Guidance SG03 'Residential Extensions and Alterations'.



5.20 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 Water Management	Sites where opportunities exist to provide sustainable flood management or water management enhancement measures as identified through either flood risk assessments or the River Basin Management Plan and Forth Area Management Plan.
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.

5.21

Policy INF02 Developer Contributions to Community Infrastructure

Developers will be required to contribute towards the provision, upgrading and maintenance of community infrastructure where development will create or exacerbate deficiencies in, or impose significantly increased burdens on, existing infrastructure. The nature and scale of developer contributions will be determined by the following factors:

1. Specific requirements identified against proposals in the LDP or in development briefs;
2. In respect of open space, recreational, education and healthcare provision, the general requirements set out in Policies INF04, INF05 and INF06;
3. In respect of physical infrastructure any requirements to ensure that the development meets sustainability criteria;
4. In respect of other community facilities, any relevant standards operated by the Council or other public agency; and
5. Where a planning obligation is the intended mechanism for securing contributions, the principles contained in Circular 3/2012.

In applying the policy, consideration of the overall viability of the development will be taken into account in setting the timing and phasing of payments.



- 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'.

5.32

Policy INF05 Education and New Housing Development

Where there is insufficient capacity within the catchment school(s) to accommodate children from new housing development, 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.

Primary Healthcare

- 5.33** Analogous to the pressures put on school capacity by community growth, in some localities, such as the Bonnybridge, Denny and Polmont areas, local doctors' surgeries and other primary care facilities have been experiencing higher demand. Where deficiencies in capacity are identified by NHS Forth Valley and will be exacerbated by new housing provision, appropriate developer contributions will be sought from new development within the catchments of the relevant primary care facilities.

5.34 **Policy INF06 Healthcare and New Housing Development**

In locations where there is a deficiency in the provision of health care facilities identified by NHS Forth Valley, developer contributions will be sought to improve the quantity and quality of such provision commensurate with the impact of the new development. The approach to the improvement of primary healthcare provision will be set out in Supplementary Guidance SG11 'Healthcare and New Housing Development'.

Sustainable Transport

- 5.35** The strategy of promoting sustainable growth while creating better quality places means that in addressing capacity issues in transport infrastructure the Council will strive to achieve a balance between three broad approaches:
- ❖ Building and widening roads to create more capacity;
 - ❖ Increasing the efficiency of the network through traffic management;
 - ❖ Managing/reducing demand through promoting sustainable transport measures, such as walking, cycling and public transport.
- 5.36** The measures to be taken to address existing constraints on strategic transport infrastructure have already been set out in the spatial strategy. Many of these have been carried forward from the Falkirk Council Local Plan and have been the subject of detailed assessment.
- 5.37** Government guidance has established a hierarchy of transport modes whereby walking, cycling and public transport should be prioritised. Encouraging sustainable travel is largely dependent on making it easier for travellers to make this choice. Planning can ensure that sustainable infrastructure, such as footways, cycle lanes or bus priority measures, is built into new development to encourage use of sustainable modes of travel.

Walking and Cycling

- 5.38** The LDP will promote the development and use of pedestrian and cycle networks through identifying specific routes and setting requirements for pedestrian and cycle provision within new development.
- 5.39** The Council's Core Paths Plan has identified an integrated system of top-tier routes, both urban and rural, recreational and functional, extending to some 250 miles. Opportunities to extend this strategic network for active travel are included in a number of the green network opportunities highlighted in the Site Schedule. In addition to the Core Paths there are locally important networks for cycling and walking. It is important that new development not only builds in a high quality of pedestrian and cycle infrastructure but also integrates with existing pedestrian and cycle networks, as set out in Policy INF07.

5.40 **Policy INF07 Walking and Cycling**

1. The Council will safeguard and promote the development of the core path network. Where appropriate, developer contributions to the implementation of the network will be sought.
2. New development will be required to provide an appropriate standard of pedestrian and cycle infrastructure, including cycle parking, which complies with current Council guidelines and meets the following criteria:
 - Where appropriate, infrastructure supporting the two modes of walking and cycling should be combined and support objectives in agreed Travel Plans helping to support active travel;
 - Pedestrian and cycle facilities in new developments 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;
 - The surfacing, lighting, design, maintenance and location of pedestrian and cycle routes should promote their safe use. Particular emphasis should be given to the provision of suitable lighting, and the provision of suitably designed and located crossing facilities where routes meet the public road network;
 - Where practical, no pedestrian route should be obstructed by features that render it unsuitable for the mobility impaired.

5.54

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.

5.58

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.