

**Falkirk Open Space Strategy and Parks
Development Plan
Strategic Environmental Assessment
Environmental Report**

Falkirk Council

October 2015

Table of Contents

NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

- 1.0 Open Space Strategy and Parks Development Plan
- 2.0 Strategic Environmental Assessment Methodology
- 3.0 Relationship with Other Plans, Programmes and Strategies
- 4.0 Environmental Baseline Information and Current Environmental Protection Objectives
- 5.0 Assessment of Environmental Effects
- 6.0 Mitigation
- 7.0 Assessment of Alternatives
- 8.0 Monitoring
- 9.0 Next Steps

NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Open Space Strategy and Parks Development Plan

The responsibility for managing, maintaining, protecting and regenerating the parks and open spaces across the Falkirk Council area is shared between different Council Services and other organisations such as Falkirk Community Trust, the Forestry Commission, NHS Forth Valley, Scottish Canals and Callendar Estates. With such a range of organisations involved there is the need for a single strategic document to:

- provide a unified vision for the future of the parks and open space resource across the Council area;
- outline the challenges that we face if we are to realise the vision
- set shared objectives which will overcome these challenges; and
- set out a detailed action plan which outlines the actions that need to be taken to achieve the shared objectives.

This single strategic document will amalgamate and replace two existing Council strategies, the Open Space Strategy 2010-2015 and the Parks Development Plan 2008-2011.

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 157,640 is focused within a network of small to medium sized towns. The principal town of Falkirk, with a population of around 39,000,

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.

The Council area has an abundance of open space. As part of the Council's open space audit approximately 24.5km² of parks and open space across 632 separate sites were surveyed representing a Council wide ratio of approximately 15.9 hectares per 1000 people. 27.6% of the total number of surveyed open spaces (representing 64.0% of the total area of open space) were assessed as "fit for purpose". And Council wide nearly 66% of households within towns and villages were within a 5 minute walk (400m) of a "fit for purpose" open space.

Consultation Process

In accordance with Section 15 (3) of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act, Falkirk Council have agreed a 12 week Consultation period for Statutory responses (Scottish Ministers/ Historic Environment Scotland (HES)/ The Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) and Scottish Natural Heritage). The public consultation period will also run for a period of 12 weeks from 7.12.15 until 29.2.16.

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 Strategy and Parks Development Plan (The Strategy) on the environment. The assessment indicates the environmental benefits and potential environmental impacts of its implementation.

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. The Strategy 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 and Proposed Mitigation

The implementation of the Open Space Strategy and Parks Development Plan has the potential to have significant environmental effects. The likely significant positive environmental effects of implementing the Strategy are:

- the ecological value of our parks and open spaces should improve;
- the number of households within an acceptable walking distance of different types of open space should improve;
- the number of households within an acceptable walking distance of “fit for purpose” open space should improve;
- participation in outdoor recreation should increase;
- the health and wellbeing quality of our parks and open spaces should improve;
- the connectivity of the open space network and the active travel network should improve;
- our ability to mitigate increased flood risk caused by a changing climate should improve; and
- the design and aesthetic quality of our parks and open spaces should improve.

The likely significant negative effects of implementing the Strategy are:

- The overall rate of open space provision across the Council area (which is measured as the number of hectares per 1000 people) is likely to reduce;
- The average walking distance to open spaces containing a playspace or a sports area may increase; and
- The overall quality of regional, settlement and neighbourhood level open spaces could decrease with a consequential impact on the percentage of households which have access to a “fit for purpose” open space within a 400m walk.

To mitigate these significant negative effects the following measures are proposed:

- A Council wide quality standard has been drafted to ensure that the rate of open space provision in any settlement area does not drop below 5ha/1000 people. Where communities currently have access to less open space than this, proposals for the creation of new open space have been included within the appropriate area strategies at section 5 of the Strategy.
- Playspaces which have been identified as potentially surplus to requirements will be slowly phased out rather than withdrawn immediately. Although this will not reduce the ultimate significance of the effect, it will reduce the initial impact.
- A future review of the Strategy will be able to identify open spaces as priorities for improvement in areas which no longer have access to fit for purpose open space within a 400m walk as a result of any deterioration in quality of settlement or neighbourhood level open space.

The assessment of environmental effects of the Strategy is presented in full in Section 5 of the Environmental Report.

Alternatives Considered

It is a statutory requirement of an SEA to consider alternatives to achieve the desired outcomes of the Strategy. The scope for considering alternatives within the Strategy is very wide. The main alternatives considered were:

- Alternative vision
- Alternative strategic proposals
- Alternative standards and policies

Given this breadth of this environmental assessment and the fact that the vision, strategic proposals, standards and policies dictate the content of the individual area strategies, it was not considered to be proportionate or necessary to carry out further environmental assessment of the individual area strategies. Assessment of alternatives is detailed in Section 5 of the Environmental Report.

Monitoring

Following adoption of the Strategy, 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 8 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 Strategy. If necessary changes will be made to the Strategy before a finalised version is presented to the Council's Executive for approval. Once approved a SEA Statement will be issued and environmental monitoring will be agreed and implemented.

1.0 FALKIRK OPEN SPACE STRATEGY AND PARKS DEVELOPMENT PLAN

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The responsibility for managing, maintaining, protecting and regenerating the parks and open spaces across the Falkirk Council area is shared between different Council Services and other organisations such as Falkirk Community Trust, the Forestry Commission, NHS Forth Valley, Scottish Canals and Callendar Estates. With such a range of organisations involved there is the need for a single strategic document to:

- provide a unified vision for the future of the parks and open space resource across the Council area;
- outline the challenges that we face if we are to realise the vision
- set shared objectives which will overcome these challenges; and
- set out a detailed action plan which outlines the actions that need to be taken to achieve the shared objectives.

1.1.2 This single strategic document will amalgamate and replace two existing Council strategies, the Open Space Strategy 2010-2015 and the Parks Development Plan 2008-2011.

Key Facts

Name of Responsible Authority	Falkirk Council
Reason for PPS	Scottish Planning Policy indicates that the Development Plan should be informed by relevant, up to date audits, strategies and action plans covering green infrastructure's multiple functions. The preparation of an Open Space Strategy and Parks Development Plan will fulfil the Council's obligations.
Plan Subject	Land Use Planning/ Open Space and Recreation
Period Covered by Plan	The Strategy will cover a five year period from adoption.
Frequency of Updates	Updates will ideally take place every 5 years to coincide with Local Development Plan preparation.
Plan Area	The Falkirk Council Administrative Area
Plan Purpose	To provide a unified vision for the future of the parks and open space resource across the Council area.
Key Contact	Danny Thallon Planning Officer Falkirk Council Development Services Abbotsford House, David's Loan, Falkirk. FK2 7YZ

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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 Strategy.

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

- Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005
- 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 7 May 2014
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 14 October 2015,
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 9 October 2014
Scoping Consultation	The Consultation Authorities (CA) advise on the scope of the Environmental Report. At this stage the timescale for consultation on the Environmental Report following receipt of consultation responses is determined.	Responses to Scoping Request received from Consultation Authorities via SEA Gateway on 10 November September 2014. Responses to comments received during the scoping stage are outlined at appendix 1 of this report.

Environmental Report	The consultative draft Open Space Strategy and Parks Development Plan is assessed against the SEA Objectives and Indicators. Assessment of reasonable alternatives to the consultative draft strategy are also assessed. Requirements for mitigation and monitoring are reported.	This report
Environmental Report Consultation	The CA will provide a response on the Environmental Report via the SEA Gateway within 12 weeks of receipt. The CA will advise on the adequacy of the information contained within the Environmental Report. This consultation includes public consultation.	To Follow
Adoption	The Strategy will be finalised taking into account the consultation responses. Once finalised, the Strategy will be formally adopted.	To Follow
Post-Adoption SEA Statement	The SEA Statement summarises the environmental assessment of the Strategy 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 Strategy.	To Follow

Table 2: SEA Stages and Progress

3.0 RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER PLANS, PROGRAMMES AND STRATEGIES

3.1 National Level Plans, Programmes and Strategies (PPS)

3.1.1 **Scottish Planning Policy** indicates that green infrastructure, including open space and green networks should be protected, enhanced and promoted 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.

3.1.2 Scotland's third **National Planning Framework (NPF3)** identifies the Central Scotland Green Network as a national development with wide ranging environmental objectives including:

- Creating an environment for sustainable economic growth;
- Creating an environment more in balance, one that will support Central Scotland to thrive in a changing climate;
- Creating an environment which supports healthy lifestyles and good physical and mental wellbeing;
- Creating an environment that people can enjoy and where they choose to live and bring up their families; and
- Creating an environment where nature can flourish

3.1.3 Parks and open spaces within the Falkirk Council area form part of the Central Scotland Green Network. NPF3 indicates that, during its lifetime, remediation of derelict land, prioritised action in disadvantaged communities and active travel to maximise community and health benefits should be the priorities for funding.

3.1.4 The **Scotland River Basin Management Plan** aims to progressively improve the ecological status of all water bodies in the Scotland river basin district. The term ecological status includes water quality, water quantity, ecology and physical impacts (including culverting and engineering of watercourses) and the water environment includes all surface waters (including wetlands and transitional waters) and groundwater (including drinking water supplies). The open space strategy could have a role to play in helping to deliver improvements to the ecological status of water bodies within the Council area, particularly through helping to deliver improvements to riparian habitats within open spaces and to restore water courses to their natural status where they are physically impacted.

3.2 Local Level PPS

3.2.1 Falkirk Community Planning Partnership has created a **Single Outcome Agreement** to measure the progress we are making locally to our shared vision for the Falkirk Council area. It contains a series of outcomes which our parks and open spaces can help to achieve:

- We will be healthier and live longer;

- Children will be supported in early years so that they become young people who are confident and successful;
- Our area will be a fairer and more equal place to live; and
- Prosperous businesses will underpin the success of our local economy, providing sustainable and quality employment

3.2.2 The vision of the ***Falkirk Local Development Plan*** is for the Falkirk area 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 and invest. The open space strategy will have a role in creating and maintaining the network of thriving greenspaces and helping to deliver an attractive and sustainable place to live work and invest.

3.2.3 The Council's ***Culture and Sport Strategy "Inspiring Lives"*** recognises that parks and open spaces are one of the places where people make culture and sport happen; they are a focal point for participation and community cohesion, they attract visitors and enhance the image of the area and therefore they need to be fit for purpose. The Strategy also recognises that participation is key to improving a sense of well-being and enriching the lives of people of all ages and therefore structures need to be in place to encourage and enable grass roots participation in parks and open spaces. The Strategy is also clear that any forward plans for parks and open space need to be aligned to partner expectations to ensure opportunities for investment are maximised.

3.2.4 ***Falkirk Greenspace – A Strategy for our Green Network*** aims to connect areas of natural, semi-natural and man-made open spaces within our towns and villages, and create links into the wider countryside. The strategy recognises that the development of a high quality, multi-functional green network will provide a range of benefits for people, businesses and wildlife across our area. Priority actions are proposed conserving 9 themes:

- Economic Development and Placemaking
- Tackling Vacant and Derelict Land
- Outdoor Access
- Community Growing
- Education Services
- Woodland
- Water Environment
- Biodiversity; and
- Landscape

3.2.5 The Falkirk Council ***Core Paths Plan*** identifies a network of paths that gives people reasonable (non-motorised) access throughout the Falkirk Council area. It also identifies various opportunities to expand the core path network across the entire district. The open space strategy can play a role in helping to deliver these opportunities for expansion.

3.2.6 The consultative draft ***Falkirk Forestry and Woodland Strategy*** envisages that by 2055 an expanded and better connected network of high quality woodland will make a significantly enhanced contribution to Falkirk's economy, the health and well-being of our communities and the quality and resilience of our environments. The open space strategy can play a role in helping to deliver an expanded and better connected network of high quality woodland.

3.2.7 The ***Falkirk Area Biodiversity Action Plan***'s primary objective is to safeguard the local variety of life. In working towards this objective it aims to: protect and enhance our rare and threatened plants, animals and habitats; encourage, inspire and enable the community to take action to conserve their local biodiversity; and promote awareness and understanding of biodiversity. The open space strategy can play a role in helping to deliver all of these aims.

3.2.8 The strategic vision of the ***Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy*** is for a Falkirk Council area where the sustainable use of resources and partnership working had resulted in economically and socially vibrant communities living in a flourishing environment. The open space strategy will have a role in helping to enable socially vibrant communities and creating a flourishing environment.

3.2.9 The ***Flood Risk Management Strategy*** for the Forth Estuary Local Plan District is expected to be published by SEPA in late 2015. It will confirm the immediate priorities for flood risk management in the area as well as setting out the future direction to be taken by all flood risk authorities. The open space strategy will have a role in helping to deliver some of the flood risk management priorities for the Falkirk area which could involve delivering natural flood management measures such as: the creation or restoration of intertidal areas; river or floodplain restoration; and runoff control actions.

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE AND CURRENT ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION OBJECTIVES

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.

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

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 a phase 1 habitat survey of the entire Council area. This provides information about the relative extent of different habitat types and an indication of recent changes to habitat cover.

4.2.5 The 2002 Falkirk Area Biodiversity Action Plan identified twenty priority habitats for targeted action. The 2011 Falkirk Area Biodiversity Action Plan grouped these 20 priority habitats into similar types for the purposes of producing habitat action plans. The priority habitat types which the Open Space Strategy is most likely to affect are: open mosaic habitat on previously developed land (OMHPLD); urban greenspace; and urban wildlife corridors,

these are all contained within the urban broad habitat group of which there was 65km² recorded in the 2008 phase 1 habitat survey.

Existing Environmental Problems – Habitats

4.2.6 Management of parks and other open spaces do not always take account of the priority habitats within it.

4.2.7 When open space is planned as part of a new development it does not often seize the opportunity to create new areas of priority habitat or extend existing areas of priority habitat.

Likely Future Changes without the Open Space Strategy – Habitats

4.2.8 Management of parks and open spaces is unlikely to be specifically targeted for the benefit of priority habitat types. Open mosaic habitat on previously developed land is likely to be promoted for future development rather than being safeguarded as protected open space.

