

## 4. WELL BEING: OPEN SPACE

### Key Principles

- **Development proposals should incorporate multifunctional open space**, as appropriate, to support placemaking (the six qualities of successful places), meet recreational and active travel needs, improve biodiversity, and deliver sustainable water management. The scale and type of open space provided should be commensurate with the size and needs of the development, and the character of the area.
- **Open space should be integrated properly into the development and wider green network at the outset** through a design led approach which uses the site's context and assets sensitively and creatively.
- **Residential development should have access to recreational open space in accordance with the Open Space Strategy's accessibility, quantity, and quality standards.** The adequacy of local recreational provision, and how development proposals will be expected to contribute to that provision will be guided by a local open space audit, using the process explained on pages 12 to 14.
- **Developers are required to compensate for any loss of open space** that would result from their development, if this loss would have a significant adverse effect on the overall recreational provision in the local area. Guidance is given in pages 15 to 16 on how the loss should be compensated.

### Key LDP Policies

PE01	Placemaking
PE13	Green and Blue Network
PE16	Protection of Open Space
PE17	Open Space and New Development
INF02	Developer Contributions



# Meeting the Recreational Needs of New Residential Development

Access to sport and recreation can enrich people's lives and benefit community health and well-being. Policy PE17 requires that, where recreational open space provision is insufficient to meet the needs of a new residential development, then such deficiencies should be addressed through either the provision of new on-site recreational open space or contributions towards the improvement of off-site open space. The following explains how the Council will establish the requirements for recreational open space.

## Step 1 - Apply Exemptions

### Size thresholds

The requirement to provide, or contribute to, recreational open space does not apply to the following categories of residential development:

- Proposals for 10 units or fewer, including houses and/or flats; or
- Flatted residential development or conversion of buildings for residential use, of up to 50 units within the town centre boundaries.

In considering whether a proposal qualifies for an exemption under these thresholds, the capacity of the total site of which the proposal is part should be used. This is to prevent avoidance of contributions through the sub-division of sites.

### Exemptions for specific categories of residential development and open space

Sheltered or special needs housing and housing exclusively for retirement living are exempt from the requirement to provide or contribute to equipped play spaces or sports areas. Proposed one bedroom dwellings and student accommodation are also exempt from the requirement to provide or contribute to equipped playspaces.

## Step 2 - Local Open Space Audit

At the pre-application stage, prior to developing detailed proposals, it is important that developers seek advice from the Council on open space requirements. The Council will then carry out an audit of recreational provision in the local area. This audit will involve an assessment of whether the needs of the development will be met in terms of the accessibility and quality of each of the types of open space provision specified in Figure 7, which is based on the Open Space Strategy. When considering accessibility from a development, the Council will take into account the physical barriers when walking to the open space(s).

The provisions of any site specific development guidance in the LDP, or any approved brief, development framework or masterplan will also be recorded in the audit, and will usually be an overriding consideration in the determining the approach to meeting recreational needs on a site. Such guidance will generally have already taken into account the recreational provision in the locality. The audit will also take into account planned improvements to recreation provision in the locality through the Open Space Strategy or any other investment programme, and the opportunity for proposed developments to contribute to such improvements.

The Council will use the audit to advise the applicant on the types of provision that are deficient, and how such deficiencies can best be addressed. The audit will be shared with the applicant at the pre-application stage to help integrate any required on site provision into the layout and establish what developer contributions in relation to off site recreational provision may be needed. The audit will be updated accordingly to reflect submitted changes to the layout and unit numbers. **Appendix 2 includes standard template for the audit.**

The recreational open space requirement for applications for planning permission in principle (PPP) will be based on likely dwelling numbers expected from the site. Conditions or a planning obligation may require a recalculation of the recreational open space requirement at a later date where the dwelling numbers change.

### Step 3 - Nature of provision

Depending on the results of the audit, the individual circumstances of the development, or the provisions of any other approved guidance, the Council may require:

**a) Only on-site recreational provision within the proposed development.**

This will generally be the approach:

- i. where there is no existing provision of the requisite size which is accessible to the proposed development using the standards in Figure 7, and on-site provision is a practical and achievable; or
- ii. in large developments which would be expected to meet their own recreational needs.

Where provision is on-site, the indicative scale of provision in relation to the scale of development is indicated in Figure 7 (column 4).

**b) Contributions to off-site recreational provision** in the vicinity of the proposed development, whether through new provision or improvements to existing provision. This will generally be the approach:

- i. where there is provision in the vicinity that could serve the site, but either the quality or the accessibility standard is not met, and the best solution is to take contributions to improve the provision's quality and/or accessibility; or
- ii. on small, or otherwise physically constrained sites where it is not possible or practical to secure provision on site.

Contributions to off-site provision will be based on the rate(s) per dwelling indicated in Figure 7.

**c) Part on-site recreational provision and part off-site contributions.** This combined approach of a) and b) involves the developer providing some of the required types of recreational open space on-site while contributing to off-site provision in lieu of the required types of provision that are not provided on-site.

**d) No on-site recreational provision or off-site contributions.** This will generally be the approach:

- i. where provision within the locality of the site is considered sufficient to meet the needs of the proposed development in terms of the Open Space Strategy's accessibility, quantity and quality standards; and
- ii. the site is not of such a size as to require its own on-site provision.

It should be noted that, even where there is no requirement for formal recreational provision within a site, some amenity open space is still be likely required to meet design and placemaking objectives within a development.

Please also refer to 'SG13 - Developer Contributions' which gives general guidance applicable to any type of contributions including those for off-site recreational open space.





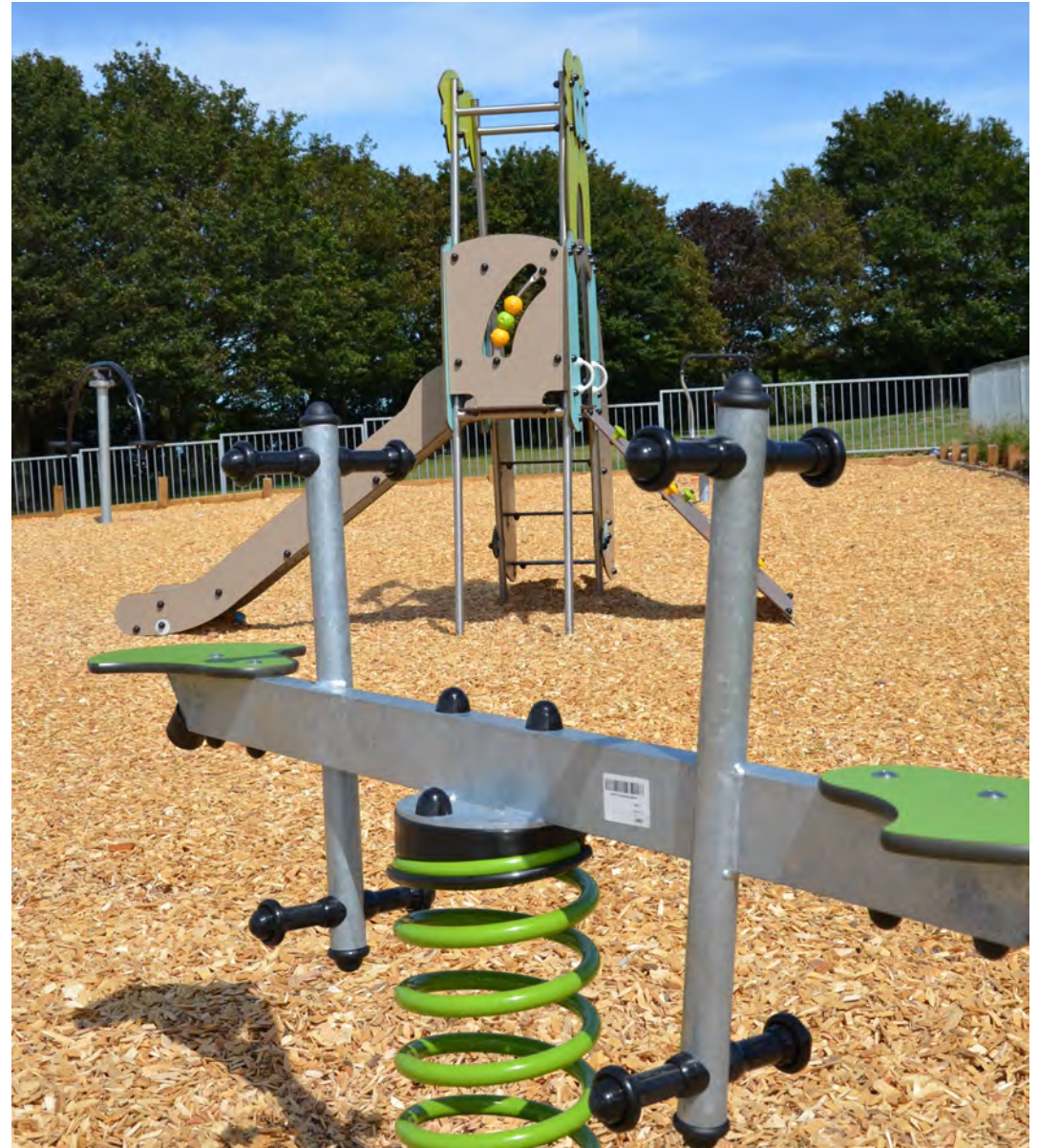
**Figure 7: Open space standards and rates for residential development**