Current Environmental Protection Objectives – Habitats

4.2.9 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.

How objectives have been taken into account – Habitats

4.2.10 As part of its programme of modernising our parks and open spaces, in order to improve the range of benefits parks and open spaces provide, the Strategy proposes:

- to change the management of the parks and open space resource to exploit opportunities to further the conservation of biodiversity; and
- to promote improvement projects which help to develop a high quality, multifunctional green network which will provide a range of benefits for people, businesses and wildlife and to the ecological status of water bodies across our area.

Current State of the Environment - Habitat Networks

4.2.11 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 3 below shows the 500m dispersal distance habitat networks which exist within the Falkirk Council area:

Table 3: Landscape Metrics for 500m dispersal distance habitat networks 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%

4.2.12 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.

4.2.13 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 4 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.

Table 4: Forest Research Habitat Networks

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	3231	6614	10,604	735	57,069	123

Woodland						
Fen/ Marsh/ Swamp	592	514	1209	197	11,377	54
Neutral Grassland	334	287	544	121	5,110	77

Existing Environmental Problems – Habitat Networks

4.2.14 The management of existing parks and open space is not routinely designed for the wider benefit of habitat networks which may surround the site.

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

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

Likely Future Changes without the Open Space Strategy – Habitat Networks

4.2.17 The Strategy will set out the factors that should be taken into account when considering declaring an existing open space as surplus to requirements and has the opportunity to include the open space's value as part of the habitat network as one of these factors . Without the strategy therefore, open spaces which form part of a wider habitat network may be declared as surplus to requirements and lost to development.

Current Environmental Protection Objectives – Habitat Networks

4.2.18 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.

4.2.19 Scottish Planning Policy states that the planning system should: *"conserve and enhance protected sites and species, taking account of the need to maintain healthy ecosystems and work with the natural processes which provide important services to communities; and seek benefits for biodiversity from new development where possible, including the restoration of degraded habitats and the avoidance of further fragmentation or isolation of habitats"*

How objectives have been taken into account – Habitat Networks

4.2.20 As part of its programme of modernising our parks and open spaces, in order to improve the range of benefits parks and open spaces provide, the

Strategy proposes to promote improvement projects which help to develop a high quality, multifunctional green network which will provide a range of benefits for people, businesses and wildlife and to the ecological status of water bodies across our area.

Current State of the Environment - Woodland

4.2.21 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.

4.2.22 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)

4.2.23 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.

4.2.24 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.

4.2.25 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 2013 approximately 1.4 million trees have been planted on an area covering 587.58ha 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 5.35ha per year. This is compared to a rate of 50.5ha per year between 1997 and 2007.

Existing Environmental Problems – Woodland

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

Likely Future Changes without the Open Space Strategy – Woodland

4.2.27 Existing open spaces may have significant potential to accommodate new woodland planting. Without the open space strategy the opportunity to increase the rate of woodland planting across the Council area through encouraging new woodland planting within open spaces may be missed.

Current Environmental Protection Objectives – Woodland

4.2.28 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 2013 this figure stood at 18% (1,410,000ha). To meet the vision of the Strategy, this will therefore require the planting of just under 15000ha of new woodland per year if the 25% figure is to be reached by 2050. This was last achieved in Scotland in 1990 and the current rate of new woodland planting (5 year average between 2010 and 2014) is less than half of that required (6600ha per year)

4.2.29 Scottish Planning Policy indicates that the planning system should: *“protect and enhance ancient semi-natural woodland as an important and irreplaceable resource, together with other native or long-established woods, hedgerows and individual trees with high nature conservation or landscape value.”*

How objectives have been taken into account – Woodland

4.2.30 The strategy does not specifically address the opportunity to promote existing parks and open spaces as locations for new woodland planting. It does however propose:

- The exploitation of opportunities to further the conservation of biodiversity; and
- The promotion of improvement projects which help to develop a high quality, multifunctional green network which will provide a range of benefits for people, businesses and wildlife and to the ecological status of water bodies across our area.

4.2.31 A number of these improvement projects will involve the creation of new woodland.

Current State of the Environment - Species Biodiversity

4.2.32 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.

4.2.33 Table 5 below sets out the priority species of urban habitats:

Table 5: Priority Species of Urban Habitats

Mammals	Birds	Amphibians	Invertebrates	Plants
Brown long-eared bat	Bullfinch	Common frog	Common blue butterfly	Bluebell
Soprano pipistrelle bat	Green woodpecker	Common toad		Dune helleborine

¹

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

Hedgehog	Kestrel			Field scabious
Water vole	Sand martin			Harebell
	Spotted flycatcher			Ox-eye daisy
	Swallow			Wych elm
	House sparrow			Young's helleborine
	Lesser redpoll			
	Song thrush			
	Starling			
	Swift			

4.2.34 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

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

4.2.36 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.

Existing environmental problems – Species Biodiversity

4.2.37 The management of parks and open spaces doesn't necessarily take account of biodiversity or work to benefit it.

4.2.38 A number of open spaces contain invasive, non native species where no clear plan exists for their containment/ removal.

Likely Future Changes without the Open Space Strategy – Species Biodiversity

4.2.39 Without the open space strategy, a policy on invasive, non native species monitoring and control within open spaces may not be formulated and they may spread further.

4.2.40 Without the open space strategy the management of parks and open spaces will not be likely to take account of biodiversity or work to benefit it.

Current Environmental Protection Objectives – Species Biodiversity

4.2.41 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.

4.2.42 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.

4.2.43 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.

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

4.2.45 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.

4.2.46 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.

How objectives have been taken into account – Species Biodiversity

4.2.47 As part of its programme of modernising our parks and open spaces, in order to improve the range of benefits parks and open spaces provide, the Strategy proposes to:

- change the management of the parks and open space resource to exploit opportunities to further the conservation of biodiversity
- promote improvement projects which help to develop a high quality, multifunctional green network which will provide a range of benefits for people, businesses and wildlife and to the ecological status of water bodies across our area.

Current State of the Environment - Protected Sites

4.2.48 Falkirk Council area has a number of local, national and internationally designated sites for nature conservation shown on map 4 at the end of this chapter.

4.2.49 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

4.2.50 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

4.2.51 Local designations:

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

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

Existing Environmental Problems – Protected Sites

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

Likely Future Changes without the Open Space Strategy – Protected Sites

4.2.54 Without the open space strategy, parks and open spaces which form part of protected sites may not be specifically managed for the benefit of the conservation status of the protected site.

Current Environmental Protection Objectives – Protected Sites

4.2.55 Scottish Planning Policy indicates that the planning system should: *“conserve and enhance protected sites and species, taking account of the need to maintain healthy ecosystems and work with the natural processes which provide important services to communities.”*

How objectives have been taken into account – Protected Sites

4.2.56 The Strategy sets out the Council's policy for identifying surplus parks and open spaces. One of the factors to be considered is whether the area is of significant ecological value. This should ensure that protected sites are conserved.

4.2.57 As part of its programme of modernising our parks and open spaces, in order to improve the range of benefits parks and open spaces provide, the Strategy proposes to change the management of the parks and open space resource to exploit opportunities to further the conservation of biodiversity.

Current State of the Environment - Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Value of Open Spaces

4.2.58 The Open Space Audit undertook a fitness for purpose assessment of 612 open spaces. The fitness for purpose assessment included an assessment of the biodiversity and nature conservation value of each of these open spaces. The assessment considered factors such as: whether the site was designated for its wildlife or biodiversity value; whether natural heritage features were an important feature of the site and if so whether they were being conserved or neglected; if there was any evidence of rare plant or animal species and whether the site was managed appropriately to encourage biodiversity.

4.2.59 Of the 612 open spaces, biodiversity and nature conservation value was considered to be a primary factor affecting fitness for purpose in 153 sites. Table 6 below outlines the results of the assessment.

Table 6: Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Value of sites where this is a primary factor influencing fitness for purpose

Hierarchy Level	Number of Spaces	Average Score (Out of 5)	Percentage of sites with Good or better Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Value
National	23	3.57	87.0%
Regional	26	4.35	96.2%
Settlement	54	3.48	90.7%
Neighbourhood	50	3.18	82.0%
Sub - Total	153	3.54	88.2%
Residual open spaces	459	1.85	21.1%

4.2.59 Table 6 shows that the vast majority of open spaces where biodiversity and nature conservation value is a primary factor affecting fitness for purpose score good or better for biodiversity and nature conservation value.

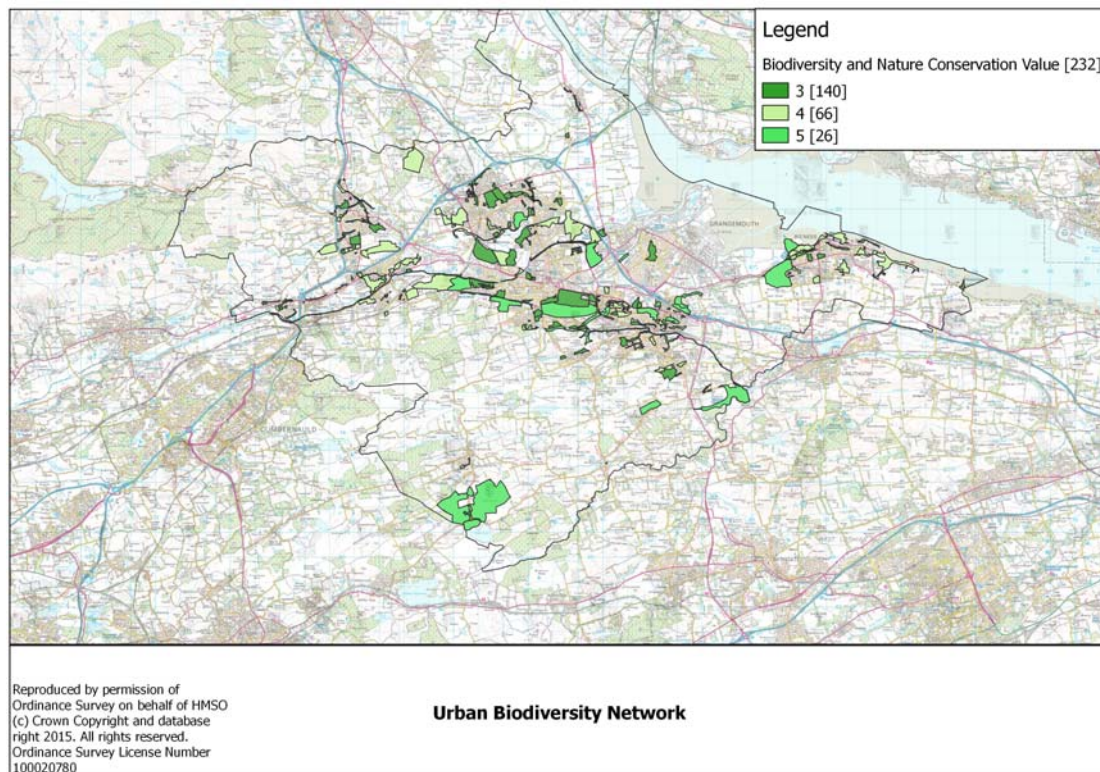
4.2.60 Of those open spaces where biodiversity and nature conservation value is not a primary factor affecting fitness for purpose only 21.1% (97 sites) achieved a score of good or better for biodiversity and nature conservation value in the fitness for purpose assessment.

4.2.61 There are 232 open spaces which scored good or better for biodiversity and nature conservation value in the fitness for purpose assessment. These sites could be considered as contributing towards an urban biodiversity network and are shown in map 1 below.

4.2.62 Of the 612 open spaces surveyed as part of the second open space audit 169 of them had previously been surveyed as part of the first open space audit. Of those 169 sites surveyed as part of the first 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 percentage point since the first audit with 27 sites improving their scores and only 4 deteriorating.

Table 4: Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Value audit comparison.

Average score 1 st audit	3.66
Average score 2 nd audit	3.99
Sites improving	27
Sites deteriorating	4



Map 1: Urban biodiversity network

Existing Environmental Problems - Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Value of Open Spaces

4.2.63 The biodiversity and nature conservation value of national level open spaces has significant room for improvement. Many of the lower scoring national level open spaces comprise part of the canal network so this could form a particular focus for action.

4.2.64 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.

Likely Future Changes without the Open Space Strategy - Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Value of Open Spaces

4.2.65 Without the open space strategy, improving the biodiversity and nature conservation value of those open spaces where it is a primary factor affecting fitness for purpose and performance is poor may not be a priority for investment. This would mean that potentially significant cumulative positive effects may not be realised.

Current Environmental Protection Objectives – Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Value of Open Spaces

4.2.66 Section 1.1 of the Nature Conservation Scotland Act (2004) states that “It is the duty of every public body and office-holder, in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions”.

How objectives have been taken into account – Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Value of Open Spaces

4.2.67 Of the 153 parks and open spaces across the Council area where biodiversity and nature conservation value is a primary factor affecting their fitness for purpose, 88.2% of them score good or better for biodiversity and nature conservation value.

4.2.68 As part of its programme of modernising our parks and open spaces the Strategy proposes that the Council should invest in our poorer quality parks and open spaces where there is no better quality alternative provision nearby. Inevitably some of the 11.8% of parks and open spaces where biodiversity and nature conservation value is a primary factor affecting their fitness for purpose and which score worse than good for biodiversity and nature conservation value, will become targets for investment. This should lead to an overall improvement in the biodiversity and nature conservation value of open spaces.

4.2.69 Additionally, As part of its programme of modernising our parks and open spaces, in order to improve the range of benefits parks and open spaces

provide, the Strategy proposes to change the management of the parks and open space resource to exploit opportunities to further the conservation of biodiversity.

4.2.70 This change of maintenance regime should help to improve the biodiversity and nature conservation value of existing parks and open spaces.