Open space type	Accessibility: maximum walking distance from site to open space	Quality criteria for open space type	Guidance if provision is on-site	Contribution rate for off-site improvements
Equipped Playspaces for toddlers, juniors and teenagers	800m	Range of good quality equipment (including MUGA) in satisfactory condition with reasonable life expectancy, offering good play value for all age groups. Appropriate surfacing, landscaping, drainage, street furniture and path access is provided. Existing off-site equipment for different age groups may be provided in different locations.	Toddler/junior play provided in most developments. Full range of provision for all ages including MUGA in very large developments.	£600 per house £300 per flat
Parks/Informal Play/ Recreation Space	400m	Open space capable of supporting passive exercise and informal play. Flat kickabout areas sufficiently removed from residential properties to avoid nuisance. Quality path network with appropriate surfacing connecting entrances/facilities and offering opportunities for walks. Range of quality landscaping appropriate to location including woodland, individual trees, shrub beds.	Indicative requirement is 49m <sup>2</sup> per house, and 24.5m <sup>2</sup> per flat, generally provided in a single space, although in larger developments this space could be complemented with one or more smaller 'pocket parks'.	£800 per house £400 per flat
Sports Areas	1200m	Pitch or pitches are of a tolerable state in terms of grass cover, surface quality, slope gradient, drainage, maintenance regime as defined by pitch classification criteria.	Only the very largest developments are likely to have scope for on site sports areas. Where a pitch is provided, the dimensions should meet the relevant standards for the activity in question.	£300 per house £150 per flat
Natural Greenspace/ Green Corridors	1200m	Proposals should consider how they can contribute to the network of accessible natural greenspace/green corridors in the vicinity of the site, having regard to LDP2 and any other relevant Council strategy or plan for green infrastructure provision. How this will be achieved will depend on the proposal and site location so provision for natural greenspace and green corridors will be opportunity led rather than through the application of standards. Nevertheless, a contribution will be required for proposals within the vicinity of an area which is covered by an unimplemented Council urban woodland management plan. This contribution will be calculated as £250 per house or £125 per flat, and will be used to improve, or create, public woodlands for the benefit of new and existing communities.		