4.3 Population and Human Health

Current State of the Environment - Quality of Accessibility within Open Space

4.3.1 The Open Space Audit undertook a fitness for purpose assessment of 612 open spaces. As part of the fitness for purpose assessment, one of the criteria assessed was the quality of accessibility within the open space. The assessment considered factors such as: access to the surrounding community; the quality of footpaths within the site; the safety of footpaths; whether there was equal access to all groups; whether the site seems welcoming; whether there is appropriate signage; and whether the site is well or under utilised.

4.3.2 The quality of accessibility within the open space was considered to be a primary factor affecting the fitness for purpose in all 612 sites. Table 7 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	23	3.57	100%
Regional	26	2.92	69.2%
Settlement	161	2.78	61.5%
Neighbourhood	402	2.48	47.8%
Total	612	2.62	54.4%

Table 7: Quality of Accessibility

4.3.3 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.

4.3.4 Of the 612 open spaces surveyed as part of the second open space audit 169 of them had previously been surveyed as part of the first open space audit. Table 8 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 1 st audit	2.64
Average score 2 nd audit	2.78
Sites improving	40
Sites deteriorating	38

Table 8: Quality of Accessibility 2007 audit comparison.

Existing Environmental Problems - Quality of Accessibility within Open Space

4.3.5 The quality of accessibility within neighbourhood level open spaces is of particular concern with only 47.8% of sites scoring good or better for quality of accessibility.

Likely Future Changes without the Open Space Strategy - Quality of Accessibility within Open Space

4.3.6 Without the open space strategy, any themed efforts to improve the quality of accessibility within open space may not be targeted to where it is most needed.

Current Environmental Protection Objectives – Quality of Accessibility within Open Space

4.3.7 Scottish Planning Policy indicates that the planning system should: *“provide for easy and safe access to and within green infrastructure, including core paths and other important routes, within the context of statutory access rights under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003.”*

How Objectives Have Been Taken Into Account – Quality of Accessibility within Open Space

4.3.8 The quality of accessibility within open space is a primary factor affecting the fitness for purpose of all parks and open spaces across the Council area. 54.4% of them score good or better for quality of accessibility.

4.3.9 As part of its programme of modernising our parks and open spaces the Strategy proposes that the Council should invest in our poorer quality parks and open spaces where there is no better quality alternative provision nearby. Inevitably some of the 45.6% of parks and open spaces which score worse than good for quality of accessibility, will become targets for investment. This should lead to an overall improvement in the quality of accessibility within open space.

Current State of the Environment - Accessibility to Open Space

4.3.10 Table 9 below shows the percentage of households within each settlement with access to different functions of open space within defined walking distances and the percentage of households within each settlement with access to fit for purpose open space within 400m.

Settlement Area	Fit for purpose open space within 400m	Park or amenity open space bigger than 0.2ha within 400m	Open space containing a playspace within 400m	Open space containing a sports area within 800m	Natural/ Semi Natural Open Space within 1200m
Bo'ness	75.0%	98.8%	57.7%	80.0%	98.5%
Bonnybridge and Banknock	55.8%	92.9%	75.1%	44.5%	99.5%
Denny	78.8%	90.7%	73.3%	92.5%	99.0%
Falkirk	74.5%	87.5%	68.2%	71.8%	99.4%
Grangemouth	60.5%	78.3%	76.1%	89.8%	86.2%

Settlement Area	Fit for purpose open space within 400m	Park or amenity open space bigger than 0.2ha within 400m	Open space containing a playspace within 400m	Open space containing a sports area within 800m	Natural/ Semi Natural Open Space within 1200m
Larbert and Stenhousemuir	58.1%	90.8%	86.9%	89.3%	99.6%
Polmont Area	66.0%	81.9%	71.9%	72.1%	99.1%
Rural North	59.9%	51.9%	73.8%	79.1%	93.0%
Rural South	24.8%	81.3%	68.5%	86.9%	74.8%
Rural Villages	34.1%	73.6%	69.9%	84.8%	79.6%
Urban Settlements	67.7%	87.9%	72.8%	77.7%	97.7%
Falkirk Council	65.7%	85.6%	72.6%	78.1%	96.6%

Table 9: Accessibility to different types of open space

Existing Environmental Problems – Accessibility to Open Space

4.3.11 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.

4.3.12 Based on analysis of the second open space audit it appears that Council wide only 63.3% of households are within 400m of a fit for purpose open space and 72.6% of households are within 400m of an open space containing a playspace.

Likely Future Changes without the Open Space Strategy - Accessibility to Open Space

4.3.13 Without the open space strategy is unlikely that open space investment will be targeted at increasing the number of households with access to different functions of open space within the various walking distances set out in table 9 (or any other walking distance threshold which the Council chooses to adopt). This will mean that the improvement of those non fit for purpose open spaces which would best improve the number of households with access to fit for purpose open spaces may not be priorities. It also seems likely that without the strategy, little progress will be made in addressing the inequalities in access between the different settlement areas.

Current Environmental Protection Objectives – Accessibility to Open Space

4.3.14 Scottish Planning Policy indicates that the planning system should: *“provide for easy and safe access to and within green infrastructure, including core paths and other important routes, within the context of statutory access rights under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003.”*

How Objectives Have Been Taken Into Account – Accessibility to Open Space

4.3.15 The Strategy proposes that the Council should make investment decisions which aim to increase the percentage of households which meet the various accessibility standards set out in the Open Space Strategy. Those accessibility standards are that people should live no more than:

- 400m walk from a surveyed open space which is good quality;
- 400m walk from a public park, garden or amenity space of greater than 2000m²;
- 800m walk from an open space containing a playspace;
- 1200m walk from an open space containing a sports area; and
- 1200m walk from a natural/ semi natural open space.

4.3.16 Where an area is not within the minimum walking distances to the different functions of open space (park or amenity space, playspace, sports area, natural/ semi natural open space), the Strategy proposes that the Council should:

- promote the provision of new open space within new development sites;
- encourage wider unrestricted public access to privately managed sports facilities;
- introduce new facilities into existing open spaces create new entrances to existing open spaces which shorten travel time; and
- create missing links in the local path network which shorten travel time.

4.3.17 Taken together the actions above should provide for easy access to parks and open space within the Council area.

Current State of the Environment - Health and Wellbeing Quality of Open Space

4.3.18 The Open Space Audit undertook a fitness for purpose assessment of 612 open spaces. As part of the fitness for purpose assessment, one of the criteria assessed was the health and wellbeing quality of the open space. The assessment considered factors such as: the extent to which the open space promotes good human health and feelings of wellbeing; whether it is used by the community for sport and exercise; whether there are an appropriate level of facilities to enable people to play sport and take exercise; whether it benefits the wellbeing of the local community; and whether it feels safe and secure.

4.3.19 The health and wellbeing quality of the open space was considered to be a primary factor affecting the fitness for purpose of 380 sites. Table 10 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	22	4.17	100%
Regional	26	3.58	88.5%
Settlement	161	3.11	82.0%
Neighbourhood	170	2.65	58.2%
Sub-Total	380	3.00	72.9%
Residual open spaces	232	1.99	16.8%

Table 10: Health and Wellbeing Quality of sites were this is a primary factor influencing fitness for purpose

4.3.20 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.

4.3.21 Of the 612 open spaces surveyed as part of the second open space audit 169 of them had previously been surveyed as part of the first open space audit. Of those 169 sites surveyed as part of the first audit, health and wellbeing quality was considered to be a primary factor affecting fitness for purpose in 155 sites. Table 11 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 11: Health and Wellbeing Quality audit comparison.

Existing Environmental Problems - Health and Wellbeing Quality of Open Space

4.3.22 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 58.2% of sites scoring good or better for health and wellbeing quality.

4.3.23 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 16.8% of 232 sites achieving a score of good or better.

Likely Future Changes without the Open Space Strategy - Health and Wellbeing Quality of Open Space

4.3.24 Without the open space strategy, any themed efforts to improve the health and wellbeing quality of open space may not be targeted to where it is most needed.

Current Environmental Protection Objectives – Health and Wellbeing Quality of Open Space

4.3.25 The Scottish Government has set out 15 National Outcomes that it wants to work towards over the next 10 years, including to “live longer healthier lives”

4.3.26 Falkirk Council’s single outcome agreement contains a specific outcome stating that “we will be healthier and live longer”

How Objectives Have Been Taken Into Account – Health and Wellbeing Quality of Open Space

4.3.27 Of the 380 parks and open spaces across the Council area where health and wellbeing quality is a primary factor affecting their fitness for purpose, 72.9% of them score good or better for health and wellbeing quality

4.2.28 As part of its programme of modernising our parks and open spaces the Strategy proposes that the Council should invest in our poorer quality parks and open spaces where there is no better quality alternative provision nearby. Inevitably some of the 27.1% of parks and open spaces where health and wellbeing quality is a primary factor affecting their fitness for purpose and which score worse than good for health and wellbeing quality, will become targets for investment. This should lead to an overall improvement in the health and wellbeing quality of open spaces.

Current State of the Environment - Participation in Outdoor Recreation

4.3.29 The Scottish Household survey monitors how often people make visits to the outdoors and how often people visit their nearest usable greenspace. Disaggregation of the figures to a local authority level most recently took place in 2013 so it is difficult to discern what local participation in outdoor recreation actually is. Table 12 below shows the frequency of visits made to the outdoors in Falkirk and Scotland.

Frequency of visits made to the outdoors	Falkirk Percentage	Scotland Percentage
One or more times a week	35	46
At least once a month	27	20
At least once a year	21	18
Not at all	16	16

Table 12: Participation in outdoor recreation

4.3.30 The Scottish Household Survey also monitors how often people use their nearest usable greenspace. Again disaggregation of results took place in 2013 and results are shown in table 13 below.

Frequency of how often uses nearest useable greenspace	Falkirk Percentage	Scotland Percentage
Every day / Several times a week	37	36
Once a week	11	13
Once a month	17	15
Less often	16	12
Not at all	19	24

Table 13: Use of nearest usable greenspace

4.3.31 A survey of Falkirk Council residents was undertaken asking how frequently they visited the area's five large parks, other smaller, more local parks and other open spaces such as nature reserves, the canal or woodland areas. Table 14 shows the results of the survey.

Frequency of visits made to open space	Large Parks	Local Parks	Other Outdoor Spaces
Every day	3%	7%	5%
Several Times a week	9%	11%	9%
Once a week	11%	8%	7%
Several times a month	15%	13%	12%
Once a month	14%	10%	11%
4 or 5 times a year	21%	16%	16%
less than 4 times a year	18%	20%	18%
never	7%	14%	18%
don't know	1%	2%	3%

Table 14: Frequency of visits made to open space in Falkirk

4.3.32 The survey of residents also asked people who rarely or never use parks and open spaces to identify the main reasons why not. Roughly a third of respondents to the survey identified themselves as rarely or never visiting parks and open spaces. Table 15 shows the results of the survey:

Reason for not visiting parks and open spaces more often	Percentage of Responses
I don't like outdoor activities	6.17%
They're too far away	11.73%
There's too much dog mess	36.42%
I don't feel safe	9.26%
There's too many children	3.70%
They're not very well kept	11.73%
There's too many bikes on the paths	19.75%
I don't like sports	4.32%
The children's play areas aren't very good	6.79%
There's nothing for me to do	12.35%
There's nothing for my children to do	1.85%
Other (please specify)	38.89%

Table 15: Reasons why people rarely or never use parks and open spaces.

Existing Environmental Problems – Participation in Outdoor Recreation

4.3.33 People in Falkirk visit the outdoors significantly less frequently than the Scottish average.

4.3.34 People in Falkirk are less likely to visit other outdoor spaces such as nature reserves, the canal or woodland areas than parks.

4.3.35 By far the most common stated reason for rarely or never visiting parks or open spaces was that there is too much dog mess, with a significant number of respondents indicating that there were too many bikes on the paths.

Likely Future Changes without the Open Space Strategy – Participation in Outdoor Recreation

4.3.36 In the absence of the open space strategy attempts to increase participation in outdoor recreation may not be approached in a strategic fashion and rates of participation may not improve.

Current Environmental Protection Objectives – Participation in Outdoor Recreation

4.3.37 One of the Scottish Government's national indicators is to increase people's use of Scotland's outdoors.

How Objectives Have Been Taken Into Account – Participation in Outdoor Recreation

4.3.38 As part of its programme of modernising our parks and open spaces the Strategy proposes that the Council should make investment decisions which encourage people to improve their health by:

- increasing their use of parks and open spaces; and
- walking or cycling to parks and open spaces.

4.3.39 To achieve this the Strategy proposes that the Council should:

- Renew its focus on tackling dog fouling within and around parks and open spaces;
- Develop a strategy for encouraging more considerate use of bicycles within parks and open spaces;
- Encourage people to access parks and open space by advertising what facilities there are within the Falkirk area and promote the benefits of using them;
- Seek to ensure the provision of good quality open space offering a range of activities within a reasonable distance of every household;
- Improve the active travel network connecting our parks and open spaces;
- Increase the number of parks and open spaces connected to the active travel network; and
- Improve the quality of paths within our parks and open spaces.

4.4 Soil

Current State of the Environment - Vacant and Derelict Land

4.4.1 Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land Survey (2014) showed 150ha is derelict and urban vacant land. Of the national figure, Falkirk accounts for 1.4% of the 2014 total, this has reduced since 2002 when the Falkirk total accounted for 2.7% of the national figure. Vacant and derelict land has decreased by 62% across the Falkirk Council area between 1996-2014 (from 395 ha to 150 ha). The percentage of the population living within 500m of a derelict site has reduced from 15.1% in 2008 to 11.1% in 2014

4.4.2 Of the 78 sites within the Council area which are classified a derelict and urban vacant land approximately 25% of them are in Council ownership so there is a realistic prospect they could be promoted for re-use as open space if it meets a need identified by the Open Space Strategy.

4.4.3 28 of the parks and open spaces which formed part of the open space audit contain some vacant and derelict land.

Existing Environmental Problems – Vacant and Derelict Land

4.4.3 The area still suffers a post-industrial legacy of vacant and derelict sites, and of townscapes fragmented by roads/parking infrastructure and insensitive development of recent decades.

Likely Future Changes without the Open Space Strategy - Vacant and Derelict Land

4.4.4 Without the open space strategy, Council owned vacant and derelict land may not be promoted for re-use as open space even if it could meet a local need and as such the level of vacant and derelict land may not decrease as fast as it otherwise could.

Current Environmental Protection Objectives – Vacant and Derelict Land

4.4.5 Scotland's third National Planning Framework (NPF3) identifies the Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN) as a national development with wide ranging environmental objectives. NPF3 identifies the remediation of derelict land as a priority for the CSGN Trust and others during the lifetime of NPF3.

4.4.6 One of the priority action themes of Falkirk Greenspace – A Strategy for our Green Network is to tackle vacant and derelict land. The vision of the strategy is that where appropriate, vacant and derelict sites within Falkirk Council will be managed to enhance the overall green network to encourage inward investment, and for the benefit of biodiversity and local communities.

How Objectives Have Been Taken Into Account – Vacant and Derelict Land

4.4.7 As part of its programme of working and investing more efficiently the Strategy proposes that the Council develop a set of projects and priorities which not only help to deliver the vision of the Strategy but also helps to deliver the aims of other related Council strategies; and align with the priorities of external funding partners.

4.4.8 11 of the priority actions contained within the area strategies are on land which has been classified as vacant or derelict, so the Strategy should assist in remediating vacant and derelict land. Additionally, where there is Council owned vacant or derelict land close to areas where there is a deficiency in access to different functions of open space, this land could potentially be used to meet local open space needs.

4.5 Water

Current State of the Environment – Ecological Status of the Water Environment

4.5.1 There are over 200km of river, streams and ditches with flowing water in the Falkirk Council area. Since 2007 SEPA have used an extensive classification system in order to comply with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive (WFD). Elements of the classification system now include assessments of water quality, fish populations, hydrology, alien species and a biological indicator for nutrients. SEPA identify 25 water bodies within the Council area: 21 within the river category and 4 within the estuary category. The number of water bodies in each classification for 2011, 2012 and 2013 is shown below:

Year	Good status	Moderate status	Poor status	Bad status
2010	8	9	8	0
2011	8	8	8	1
2012	8	11	5	1
2013	8	10	6	1

Table 16: WFD classification of water bodies

4.5.2 In 2013 waterbodies deteriorating in status were:

- River Avon (Jawhills to Logie Water Confluence);
- River Carron (Bonny Water Confluence to Carron Estuary; and
- Bonny Water/ Red Burn

And those improving in status were:

- Auchenbowie Burn (Loch Coulter Reservoir to River Carron);
- Pow Burn/ Tor Burn (from source to confluence with Sauchenford Burn); and
- Upper Forth Estuary

Existing Environmental Problems – Ecological Status of the Water Environment

4.5.3 Diffuse source pollution is a particular problem on the Bonny Water and the River Carron (from the Bonny Water confluence). This is mainly an urban problem upstream of the confluence with the River Carron.

4.5.4 Point source pollution is a more widespread problem adversely affecting the River Carron; River Avon; Forth Estuary; Bonny Water and the Union Canal. In the main this is from sewage disposal, however there are also problems caused by other refuse disposal, chemical production, food production and other manufacturing processes.

4.5.5 Although water quality is generally improving, there are ongoing quality concerns about pollution incidents and ongoing pollution from urban run-off

4.5.6 There are known sewerage constraints in the Falkirk council area and without maintenance of the infrastructure there could be potential impacts on water quality or ecological value of watercourses. Significant impacts would occur if poorly maintained private plants were used as a result of lack of investment.

4.5.7 Culverting poses a threat to water quality and may heighten flood risk.

4.5.8 Development generally affects water runoff rates and water quality. SUDS is now required on sites as a matter of course and can offer opportunities for the promotion of biodiversity and improved water quality.

4.5.9 Morphological impact on water bodies which are a problem in the Falkirk area include: barriers to fish migration, poor quality of riparian zone and wetland habitats, poor quality of river channel/bed and/or banks/shoreline and poor quality of modified water body (canals) habitat.

Likely Future Changes without the Open Space Strategy – Ecological Status of the Water Environment

4.5.10 The open space strategy could have a role to play in helping to deliver improvements to the ecological status of water bodies within the Council area, particularly through helping to deliver improvements to riparian habitats within open spaces and helping to restore water courses to their natural status where they are physically impacted. Without the open space strategy the potential to have a positive environmental effect on the ecological status of the water environment will be reduced

Current Environmental Protection Objectives – Ecological Status of the Water Environment

4.5.11 The Scotland River Basin Management Plan aims to progressively improve the ecological status of all water bodies in the Scotland river basin district.

How Objectives Have Been Taken Into Account – Ecological Status of the Water Environment

4.5.12 As part of its programme of modernising our parks and open spaces the Strategy proposes that the Council should:

- change the management of the parks and open space resource to exploit opportunities to further the conservation of biodiversity and reduce overall flood risk; and
- promote improvement projects which help to develop a high quality, multi-functional green network which will provide a range of benefits for people, businesses and wildlife and to the ecological status of water bodies across our area.

4.5.13 To do this the Strategy proposes that the Council:

- Identify opportunities to change the maintenance regime of its parks and open spaces to enhance the ecological status of water bodies; and
- Support a range of projects which deliver improvements to riparian habitats within open spaces and to restore water courses to their natural status where they are physically impacted.

Current State of the Environment – Flood Risk

4.5.14 The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SRFA) contained within technical report 4 of the Local Development Plan contains a review of all available information on flood risk in the Council area including: the SEPA Indicative Flood Risk map; a specially commissioned study of flood risk in Grangemouth; assorted flood risk studies commissioned to accompany prospective development proposals across the area; and historic flooding records held by the Council. This information has been used to help decide when development proposals and opportunities within the LDP are likely to take place within areas at high risk of flooding.

4.5.15 Coastal flooding is an issue along the estuary, with particular implications for Grangemouth and Bo'ness given the prospect of sea level rise. A flood defence scheme has been constructed in Bo'ness and studies are underway to design a flood prevention scheme for Grangemouth although it is not expected to be constructed in the short term.

4.5.16 There are localised flooding problems associated with a number of other watercourses in the area, most notably the River Carron and River Avon.

Existing Environmental Problems – Flood Risk

4.5.17 Coastal flooding poses a threat to areas in Bo'ness and Grangemouth.

4.5.18 Fluvial flooding poses a threat to areas in Grangemouth, Bonnybridge, Carron and Dunipace.

Likely Future Changes without the Open Space Strategy – Flood Risk

4.5.19 The open space strategy could have a role in helping to deliver some of the flood risk management priorities for the Falkirk area which could involve delivering natural flood management measures such as: the creation or restoration of intertidal areas; river or floodplain restoration; and runoff control actions. Without the open space strategy therefore the potential to have a positive environmental effect through reducing flood risk will be reduced.

Current Environmental Protection Objectives – Flood Risk

4.5.20 The Council has a duty under the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 to exercise flood risk related functions with a view to reduce overall flood risk.

How Objectives Have Been Taken Into Account – Flood Risk

4.5.21 As part of its programme of modernising our parks and open spaces the Strategy proposes that the Council should:

- change the management of the parks and open space resource to exploit opportunities to reduce overall flood risk;

4.5.22 In order to achieve this, the Strategy proposes that the Council should:

- Support the development of flood risk management measures within existing parks and open spaces which have been identified within the Local Flood Risk Management Plan or Surface Water Management Plan.

4.6 Material Assets

Current State of the Environment - Active travel links

4.6.1 Falkirk Council maintains over 450km 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.

4.6.2 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.

4.6.3 Table 17 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	181
Within 50m of the core path network	373
Within 100m of the core path network	452

Table 17: Open Spaces connected to the core path network

4.6.4 A survey of Council residents asked how people got to the area's five large parks, other smaller, more local parks and other open spaces such as nature reserves, the canal or woodland areas. Table 18 below shows the results of the survey.

Method of transport	Large Parks	Local Parks	Other Outdoor Spaces
On Foot	17.44%	47.43%	49.19%
By Bicycle	5.16%	4.86%	9.71%
On the Bus	6.39%	3.43%	3.88%
Car/ Motorbike	71.01%	44.29%	37.22%

Table 18: Method of travel to parks and open spaces in the Council area.

4.6.5 People are more likely to travel to one of the large parks by motorised transport than by active modes of transport, whereas people are more likely to travel to local parks and other open spaces by active modes of transport than motorised transport.

Existing Environmental Problems – Active Travel Links

4.6.6 In some areas there are still inadequate walking and cycling links to

good quality, usable open space leading to reduced participation in outdoor recreation and fewer people travelling by active travel modes.

4.6.7 The percentage of people using motorised transport to access local parks or other open spaces is surprisingly high (47.7% and 41% respectively) and should be seen as an area where improvements should be targeted.

Likely Future Changes without the Open Space Strategy – Active Travel Links

4.6.8 Expanding the active travel network is primarily the task of the Core Path Plan, however, it can be influenced to increase the level of connection between the active travel network and the area's parks and open spaces by the open space strategy.

4.6.9 In the absence of the open space strategy it may be more difficult to increase the number of people visiting parks and open spaces by active modes of travel.

Current Environmental Protection Objectives – Active Travel Links

4.6.10 One of the Scottish Government's national indicators is to increase the proportion of journeys to work made by public or active transport.

4.6.11 Falkirk Greenspace – A Strategy for Our Green Network identifies the creation of an accessible green network as one of its themed priority actions. The strategy's vision is that we shall have a well used, managed, maintained and marketed path network serving people living, working and visiting the Council area.

How Objectives Have Been Taken Into Account – Active Travel Links

4.6.12 As part of its programme of working and investing more efficiently the Strategy proposes that the Council should:

- create new entrances to existing open spaces which shorten travel time;
- and create missing links in the local path network which shorten travel time

4.6.13 As part of its programme of modernising our parks and open spaces the Strategy proposes that the Council should:

- promote improvement projects which help to develop a high quality, multi functional green network which will provide a range of benefits for people and businesses; and
- make investment decisions which encourage people to improve their health by increasing their use of parks and open spaces and walking or cycling to parks and open spaces.

4.6.14 To achieve this, the Strategy proposes that the Council should:

- Support a range of projects which improve the green network in and around the Council area by improving open space sites and corridors and their connectivity;
- Improve the active travel network connecting our parks and open spaces; and
- Increase the number of parks and open spaces connected to the active travel network.

4.7 Landscape

Current State of the Environment - Quantity of Open Space

4.7.1 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 19, 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 19: Quantity of open space Falkirk Council wide

4.7.2 The Council undertook an audit of 632 parks and open spaces between 2013 and 2015. Table 20 below shows the amount of open space within the different settlement areas across the district.

Settlement Area	Area of Open Space (Hectares)	Population (2013 mid year estimate)	Hectares of open space/1000 people 2013
Bo'ness	243.7	14,531	16.8
Bonnybridge and Banknock	127.8	12,424	10.3
Denny	154.5	13,184	11.7
Falkirk	795.0	38,886	20.4
Grangemouth	100.1	17,269	5.8
Larbert and Stenhousemuir	223.6	25,498	8.8
Polmont Area	274.0	22,308	12.3
Rural North	70.9	2,691	26.3
Rural South	458.6	7,178	63.9
Rural Villages	529.5	9,869	53.7
Urban Settlements	1919.4	144,100	13.3
Falkirk Council	2448.9	153,969	15.9

Table 20: Amount of open space within settlement areas

4.7.3 It is worth noting that the open space audit surveyed approximately 30% of the total open space resource within 1200m of a settlement boundary (shown in table 19 above) 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.

Existing Environmental Problems - Quantity of Open Space

4.7.4 Although there is generally an abundance of open space across the Council area (15.9 hectares per 1000 people), there are localities where this is not the case i.e. in the villages of: Airth; Avonbridge; California; Dunmore; Shieldhill; and Skinflats.

Likely Future Changes without the Open Space Strategy - Quantity of Open Space

4.7.5 Without the open space strategy the Council could inadvertently allow the loss of open space in communities where the current rate of provision is below or marginally above the 5ha/1000 people standard, thereby exacerbating current problems.

Current Environmental Protection Objectives – Quantity of Open Space

4.7.6 Scottish Planning Policy indicates that planning should protect, enhance and promote green infrastructure, including open space and green networks, as an integral component of successful placemaking.

How Objectives Have Been Taken Into Account – Quantity of Open Space

4.7.7 The Strategy sets a quantity standard that each community should have access to open space at a rate equivalent to 5 hectares per 1000 people. It also sets out a policy which means that other than in a number of limited circumstances, the sale of Council owned open space or planning applications which would result in the loss of open space will not be supported in settlements which fall below the 5ha/1000 people standard.

Current State of the Environment - Design and Aesthetic Quality of Open Space

4.7.8 The Open Space Audit undertook a fitness for purpose assessment of 612 open spaces. As part of the fitness for purpose assessment, one of the criteria assessed was the design and aesthetic quality of the open space. The assessment considered factors such as whether the open space optimised its design opportunity; whether it was inspiring; and whether its design was a creative response to its environment.

4.7.9 The design and aesthetic quality of the open space was considered to be a primary factor affecting the fitness for purpose of 444 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	6	4.5	100%
Regional	4	3.8	100%
Settlement	82	2.6	56.1%
Neighbourhood	351	2.0	23.4%
Sub - Total	443	2.2	31.2%
Residual open spaces	169	2.5	48.5%

Table 21: Design and Aesthetic Quality of sites were this is a primary factor influencing fitness for purpose

4.7.10 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.

4.7.11 Of the 612 open spaces surveyed as part of the first open space audit 169 of them had previously been surveyed as part of the second 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 1 st audit	2.02
Average score 2 nd audit	2.51
Sites improving	41
Sites deteriorating	4

Table 22: Design and Aesthetic Quality 2007 audit comparison.

Existing Environmental Problems - Design and Aesthetic Quality of Open Space

4.7.12 The design and aesthetic quality of open space and its relationship to surrounding development can have a positive impact on overall townscape quality. There are many locations where the design and aesthetic quality of open space is low or where its relationship to surrounding development has not been given enough consideration at the planning stage which means that the potential to positively impact on townscape quality has not been fully realised.