## Compensating the Loss of Recreational Open Space

Policy PE16 states that, where a development involves the loss of an area of open space which will have a significant impact adverse impact on overall recreational provision, this will only be allowed where the loss is compensated by qualitative improvements to other open space in the local area. In judging significance, Falkirk Council will consider the impact on the functional value in terms of how reduced space or infrastructure may restrict activities, or how loss of natural features/views etc. reduces the enjoyment of the space. The assessment would also be guided by national and local planning policy requirements, consultation feedback, the Open Space Strategy and, if relevant and prepared, the Council's pitch strategy.

Depending on the development proposals, compensation may involve on-site enhancement, off site replacement, or a financial payment towards improving a nearby open space. The Council's preference in the majority of cases, however, is likely to be financial payment given in most places the issue is quality rather than quantity of recreational open space provision. Where financial compensation is sought, the appropriate amount will be determined by the Council on a case-by-case basis taking into account the individual circumstances of the planning application. Figure 8, page 16, should be used as a starting point to establish the compensation value for the particular type or types of open space to be lost. It should be noted that the sums stated do not include land acquisition, and other, costs. These costs may need to be added to the compensation value for off-site replacement provision.



**Figure 8 - Approximate compensation**

Type of recreational open space		Approximate compensation
Equipped playspace	MUGA	Replacement value of lost provision
	Equipped play areas	Replacement value of lost provision
Public parks, gardens, amenity space, natural/semi natural open space		£21 per sqm lost*
Sports Areas	11-a-side grass turf unlit football pitch (7,420 sqm)	£171,000**
	Tennis court	£40,000 (unlit) or £50,000 (lit)**
	Rugby union grass turf pitch (10,400 sqm)	£239,000**
	Bowling green (1,600 sqm)	£80,000 - £120,000 (for bowling green surface only)**
Community growing/allotment		Replacement value of lost provision

**Notes:**

\*The rate is carried over from SG13 - Open Space and New Development, published July 2015, and is what the Council presently seeks for the loss of passive open space.

\*\* The values are taken from sportscotland but exclude:

- Land acquisition costs
- Project specific costs including access, car parking, utility connections, drainage, maintenance, fencing, changing facilities, addressing ground conditions etc.
- Inflation
- Regional cost variations in materials and labour



## Good Practice

**Placemaking:** Public art, site features, local heritage, landscaping, vistas etc. can be used to foster a strong sense of place and identity within a development's open spaces.



The Drum



Kinnaird Village Park



Foundry Fortune Heritage Trail



Carron Dams

**Pocket parks:** Pocket parks can create a focus within a development as well as create places for relaxation. Images: The Drum, Bo'ness.



**Integrated and multifunctional:** It is important that open space is integrated properly into the layout at the outset with positive functions rather than being left over space or added as an afterthought. Images: Lionthorn, Falkirk



**Future maintenance:** Spaces, including street furniture, signage, paths and landscaping, should be designed to last and for low maintenance. Appropriate long term management and maintenance arrangements should be put in place.





**Natural surveillance:** Windows should overlook onto well-lit streets, paths and open spaces to create natural surveillance. Open spaces that are visible and linked to the green and blue network provide a sense of security through encouraging activity. Images: Carrongrove, Stoneywood



**Road verges:** Grassed road verges can enhance the amenity of streets, and help to reinforce the street hierarchy, especially where planted up with street trees. Images: Kinnaird, Larbert (left) and The Drum, Bo'ness (right)



**Natural play:** Consideration should be given to opportunities for incorporating natural play features into open space such as tree trunks, logs, boulders and fox holes. Images: Kinglass, Bo'ness (left), and Callendar Park, Falkirk (right)



## Other Useful Guidance

Designing Streets

Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play spaces

Falkirk Greenspace

Green Infrastructure: Design and Placemaking

Greenspace Scotland

Inclusive Design Hub website

Open Space Strategy

Play Scotland website

SG02 - Neighbourhood Design Guidance

SG13 - Developer Contributions