4.7.13 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.

4.7.14 The design and aesthetic quality of settlement level open spaces where this is a primary factor affecting fitness for purpose is a little better with 56.1% of them achieving a score of good or better, however it is still a cause for concern.

Likely Future Changes without the Open Space Strategy - Design and Aesthetic Quality of Open Space

4.7.15 The open space strategy is likely to work to increase the percentage of open spaces which are fit for purpose, this is likely to lead to the percentage of open spaces (where design and aesthetic quality is a primary factor affecting fitness for purpose) scoring good or better for design and aesthetic quality increasing. Without the open space strategy there can be no guarantee that performance will improve.

Current Environmental Protection Objectives – Design and Aesthetic Quality of Open Space

4.7.16 Scottish Planning Policy indicates that planning should protect, enhance and promote green infrastructure, including open space and green networks, as an integral component of successful placemaking.

4.7.17 Planning Advice Note 65 – Planning and Open Space indicates that open spaces should be designed to reduce vandalism and, where appropriate, maintenance with the use of high quality durable materials and incorporating elements of interest, for example through public art.

How Objectives Have Been Taken Into Account – Design and Aesthetic Quality of Open Space

4.7.18 Of the 443 parks and open spaces across the Council area where design and aesthetic quality is a primary factor affecting their fitness for purpose, only 31.2% of them score good or better for design and aesthetic quality.

4.7.19 As part of its programme of modernising our parks and open spaces the Strategy proposes that the Council should invest in our poorer quality parks and open spaces where there is no better quality alternative provision nearby. Inevitably some of the 68.8% of parks and open spaces where design and aesthetic quality is a primary factor affecting their fitness for purpose and which score worse than good for design and aesthetic quality, will become targets for investment. This should lead to an overall improvement in the design and aesthetic quality of open spaces.

Current State of the Environment - Fitness for Purpose of Open Space

4.7.20 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 detailed description of how the fitness for purpose assessment was carried out is contained within appendix 5 of the consultative draft Open Space Strategy. As part of the open space audit an assessment of fitness for purpose was carried out for 612 of the 632 open spaces. Table 18 below shows that the quality of open space varies across the Council area.

Settlement Area	Number of open spaces	Average score of an open space in the fitness for purpose assessment	Percentage of total number of open spaces which are fit for purpose	Percentage of total area of open space which is fit for purpose
Bo'ness	48	2.49	33.3%	69.3%
Bonnybridge and Banknock	82	2.29	15.0%	44.0%
Denny	51	2.48	19.6%	47.9%
Falkirk	124	2.62	36.4%	69.8%
Grangemouth	33	2.55	28.1%	50.3%
Larbert and Stenhousemuir	109	2.38	18.6%	40.5%
Polmont Area	103	2.53	31.3%	66.0%
Rural North	21	2.83	35.0%	5.1%
Rural South	61	2.52	34.4%	84.4%
Rural Villages	82	2.60	34.6%	73.8%
Urban Settlements	550	2.48	26.6%	61.3%
Falkirk Council	632	2.50	27.6%	64.0%

Table 23: Quality of open space within settlement areas

4.7.21 The table above shows that although only 27.6% of the sites surveyed scored good or better fitness for purpose, they represent 64.0% of the total area of open space surveyed.

4.7.22 Of the main urban settlement areas, Falkirk has the best quality of open space with: the second highest average score in the fitness for purpose assessment (2.62); the highest percentage (36.4%) of the total number of open spaces scoring good or better in the fitness for purpose assessment and the highest percentage (69.8%) of the total area of open space scoring good or better in the fitness for purpose assessment.

4.7.23 Bonnybridge and Banknock have the worst overall quality of open space with the lowest average score (2.29) in the fitness for purpose assessment; the lowest percentage (15.0%) of the total number of open spaces scoring good or better in the fitness for purpose assessment and the third lowest percentage (44.0%) of the total area of open space scoring good or better in the fitness for purpose assessment.

4.7.24 There appears to be two tiers of quality of open space provision across the Council area with a greater number of larger, higher quality open spaces in Bo'ness, Falkirk, Polmont and the Rural South and significantly less of these in Bonnybridge and Banknock, Denny, Grangemouth and Larbert and Stenhousemuir. The rural north area is unusual in that it has a high average quality score and a high percentage of open spaces which are fit for purpose but a very small total area of open spaces which are fit for purpose, this is because there are a small number of very large open spaces which are not fit for purpose in the rural north area.

4.7.25 Table 24 below shows that generally the higher an open space is in the hierarchy of importance, the more likely it is to score good or better fitness for purpose.

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	23	3.61	356.8	90.0%	98.9%
Regional	26	3.28	957.6	73.1%	84.4%
Settlement	162	2.77	764.3	41.6%	45.9%
Neighbourhood	421	2.27	370.3	15.7%	14.5%

Table 24: Quality of open spaces at different levels of the hierarchy of importance

4.7.26 Of the 612 open spaces surveyed as part of the second open space audit 169 of them had previously been surveyed as part of the first open space audit. Table 25 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 the first audit to 39.5% in the second audit. 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% to 68.7%.

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 25: Fitness for Purpose Audit Comparison

Existing Environmental Problems - Fitness for Purpose of Open Space

4.7.27 The majority of settlement and neighbourhood level open spaces across the Council area are not fit for purpose at 58.4% and 84.3% respectively.

4.7.28 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 the total area of open space within Bo’ness, Falkirk, Polmont and the Rural South which is fit for purpose (66.0% - 84.4%) open than there is in Bonnybridge and Banknock, Denny, Grangemouth, Larbert and Stenhousemuir and the Rural North (5.1% - 50.3%).

Likely Future Changes without the Open Space Strategy - Fitness for Purpose of Open Space

4.7.29 The open space strategy is likely to direct a proportion of investment towards improving parks and open spaces which are not currently fit for purpose. Without the open space strategy therefore the positive effects which any open space investment programme would have on the number of open space which are fit for purpose may not be achieved.

Current Environmental Protection Objectives – Fitness for Purpose of Open Space

4.7.30 PAN65 indicates that open space designers, planners and managers should be aware of the potential to improve the quality of our environment and create long-lasting, beautiful places of which we can be proud. To achieve this, green and civic spaces must be fit for purpose and have a relationship with the surrounding buildings and uses, and the movements through them.

How Objectives Have Been Taken Into Account – Fitness for Purpose of Open Space

4.7.31 The open space audit involved an assessment of the fitness for purpose of 612 parks and open spaces across the Council area. The Strategy

indicates that people should live no further than 400m walk from an open space which scored “good” or better in the fitness for purpose assessment. The Strategy also sets a minimum target score for different levels of open space to aim for i.e. 3.0 for national and regional level; 2.5 for settlement level; and 2 for neighbourhood level open spaces. 10 national and regional level open spaces are highlighted as priorities for quality improvement within the various area strategies as part of the Strategy’s efforts to meet these targets.

4.7.32 The area strategies set out an open space improvement programme which is driven by an attempt to meet these open space standards, so the Strategy should be able to increase the overall fitness for purpose of open space across the Council area.

4.7.33 As part of its programme of modernising our parks and open spaces the Strategy proposes that the Council should invest in our poorer quality parks and open spaces where there is no better quality alternative provision nearby. 49 separate parks and open spaces are identified within the area strategies as priorities for quality improvement.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF THE STRATEGY

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 The purpose of the SEA assessment is to highlight any aspect of the elements which make up the plan which have the potential for environmental effects (both positive and negative).

5.2 Assessment Methodology

5.1.2 The assessment of the SG is based on a matrix approach assessing the alternative approaches the SG could recommend against the SEA topics which have been 'scoped in' to the assessment. The assessment matrix is presented in Section 5.4 below.

Table 26: SEA Objectives and Assessment Questions

SEA Sub issue	SEA Objective	Assessment Questions
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna		
Habitats	Maintain or extend the extent of priority habitat types associated with parks and open space spaces across the Council area.	Does the alternative maintain or extend the extent of open mosaic habitat on previously developed land, urban greenspace and urban wildlife corridors (as defined by the a phase 1 habitat survey) associated with parks and open space spaces across the Council area?
Habitat Networks	Enable parks and open spaces to expand and improve the wider Falkirk Integrated Habitat Network.	Does the alternative promote the integration parks and open spaces into the wider habitat network?
		Does the alternative help to expand and improve the integrated habitat network?
Woodland	Increase the rate of woodland planting across the Council area	Will the alternative increase the rate of woodland planting across the Council area?
Species Biodiversity	Help to implement the aspirational projects set out in the Falkirk Area Biodiversity Action Plan	Will the alternative help to implement the aspirational projects set out in the Falkirk Area Biodiversity Action Plan?
Protected Sites	Help to secure the appropriate management of sites protected for their nature conservation value	Will the alternative help to secure the appropriate management of sites protected for their nature conservation value?
Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Value of Open Spaces	Improve the biodiversity and nature conservation value of parks and open spaces	Will the alternative improve the biodiversity and nature conservation value of existing open spaces within the Council area?
Population and Human Health		

SEA Sub issue	SEA Objective	Assessment Questions
Quality of Accessibility within Open Space	Improve the quality of accessibility within parks and open spaces	Will the alternative improve the quality of accessibility within existing open spaces?
Accessibility to Open Space	Improve access to different types of open space	Will the alternative promote access to open space of different types? Will the alternative assist in meeting the accessibility standards to different types of open space set out in the Open Space Strategy?
Health and Wellbeing Quality of Open Space	Maximise the contribution that new and existing open space makes towards peoples' health and wellbeing	Will the alternative improve the health and wellbeing quality of existing and new open space?
Participation in outdoor recreation	Increase the levels of participation in outdoor recreation	Will the alternative increase the levels of participation in outdoor recreation?
Soil		
Vacant and Derelict Land	Decrease the amount of vacant and derelict land	Will the alternative decrease the amount of vacant and derelict land in the Falkirk Council area
	Increase the amount of vacant and derelict land rehabilitated as open space	Will the alternative increase the amount of vacant and derelict land which has been rehabilitated as open space?
Water		
Ecological status of the water environment	Prevent deterioration and improve the status of the water environment	Will the alternative prevent the deterioration of the water environment?
		Will the alternative improve the status of the water environment?
Flood Risk	Contribute to the mitigation of floods and droughts	Will the alternative contribute to the mitigation of floods and droughts?

SEA Sub issue	SEA Objective	Assessment Questions
	Reduce overall flood risk	Will the alternative reduce overall flood risk?
Material Assets		
Active Travel Links	Increase the connectivity of the core path network and the open space network	Will the alternative increase the connectivity of the core path network and the open space network?
	Increase the percentage of people who travel to parks and open spaces by active forms of travel	Will the alternative increase the percentage of people using active travel to get to parks and open spaces?
Landscape		
Quantity of open space	Ensure each community has access to 5ha/1000 people of open space.	Will the alternative help to ensure each community has access to 5ha/1000 people of open space?
Design and Aesthetic Quality of Open Space	Enhance the design and aesthetic quality of open spaces	Will the alternative improve the design and aesthetic quality of existing and new open spaces?
Fitness for purpose of Open Space	Enhance the overall fitness for purpose of parks and open spaces	Will the alternative enhance the overall fitness for purpose of existing open spaces?

Table 27: SEA Assessment Matrix Key

Significant positive effect	Positive effect	Neutral effect	Unknown effect	Negative effect	Significant negative effect
++	+	N	?	-	--

5.4 SEA Assessment Matrix

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
<p>Vision Alternative 1- “Our parks and open spaces will be well used and will provide a modern, sustainable and diverse resource which will improve the health and enrich the lives of all of the communities they serve.”</p>	+	++	N	N	+	N	<p>If the “communities” which are served by our parks and open spaces are taken to include the flora and fauna within and surrounding them then this will have a cumulatively significant positive effect on biodiversity. As the vision doesn’t make this clear, only positive effects are recorded.</p> <p>Well used open space which improves the health of the communities it serves will have a cumulatively significant positive effect on population and human health through improving the health and wellbeing quality of open space and increasing participation in outdoor recreation</p> <p>The vision is silent on the issues of vacant and derelict land, the ecological status of the water environment and flood risk. Neutral effects on soil and water are predicted.</p> <p>If it is assumed that well used parks and open spaces will implicitly need to be connected to</p>	<p>The vision should be altered to make specific reference to aspirations for the parks and open space resource to: be beneficial to flora and fauna; help to enhance the ecological status of the water environment; reduce flood risk; be well connected to the active travel network; be fit for purpose and be of high design quality.</p>

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
							<p>the active travel network then the connectivity of the open space and active travel networks will be increased leading to a cumulatively significant positive effect on material assets. As the vision doesn't make this clear, only positive effects are recorded.</p> <p>A park and open space resource which is well used, modern, sustainable and diverse is not necessarily fit for purpose or of good design and aesthetic quality. Neutral effects on landscape are therefore predicted</p>	
<p>Vision alternative 2 – The Vision of the 2010 Open Space Strategy was to “secure the long-term improvement to the quality and accessibility of Falkirk’s open spaces, so that they can provide a truly sustainable and diverse resource for the benefit of the communities they serve.”</p>	+	++	N	N	+	++	<p>If the “communities” which are served by Falkirk’s open spaces are taken to include the flora and fauna within and surrounding them then this will have a cumulatively significant positive effect on biodiversity. As the vision doesn't make this clear, only positive effects are recorded.</p> <p>Improving the accessibility of Falkirk’s open spaces will have a cumulatively significant positive effect on population and human health</p>	<p>The vision should be altered to make specific reference to aspirations for the parks and open space resource to: be beneficial to flora and fauna; be of greater benefit to human health; be well connected to the active travel network; help to enhance the ecological status of the water environment; reduce flood risk;</p>

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
							<p>The vision is silent on the issues of vacant and derelict land, the ecological status of the water environment and flood risk. Neutral effects on soil and water are predicted.</p> <p>If it is assumed that the proposed improvement to the accessibility of Falkirk's open spaces will implicitly lead to an increased connectivity with the active travel network, then this will lead to a cumulatively significant positive effect on material assets. As the vision doesn't make this clear, only positive effects are recorded.</p> <p>Securing a long term improvement to the quality of Falkirk's open spaces will have a cumulatively significant positive effect on landscape</p>	
Vision Alternative 3 – "Our parks and open spaces will be high quality, well used and well connected and will provide a modern, sustainable and diverse	++	++	N	++	++	++	<p>If our parks and open spaces are of significant ecological value then this will have a cumulatively significant positive effect on biodiversity and water</p> <p>Parks and open spaces which are well connected, well used and improve the health of</p>	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health		Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures	
<p>resource which will: improve the health and enrich the lives of all of the communities they serve; be of significant ecological value; and help to mitigate the effects of climate change”</p>								<p>the communities they serve will have a cumulatively significant positive effect on population and human health (through improving: accessibility to open space; health and wellbeing quality of open space; and participation in outdoor recreation) and material assets (through improving connectivity with the active travel network)</p> <p>Parks and open spaces which are of high quality will have a cumulatively significant positive effect on landscape (through improving the design and aesthetic quality and fitness for purpose of open space)</p>		
Modernising our parks and open spaces - Which parks and open spaces should we be seeking to improve?										
<p>Alternative 1 - continue focussing capital investment solely on the Helix, the 7 Core Parks identified in the 2003 Culture and Leisure Strategy and poorly performing play areas identified in the previous Parks Development Plan</p>	+	-	+	N	N	N	-	-	<p>Continuing a strategy of investing solely in the higher tier parks and open spaces which are already of good quality or the as yet unimproved play areas identified in the previous Parks Development Plan could lead to a disproportionate deterioration of the fitness for purpose of the remainder of the parks and open space resource. This could have cumulatively significant negative effects on population and human health (through a reduction in the overall health and wellbeing quality and quality</p>	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health		Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape		Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
									of accessibility of open space) and landscape (through a reduction in the overall fitness for purpose and design and aesthetic value of open space) but also a positive effect on biodiversity; population and human health and landscape (through improving the: biodiversity and nature conservation value; health and wellbeing quality; quality of accessibility and design and aesthetic quality of the Helix and the seven core parks and to the fitness for purpose of the remaining poorly performing play areas)	
Alternative 2 - re-focus all investment on the poorer quality parks and open spaces which are particularly valued by the local community and where there is no better quality alternative provision	++	+	-	N	N	N	+	-	This investment strategy should lead to cumulatively significant positive effects on: biodiversity; population and human health; and landscape (through improving the: biodiversity and nature conservation value; health and wellbeing quality; quality of accessibility; design and aesthetic quality and fitness for purpose of the poorer quality parks and open spaces) it could also have negative effects on population and human health and landscape (through the a reduction in the: health and wellbeing quality; quality of accessibility; design and aesthetic quality and fitness for purpose of the Helix and the six of the	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
	++	++	N	N	N	++	seven core parks as, although these open spaces are valued by the community, they are not generally of such poor quality that they would be priorities for continued investment)	
<p>Alternative 3 - re-focus some investment on the poorer quality parks and open spaces where there is no better quality alternative provision and some on the parks and open spaces which are particularly valued by the local community whilst maintaining investment and revenue budgets in the higher level open spaces which serve a more strategic function and raise the tourism profile of the Council area.</p>	++	++	N	N	N	++	Effects are similar to alternative 2 above other than negative effects on population and human health and landscape are avoided as investment and revenue budgets in higher level open spaces are maintained to avoid a deterioration in their quality.	
<p>Modernising our parks and open spaces - What sports and play facilities should we be providing within our parks and open spaces?</p>								
<p>Alternative 1 - Continue to maintain and upgrade</p>	N	--	N	N	N	--	This approach will maintain accessibility to open spaces containing a playspace and open	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health		Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape		Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
our existing sports pitches and equipped play spaces, accepting that with reducing capital and revenue budgets, over time the overall play and sports development value will decline									spaces containing a sports area at current levels, however with reducing capital and revenue budgets and a predicted reduction in overall play and sports development value this will have a cumulatively significant negative effect on population and human health (through an overall reduction in the health and wellbeing value of existing playspaces and sports areas) and landscape (through an overall reduction in the fitness for purpose of existing playspaces and sports areas)	
Alternative 2 - Reduce the overall number of separate sports pitches and play areas we maintain, allowing capital and revenue budgets to be released to enable investment in a more modern portfolio of play and sports facilities which have a higher overall play and sports development value.	N	-	+	N	N	N	-	+	This approach will have a negative effect on population and human health (through a negative effect on levels of accessibility to playspaces and sports areas) and landscape (through a reduction in quantity of open space) but should have a cumulatively significant positive effect on population and human health (through enabling an overall improvement in the health and wellbeing value of the remaining playspaces and sports areas) and landscape (through enabling an improvement in the fitness for purpose of remaining playspaces and sports areas)	
Modernising our parks and open spaces - How can we encourage more people to use our parks and open spaces?										

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
Alternative 1 - Do nothing	N	N	N	N	N	N		
Alternative 2 - Aim to deliver wider health benefits by decreasing the amount of people who rarely or never use parks and open spaces; and increasing the amount of people who choose to walk or cycle to parks and open spaces.	N	++	N	N	+	+	Cumulatively this should have a significant positive effect on population and human health (through increasing participation in outdoor recreation). Some of the actions taken to achieve this aim may also have positive effects such as: efforts of improve accessibility to and within open space; improving the connectivity of the network of open spaces to the active travel network; and improving the design and aesthetic quality of open spaces.	
Modernising our parks and open spaces – How can we improve the range of benefits our parks and open spaces provide?								
Alternative 1 - Develop a strategy for the long term improvement of its parks and open spaces without having specific regard to its biodiversity and flood risk management duties or the aims of Falkirk Greenspace	N	N	N	N	N	++	This alternative would focus open space investment purely on improving the open space resource. Cumulatively significant positive effects on landscape are predicted (through improving the overall percentage of open spaces which are fit for purpose)	
Alternative 2 - Change	++	++	N	++	++	+	Cumulatively this should have significant	Can anything more be done to

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
<p>the management of the parks and open space resource to exploit opportunities to further the conservation of biodiversity, reduce overall flood risk and promote improvement projects which help to develop a high quality, multi-functional green network which will provide a range of benefits for people, businesses and wildlife and to the ecological status of water bodies across our area.</p>							<p>positive effects on biodiversity (through helping to implement aspirational projects set out in the Falkirk Biodiversity Action Plan, and improving the biodiversity and nature conservation value of open spaces) population and human health (through increasing participation in outdoor recreation) water (through reducing flood risk and improving the ecological status of the water environment) and material assets (through improving the connectivity of the open space network with the active travel network)</p> <p>The significant positive effects on landscape predicted for alternative 1 above are likely to be reduced in magnitude as investment will not solely be made to improve the fitness for purpose of open spaces</p>	<p>help deliver aims surrounding vacant and derelict land?</p>
<p>Addressing inequality and fostering community through open space investment - How should we address the inequality of park and open space provision across our communities?</p>								
<p>Alternative 1 - Give investment priority to those areas and open spaces which need improving the most</p>	N	N	N	N	N	++	<p>Cumulatively this should have a significant positive effect on landscape (through improving the percentage of open spaces which are fit for purpose)</p>	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
Alternative 2 - Spread investment equally across all communities.	N	N	N	N	N	+	Investment in improving the quality of open space is likely to have a positive effect on landscape (through improving the percentage of open spaces which are fit for purpose) but if this isn't targeted to those open spaces which are most in need, then the magnitude of improvement is unlikely to be as significant as alternative 1 above .	
Addressing inequality and fostering community through open space investment - How can we foster community cohesion through open space investment?								
Alternative 1 - Actively encourage the increased involvement of community groups in the management and improvement of parks and open spaces	N	+	N	N	N	N	Arguably, the active encouragement of the involvement of community groups in the management and improvement of open space could have a positive effect on population and human health (through increasing participation in outdoor recreation)	
Alternative 2 - Continue to act as the primary guardian of parks and open spaces, providing support to community organisations with an interest in parks and open spaces only where they actively seek it	N	N	N	N	N	N	No environmental effects predicted	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
Working and investing more efficiently – How can we maintain our parks and open spaces more efficiently?								
Alternative 1 - Continue to maintain the majority of our parks and open spaces uniformly, accepting that as revenue budgets become tighter there will have to be an overall lowering of standards	N	N	N	N	N	-	Cumulatively significant negative effect on landscape (through a reduction in the fitness for purpose of open spaces)	
Alternative 2 - Identify those parks and open spaces where: high intensity maintenance regimes are necessary to maintain an appropriate image; and lower intensity maintenance regimes would be more appropriate to save money and enhance value for wildlife.	+	N	N	N	N	-?	This will have a positive effect on biodiversity (through improving the biodiversity and nature conservation value of open space) the effect would be more significant if biodiversity improvements were the sole focus of changing maintenance regimes, it seems unlikely that measures to enhance biodiversity that do not also save money will be unlikely to be favoured. There may still be negative effects on landscape (through a reduction in the fitness for purpose of open space) as it is uncertain whether money saving changes can be promoted which do not also adversely affect the fitness for purpose of open space sites.	Changes to maintenance regimes which also enhance the ecological status of the water environment should be considered.

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
Working and investing more efficiently - What is the best way to improve overall performance against the Council's various open space accessibility standards?								
Alternative 1 - Revise open space accessibility standards to minimise the amount of investment needed to meet the new standards	N	--	N	N	N	N	Revising open space accessibility standards upwards will have a cumulatively significant negative effect on population and human health (through increasing the average walking distance to different functions of open space)	
Alternative 2 - Promote the creation of open spaces within new development sites to meet existing deficiencies	N	+	N	N	N	N	This should have a positive effect on population and human health (through increasing the percentage of households within the appropriate walking distance of different functions of open space)	
Alternative 3 - Introduce new facilities into existing open spaces to meet existing deficiencies; where possible this could be funded through planning gain	N	+	N	N	N	N	This should have a positive effect on population and human health (through increasing the percentage of households within the appropriate walking distance of different functions of open space)	
Alternative 4 - Identify where new entrances to existing open spaces; or where missing links in	N	+	N	N	+	N	This should have a positive effect on population and human health (through increasing the percentage of households within the appropriate walking distance of different	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
the active travel network can be created to address deficiencies.							functions of open space) and material assets (through improving the connectivity of the open space and active travel networks)	
Working and investing more efficiently - How can we maximise the improvements achieved through Council investment?								
Alternative 1 - Develop a set of projects and priorities which seek to exclusively deliver the vision of the Open Space Strategy and Parks Development Plan and aim to deliver these projects the use of Council funds alone	++	++	N	++	++	++	This should deliver the same positive environmental effects as the enhanced vision.	
Alternative 2 - Develop a set of projects and priorities which not only help to deliver the vision of the Open Space Strategy and Parks Development Plan but also help to deliver the aims of other related Council strategies; and align with the priorities of	++	++	N	++	++	++	Through leveraging partnership funding even more of the positive effects of the vision will be able to be delivered.	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures	
external funding partners.									
Generating money for investment in parks and open space - How should we raise money for investment in parks and open spaces?									
Alternative 1 - Protect all Council operated parks and open spaces in their current forms and source money for improvement and maintenance of them from existing limited revenue streams	N	--	N	N	N	--	Whilst this will maintain the quantity of open space across the Council area, through spreading available resources thinly this will have a cumulatively significant negative effect on population and human health (through an overall reduction in the health and wellbeing value of existing open spaces) and landscape (through an overall reduction in the fitness for purpose and the design and aesthetic value of existing open spaces) Neutral effects on biodiversity are recorded as a reduction of investment in any specific open space will not necessarily lead to a reduction in the biodiversity and nature conservation value of that open space.		
Alternative 2 - Explore opportunities to generate money for investment in park and open space improvement and maintenance through: selling off parks and	++	+ +	-	N	N	N	+ +	-	This approach will have a negative effect on population and human health (through a potential reduction in participation in outdoor recreation) and landscape (through a reduction in quantity of open space) but should have a cumulatively significant positive effect on biodiversity (through enabling an overall

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
open spaces which are surplus to requirements; and expanding the scheme of charging for the commercial use of parks and open space currently operated by Falkirk Community Trust to parks and open spaces which are directly operated by the Council							improvement in the biodiversity and nature conservation value of remaining open spaces) population and human health (through enabling an overall improvement in the health and wellbeing value of the remaining open spaces) and landscape (through enabling an improvement in the fitness for purpose and design and aesthetic quality of remaining open spaces)	
Standards and Policies								
Quantity Standard – Alternative 1: Each community should have access to open space at a rate equivalent to 5 hectares per 1000 people.	++	++	N	N	N	+ - + -	5ha of open space per 1000 people is lower than the existing rate of open space provision in the majority of our towns and villages (only the villages of Airth, Avonbridge, California, Dunmore, Shieldhill and Skinflats have a rate lower than this), so this alternative could lead to cumulatively significant negative effects on landscape (through a reduction in the quantity of open space). Although cumulatively the loss of open space could be significant, because the minimum rate has been set at 5ha/1000 people this should prevent the amount of open space in	Developing a quantity policy to ensure the rate of open space provision did not drop below the 5ha/1000 people standard would help to ensure the maintenance of this quality standard.

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
							<p>any settlement falling below critical level.</p> <p>The effect of setting the standard at 5ha/1000 people will be to permit the loss of open space in the majority of our settlements, money received from the sale of open spaces should be able to be reinvested in improving the remainder of the open space resource which could cumulatively have a significant positive effect on biodiversity (through improving the biodiversity and nature conservation value of open space) population and human health (by improving the health and wellbeing value of open space) and landscape (by improving the fitness for purpose and design and aesthetic quality of open space)</p>	
<p>Quantity Standard – Alternative 2: Each community should have access to open space at a rate equivalent to 15.9 hectares per 1000 people.</p>	+	+	N	N	N	+ +	<p>15.9 ha of open space per 1000 people is the average rate of open space provision across the Council area. Of the main settlements, only Bo’ness and Falkirk have a higher rate of open space provision and these are the only places where open spaces could be sold to finance improvements of the rest. Therefore in Bonnybridge and Banknock; Denny; Grangemouth; Larbert and Stenhousemuir; the Polmont area and a few rural villages, money</p>	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
							<p>which could have been spent improving the quality of the existing open space resource would need to be diverted towards creating new open spaces.</p> <p>Overall, this is likely to lead to significant positive effects on landscape in some areas (through increasing the quantity of open space) but negative effects in others (through decreasing the quantity of open space) The magnitude of positive environmental effects delivered from reinvestment of money from sale of surplus open spaces is likely to reduce in comparison with alternative 1 above)</p>	
<p>Quantity Policy - Alternative 1: If the quantity of open space within any community falls below 5 hectares per 1000 people then: 1) The sale of Council owned open space will not be supported unless it results in replacement provision of equal or</p>	N	N	N	N	N	N	<p>In the communities which have a rate of open space provision below 5ha/1000 people, this policy should prevent any further loss of open space. Neutral environmental effects are therefore recorded.</p> <p>The communities which have less than 5ha/1000 people of open space will not be able to generate funding for open space improvements by selling off surplus open space. This could leave these communities at a disadvantage.</p>	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
<p>greater size. 2) Planning applications which would result in the loss of open space will not be supported unless they enable replacement provision of an equal or greater size.</p>								
<p>Quantity Policy – Alternative 2: The loss of open space will be sanctioned in communities where the rate of provision is below 5ha/1000 people, if the loss is compensated for by a significant improvement of remaining open space within the community.</p>	+	+	N	N	N	- -	<p>This alternative would allow the loss of open space in communities where the rate of provision is below the 5ha/1000 people standard causing significant negative effects on landscape.</p> <p>As compensation, this alternative would secure the significant improvement of remaining open space within the community. Although improvements would be locally significant, they are unlikely to be significant strategically therefore only positive effects on biodiversity, population and human health and landscape are predicted (due to improvement of the biodiversity and nature conservation value, health and wellbeing quality, design and aesthetic value and overall fitness for purpose</p>	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
<p>Quantity Policy Alternative 3: As per alternative 1 however, planning applications which would result in the loss of open space will not be supported unless they enable replacement provision of an equal or greater size, or there is particular support for the development within the local community, or material considerations outweigh the need to retain the open space.</p>	N	N	N	N	N	--	<p>This alternative would allow the loss of open space in communities where the rate of provision is below the 5ha/1000 people standard causing significant negative effects on landscape.</p>	<p>In communities where the rate of open space provision is below 5ha/1000 people standard opportunities should be sought to create enough new open space to raise local provision above this level.</p>
<p>Quality Standard - Alternative 1: All open spaces should score 3 or better in the fitness for purpose assessment</p>	++	++	N	N	N	++	<p>Of the 612 open spaces which were subject to fitness for purpose assessments, 27.6% scored 3 or better.</p> <p>The majority of sites which score less than 3 in the fitness for purpose assessment (433 out of 443) are either settlement or neighbourhood level open spaces.</p>	<p>It is questionable whether this standard is achievable within current budgetary constraints. Varying the standard to a more achievable level should be considered.</p>

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health		Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures						
								<p>Adopting the standard in this alternative will therefore mean that the majority of open space investment will need to be concentrated in smaller more local open spaces.</p> <p>This alternative will have cumulatively significant positive effect on biodiversity (through enabling an overall improvement in the biodiversity and nature conservation value of remaining open spaces) population and human health (through enabling an overall improvement in the health and wellbeing value of the remaining open spaces) and landscape (through enabling an improvement in the fitness for purpose and design and aesthetic quality of remaining open spaces)</p>							
<p>Quality Standard - Alternative 2: In the fitness for purpose assessment: National and Regional level open spaces should score 3.5 or better; settlement level open spaces should score 2.5 or</p>	++	+	-	N	N	N	+ - + -	<p>The table below shows the number of open spaces at each level of the hierarchy of importance which fall under the variable quality standards proposed in this alternative.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1093 1217 1659 1345"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="1093 1217 1317 1313">Hierarchy</th> <th data-bbox="1317 1217 1491 1313">Number under standard</th> <th data-bbox="1491 1217 1659 1313">Percentage of total</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="1093 1313 1317 1345">National</td> <td data-bbox="1317 1313 1491 1345">13</td> <td data-bbox="1491 1313 1659 1345">68.4%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Hierarchy	Number under standard	Percentage of total	National	13	68.4%	
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Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures									
better; and neighbourhood level open spaces should score 2 or better.							<table border="1" data-bbox="1090 531 1659 630"> <tr> <td>Regional</td> <td>12</td> <td>44.4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Settlement</td> <td>45</td> <td>28.0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Neighbourhood</td> <td>110</td> <td>27.4%</td> </tr> </table> <p data-bbox="1090 662 1659 782">In comparison with alternative 1 above 180 open spaces would be targets for quality improvement rather than 433. This should prove to be a more achievable target.</p> <p data-bbox="1090 813 1659 1212">If the availability of resources to achieve this standard is put to one side, then this alternative will still have cumulatively significant positive effects on biodiversity (through enabling an overall improvement in the biodiversity and nature conservation value of remaining open spaces) population and human health (through enabling an overall improvement in the health and wellbeing value of the remaining open spaces) and landscape (through enabling an improvement in the fitness for purpose and design and aesthetic quality of remaining open spaces)</p> <p data-bbox="1090 1244 1659 1334">This alternative will also mean that the quality target from settlement and neighbourhood level open space will be lower than that pursued in</p>	Regional	12	44.4%	Settlement	45	28.0%	Neighbourhood	110	27.4%	
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Alternative	Biodiversity		Population and human health		Soil	Water	Material Assets		Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures															
										the 2010 Open Space Strategy. This could result in the quality of the 130 settlement and neighbourhood level open spaces which currently score 3 or better in the fitness for purpose assessment falling below that level with a cumulatively significant negative effects on population and human health (through a reduction in the percentage of households with access to fit for purpose open space within 400m) and landscape (through a reduction in the number of open spaces which are fit for purpose)																
Quality Standard - Alternative 3: In the fitness for purpose assessment: National and Regional level open spaces should score 3 or better; settlement level open spaces should score 2.5 or better; and neighbourhood level open spaces should score 2 or better.	++		+ +		-	N	N	N		<p>The table below shows the number of open spaces at each level of the hierarchy of importance which fall under the variable quality standards proposed in this alternative.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1090 1062 1659 1318"> <thead> <tr> <th>Hierarchy</th> <th>Number under standard</th> <th>Percentage of total under standard</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>National</td> <td>3</td> <td>13.0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Regional</td> <td>7</td> <td>26.9%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Settlement</td> <td>45</td> <td>28.0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Neighbourhood</td> <td>110</td> <td>27.4%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Hierarchy	Number under standard	Percentage of total under standard	National	3	13.0%	Regional	7	26.9%	Settlement	45	28.0%	Neighbourhood	110	27.4%	<p>The next open space audit should assess whether this predicted reduction in quality has happened and if so, what effect that has had on the number of households with access to fit for purpose open space within 400m. If an adverse effect is picked up, then these open spaces will be able to be identified as priorities for quality improvement within future reviews of the Strategy.</p> <p>Another way of mitigating this</p>
Hierarchy	Number under standard	Percentage of total under standard																								
National	3	13.0%																								
Regional	7	26.9%																								
Settlement	45	28.0%																								
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Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
							<p>In comparison with alternative 2 above 165 open spaces would be targets for quality improvement rather than 180. This should prove to be a more achievable target.</p> <p>If the availability of resources to achieve this standard is put to one side, then this alternative will still have cumulatively significant positive effects on biodiversity (through enabling an overall improvement in the biodiversity and nature conservation value of remaining open spaces) population and human health (through enabling an overall improvement in the health and wellbeing value of the remaining open spaces) and landscape (through enabling an improvement in the fitness for purpose and design and aesthetic quality of remaining open spaces)</p> <p>This alternative will also mean that the quality target from settlement and neighbourhood level open space will be lower than that pursued in the 2010 Open Space Strategy. This could result in the quality of the 130 settlement and neighbourhood level open spaces which</p>	<p>effect would be to: specifically identify those settlement and neighbourhood level open spaces which are currently fit for purpose and where a deterioration in their quality would lead to a decrease in the number of households with access to a fit for purpose open space within 400m; and indicate that the Council will aim to maintain the current quality of these sites.</p>

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
							currently score 3 or better in the fitness for purpose assessment falling below that level with cumulatively significant negative effects on population and human health (through a reduction in the percentage of households with access to fit for purpose open space within 400m) and landscape (through a reduction in the number of settlement and neighbourhood level open spaces which are fit for purpose)	
<p>Quality Policy Alternative 1: The Council will make investment decisions which aim to increase the percentage of open spaces which meet the quality standard appropriate to their place on the hierarchy of importance.</p>	N	N	N	N	N	+ - + - ?	<p>If, as proposed, quality standard alternative 3 is selected then the Council will make investment decisions which improve the fitness for purpose score of 165 open spaces (representing 15.85% of the total area of surveyed open space) this will have a cumulatively significant positive effect on landscape (through enhancing the overall fitness for purpose of open space)</p> <p>On the other hand, indirectly, 367 open spaces representing 78.90% of the total area of surveyed open space) could be allowed to deteriorate in quality. This could have a cumulatively significant negative effect on landscape (through diminishing the overall fitness for purpose of open space)</p>	<p>Consideration should be given to developing a policy which safeguards the quality of existing open spaces which already achieve a quality score above the target appropriate to their place in the hierarchy of importance.</p> <p>Open spaces which could, if improved, increase the number of households within 400m of a fit for purpose open space have been highlighted as proprieties for improvement within the various area strategies.</p>

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
							It is less certain that not investing in open spaces which already meet the standard appropriate to their level in the hierarchy of importance will actually lead to a deterioration in quality	
Quality Policy Alternative 2: The Council will try and maintain the number of open spaces which meet the quality standard appropriate to their place on the hierarchy of importance.	N	N	N	N	N	N	This alternative would have a neutral overall effect on the overall fitness for purpose of open space, as the proportion of open spaces which meet the standard appropriate to their level in the hierarchy should not change. The significant positive effects realised by the alternative above	
Accessibility Standard 1 – Alternative 1: People should live no more than 400m (5 minutes walk) from a surveyed open space which is good quality.	N	++	N	N	+	++	Currently 65.7% of the households within the towns and villages across the Council area meet this standard. To increase the proportion of households which meet this standard the Council could either: create new, fit for purpose open spaces in areas of identified deficit; or improve the quality of existing non fit for purpose open spaces in areas of identified deficit; or improve the access	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
							<p>network in areas of identified deficit to shorten the walking distance to open spaces which are already fit for purpose.</p> <p>This will; have cumulatively significant positive effects on population and human health (through increasing the proportion of households with access to fit for purpose open space within 400m) and landscape (through increasing the overall fitness for purpose of existing open space) and will also have positive effects on material assets (through improving the connectivity of open spaces to the active travel network) and landscape (through increasing the quantity of open space)</p>	
<p>Accessibility Standard 1 – Alternative 2: People should live no more than 800m (10 minutes walk) from a surveyed open space which is good quality.</p>	N	+?	N	N	+?	+?	<p>A greater proportion of households within the towns and villages across the Council area will meet the standard in this alternative than the standard in alternative 1. The scope for positive environmental effects will therefore be reduced in magnitude in comparison to alternative 1 above, it is uncertain whether they could still be cumulatively significant.</p>	
<p>Accessibility Standard 1 – Alternative 3: People should live no</p>	N	++	N	N	++	++	<p>A smaller proportion of households within the towns and villages across the Council area will meet the standard in this alternative than the</p>	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
more than 400m (5 minutes walk) from a surveyed open space of 2000m ² of greater which is good quality.							standard in alternative 1. The scope for positive environmental effects will therefore be increased in magnitude in comparison to alternative 1 above,	
Accessibility Standard 1 – Alternative 4: People should live no more than 400m (5 minutes walk) from a surveyed open space which meets the relevant quality standard for that level of open space.	N	++	N	N	++	++	A greater proportion of households within the towns and villages across the Council area will meet the standard in this alternative than the standard in alternative 1. The scope for positive environmental effects will therefore be reduced in magnitude in comparison to alternative 1 above, it is uncertain whether they could still be cumulatively significant.	
Accessibility Standard 2 – Alternative 1: People should live no more than 400m (5 minutes walk) from a public park, garden or amenity space	N	++	N	N	++	++	A greater proportion of households within the towns and villages across the Council area will meet the standard in this alternative than the standard in alternative 2. The scope for positive environmental effects will therefore be reduced in magnitude in comparison to alternative 2 below, it is uncertain whether they could still be cumulatively significant.	
Accessibility Standard 2 – Alternative 2: People should live no more than 400m (5	N	++	N	N	+	++	Currently 85.6% of households within the towns and villages across the Council area have access to a public park or garden or amenity space of over 0.2ha.	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
<p>minutes walk) from a public park, garden or amenity space of greater than 2000m².</p>							<p>To increase the proportion of households which meet this standard the Council could either: create new, public park or garden or amenity space of over 0.2ha in areas of identified deficit; or improve the access network in areas of identified deficit to shorten the walking distance to existing public parks or gardens or amenity spaces.</p> <p>This will; have cumulatively significant positive effects on population and human health (through increasing the proportion of households with access to public park or garden or amenity space of over 0.2ha within 400m) and a positive effect on material assets (through improving the connectivity of open spaces to the active travel network) and landscape (through increasing the quantity of open space)</p>	
<p>Accessibility Standard 2 – Alternative 3: People should live no more than 800m (10 minutes walk) from a public park, garden or</p>	N	+?	N	N	+?	+?	<p>A greater proportion of households within the towns and villages across the Council area will meet the standard in this alternative than the standard in alternative 2. The scope for positive environmental effects will therefore be reduced in magnitude in comparison to alternative 2</p>	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health		Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape		Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
amenity space									above, it is uncertain whether they could still be cumulatively significant.	
<p>Accessibility Standard 3 – Alternative 1: People should live no more than 400m (5 minutes walk) from an open space containing a playspace.</p>	N	+	-	N	N	+	+	-	<p>Currently 72.6% of households within the towns and villages across the Council area have access to an open space containing a playspace within 400m</p> <p>To increase the proportion of households which meet this standard the Council could either: create new open spaces containing a playspace within areas of identified deficit; create new playspace within existing open spaces within areas of deficit; or improve the access network in areas of identified deficit to shorten the walking distance to existing public parks or gardens or amenity spaces.</p> <p>Setting the standard at this level will result in the need to create a greater number of new playspaces than the number of surplus playspaces which can be identified, this will have a positive effect on landscape (through increasing the amount of open space) but, given the limited financial resources available, will likely result in an overall decrease in play value with cumulatively significant negative effect on</p>	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
							<p>population and human health (through reducing the health and well being value of open spaces containing a playspace) and landscape (through reducing the design and aesthetic value and overall fitness for purpose of open spaces containing a playspace)</p> <p>Overall this will; have cumulatively significant positive effects on population and human health (through increasing the proportion of households with access to an open space containing a playspace within 400m) and will also have positive effects on material assets (through improving the connectivity of open spaces to the active travel network)</p>	
<p>Accessibility Standard 3 – Alternative 2: People should live no more than 600m (7 and a half minutes walk) from an open space containing a playspace.</p>	N	-	N	N	+	-	<p>Currently 89.9% of households within the towns and villages across the Council area have access to an open space containing a playspace within 600m</p> <p>Setting the standard at this level will result in the need to create roughly the same number of new playspaces as the number of surplus palyspaces which can be identified. Neutral effects on landscape are therefore recorded as</p>	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health		Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
								<p>there is unlikely to be any net increase in the amount of open space.</p> <p>Given the limited financial resources available for investment in playspaces, this alternative will be likely to result in an overall decrease in play value with a negative effect on population and human health (through reducing the health and well being value of open spaces containing a playspace)</p> <p>Overall implementing this alternative will have negative effects on population and human health (through decreasing the proportion of households with access to an open space) containing a playspace within 400m) and landscape (through reducing the design and aesthetic value and overall fitness for purpose of open spaces containing a playspace) however, it will also have positive effects on material assets (through improving the connectivity of open spaces to the active travel network)</p>	
Accessibility Standard 3 – Alternative 3: People should live no	N	+	-	N	N	+	+	Currently 96.7% of households within the towns and villages across the Council area have access to an open space containing a	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
<p>more than 800m (10 minutes walk) from an open space containing a playspace.</p>							<p>playspace within 800m</p> <p>Setting the standard at this level will result in the need to create fewer new playspaces than the number of surplus playspaces which can be identified. Although this will lead to a net reduction in the number of open spaces containing a playspace is does not necessarily mean that there would be a corresponding reduction in the amount of open space e.g. the playspace would be removed but the open space it sits within will remain.</p> <p>Reducing the total number of playspaces will allow limited financial resources to be concentrated on improving the play value of existing playspaces and should result in positive effects on population and human health (through increasing the health and wellbeing value of existing open spaces containing playspaces) and landscape (through improving the design and aesthetic quality and overall fitness for purpose of open spaces containing a playspace)</p> <p>Overall implementing this alternative will</p>	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
							cumulatively significant negative effects on population and human health (through decreasing the proportion of households with access to an open space containing a playspace within 400m) however, it will also have positive effects on material assets (through improving the connectivity of open spaces to the active travel network)	
<p>Accessibility Standard 3 – Alternative 4: People should live no more than 400m (5 minutes walk) from an open space containing a playspace which is of good quality.</p>	?	?	?	?	?	?	<p>Currently 39.6% of open spaces containing a playspace scored good or better in the fitness for purpose assessment. Therefore, a smaller proportion of households within the towns and villages across the Council area will meet the standard in this alternative than the standard in alternative 1.</p> <p>In addition to the need to increase the net number of play areas, implementing this alternative will lead to a need for improvements to be made to existing open spaces containing play areas which are not already fit for purpose this will have a cumulatively significant positive effect on landscape (through increasing the overall fitness for purpose of open spaces</p>	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health		Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape		Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
								<p>containing a play area)</p> <p>Unless there is a net reduction in the total number of play areas it is likely that overall play value will have to decrease. Therefore an alternative which is likely to result in a net increase in play areas and which also requires an overall increase in play value is not considered to be reasonable.</p>		
<p>Accessibility Standard 4 – Alternative 1: People should live no more than 800m (10 minutes walk) from an open space containing sports area.</p>	N	+	-	N	N	+	+	-	<p>Currently 78.1% of households in the towns and villages across the Council area have access to an open space containing a sports area within 800m.</p> <p>Setting the standard at this level is likely to create the need for a small net increase in the number of publicly accessible open spaces containing a sports area. To achieve this increase the Council could either: create new open spaces containing a sports area; create new sports areas within existing sports areas; or negotiate wider public access to privately operated open spaces which contain sports</p>	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
							<p>areas. This will be likely to have a positive effect on landscape (through increasing the overall quantity of open space)</p> <p>Another way of achieving this standard would be to develop missing linkages in the active travel network, this will have positive effects on material assets (through improving the connectivity of open spaces and the active travel network)</p> <p>Given the limited financial resources available for investment in sports areas, implementing this alternative will result in an overall decrease in sports development value with cumulatively significant negative effect on population and human health (through reducing the health and well being value of open spaces containing a sports area) and landscape (through reducing the overall fitness for purpose of open spaces containing a sports area)</p> <p>Overall, however, implementing this alternative will have a cumulatively significant positive effect on population and human health (through increasing the percentage of</p>	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health		Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
								households with access to an open space containing a sports area within 800m)	
<p>Accessibility Standard 4 – Alternative 2: People should live no more than 1200m (15 minutes walk) from an open space containing sports area.</p>	N	+	-	N	N	+	+	<p>A greater proportion of households within the towns and villages across the Council area will meet the standard in this alternative than the standard in alternative 1.</p> <p>It is likely that implementing this alternative would lead to a net reduction in the number of open spaces containing a sports area, although this is not likely to be a significant reduction. This is not, however, predicted to result in a reduction in the amount of open space e.g. sports areas could be removed but the open space it sits within could remain.</p> <p>Reducing the total number of sports areas will allow limited financial resources to be concentrated on improving the sports development of remaining sports areas and should result in positive effects on population and human health (through increasing the health and wellbeing value of existing open spaces containing sports areas) and landscape (through improving the overall fitness for purpose of open spaces containing sports</p>	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
							<p>areas)</p> <p>Overall implementing this alternative will have cumulatively significant negative effects on population and human health (through decreasing the proportion of households with access to an open space containing a sports area within 800m) however, it will also have positive effects on material assets (through improving the connectivity of open spaces to the active travel network)</p>	
<p>Accessibility Standard 4 – Alternative 3: People should live no more than 800m (10 minutes walk) from an open space containing sports area which is of good quality.</p>	N	++	N	N	+	++	<p>The effects of this alternative are broadly similar to alternative 1 above.</p> <p>Currently 40.5% of open spaces containing a sports area scored good or better in the fitness for purpose assessment. Therefore, a smaller proportion of households within the towns and villages across the Council area will meet the standard in this alternative than the standard in alternative 1.</p> <p>In addition to the need to increase the net number of sports areas, implementing this</p>	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
							<p>alternative will lead to a need for improvements to be made to existing open spaces containing a sports area which are not already fit for purpose this will have a cumulatively significant positive effect on landscape (through increasing the overall fitness for purpose of open spaces containing a sport area)</p> <p>Unless there is a net reduction in the total number of sports area it is likely that overall fitness for purpose of open spaces containing a sports area will have to decrease. Therefore an alternative which is likely to result in a net increase in sports areas and which also requires an overall increase in fitness for purpose of open spaces containing a sports area is not considered to be reasonable.</p>	
<p>Accessibility Standard 5 – Alternative 1: People should live no more than 1200m (15 minutes walk) from a natural/semi natural open space.</p>	+	+	N	N	N	+	<p>Currently 96.6% of households have access to a natural/ semi natural open space within 1200m. Positive effects on population and human health are recorded (As there is only a limited opportunity to improve performance against this accessibility standard)</p> <p>Analysis has indicated that, to meet this</p>	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
							<p>standard, there will be a need to create a very small number of new semi natural open spaces. This will have a positive effect on biodiversity (through increasing the biodiversity and nature conservation value of open space) and landscape (through increasing the amount of open space)</p> <p>No analysis has been carried out to see whether the application of this standard would allow surplus natural/ semi natural open spaces to be identified because reducing the amount of these open spaces is not an objective of the strategy.</p>	
<p>Accessibility Standard 5 – Alternative 2: People should live no more than 800m (10 minutes walk) from a natural/semi natural open space.</p>	++	++	N	N	++	+ +	<p>- ?</p> <p>Less households would have access to an open space containing a natural/ semi natural within 800m than were identified in alternative 1 above.</p> <p>To increase the proportion of households which meet this standard the Council could either: create new semi natural open spaces within areas of identified deficit; create new semi natural areas within existing open spaces within areas of deficit; or improve the access network in areas of identified deficit to shorten the walking distance to existing natural/ semi</p>	<p>In the current climate of budget restraint, to avoid potentially significant negative effects, this alternative should not be chosen.</p>

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
							<p>natural open spaces.</p> <p>This could have a cumulatively significant positive effect on biodiversity (through increasing the biodiversity and nature conservation value of open space) population and human health (through improving overall accessibility to natural/ semi natural open space) material assets (through improving the connectivity of the core path network to the open space network) and landscape (through increasing the amount of open space)</p> <p>In a climate of diminishing resources, this level of investment would be likely to come at a cost with negative effects of an unknown magnitude on landscape (through a reduction in the overall fitness for purpose of open space)</p>	
<p>Accessibility Standard 5 – Alternative 3: People should live no more than 1200m (15 minutes walk) from a natural/semi natural open space which is of</p>	++	+	N	N	N	++	<p>Currently 44.4% of natural/ semi natural open spaces score good or better in the fitness for purpose assessment. Therefore, a smaller proportion of households within the towns and villages across the Council area will meet the standard in this alternative than the standard in alternative 1.</p>	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
good quality.							To increase the number of households who meet the standard in this alternative, there would need to be a drive to improve the fitness for purpose of existing natural/ semi natural open spaces which do not currently score good or better in the fitness for purpose assessment (there are 85 of these). This is likely to have a cumulatively significant positive effect on biodiversity (through improving the biodiversity and nature conservation value of open spaces) and landscape (through improving the overall fitness for purpose of open space) and a positive effect on population and human health (As there will only a be a limited opportunity to improve overall accessibility to natural/ semi natural open space)	
Accessibility Policy – Alternative 1: The Council will make investment decisions which aim to increase the percentage of households which meet the various accessibility standards set out in the	N	++	N	N	++	++	This will have cumulatively significant positive effects on population and human health (through improving overall accessibility to different functions of open space) material assets (through improving the connectivity of the core path and open space networks) and landscape (through increasing the amount of open space)	It may be worth adding a clause to this policy to ensure that the percentage of households which meet the various accessibility standards set out in the Open Space Strategy does not decrease.

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
Open Space Strategy.								
Accessibility Policy – Alternative 2: The Council will seek to ensure that the percentage of households which meet the various accessibility standards set out in the Open Space Strategy does not decrease	N	N	N	N	N	N	This alternative would have none of the positive effects of alternative 1 above, but would protect against a reduction in the percentage of households which meet the various accessibility standards set out in the Open Space Strategy. Neutral effects on population and human health are therefore predicted.	
Commercial Use of Open Space – Alternative 1 The Council will devise an appropriate scheme of charging for the use of parks and open spaces by small businesses or commercial organisations. The Council will also carry out a study to identify what opportunities there are for commercialising	N	-	N	N	N	+ ?	- ? Charging small businesses and commercial organisations for the use of parks and open spaces will allow the Council to repair some of the damage which might be done by them to open spaces during use. Charging may also have the effect of reducing participation in outdoor recreation if businesses choose to pass the cost onto their customers. Dependent on the outcome of the study to identify opportunities for commercialisation of the parks and open space resource, there may be a negative effect on landscape (through loss of open space) if revenue from the	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
the park and open space resource							commercialisation of open space can be re-invested in the parks and open space resource then there will also be positive effects on landscape (through improvement to the quality of open space) The magnitude of these effects on landscape are unknown pending the findings of the study.	
Commercial Use of Open Space – Alternative 2 The Council will not charge for the use of parks and open spaces by small businesses and community organisations and will not identify opportunities to commercialise the parks and open space resource.	-	N	N	N	-	-	Not charging for the commercial use of parks and open spaces could leave the council exposed to the cost of fixing any damage done by commercial organisations to open space during their use of it. This could have a negative effect on biodiversity (through reduction of habitat value) material assets (through damage to the path network) and landscape (through reduction in quality of open space) In comparison with alternative 1 above however there would be a neutral effect on participation in outdoor recreation.	
Identifying Surpluses – Alternative 1 In order to identify whether an open space is surplus to	++	++	N	++	++	+ +	This alternative seeks to ensure that the identification of surplus open spaces does not cause negative environmental effects. Cumulatively significant negative effects on landscape (due to a reduction in the amount of	To mitigate these significant negative effects money raised from the sale of open space should be reinvested in the remaining open space resource.

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
<p>requirements or not a number of factors should be considered (see section 4.5.2 of the Open Space Strategy) Compensation for the loss of open space will be captured through the development management process rather than at the point of sale</p>							<p>open space) are still recorded as this approach will allow for the loss of open spaces so long as the rate of open space provision does not drop below 5ha/1000 people. As the majority of settlements have a rate of open space provision significantly above this, there is significant scope for the loss of open space.</p> <p>Through the development management process compensation will be sought for the loss open space. The money received through this process can then be used to: improve the quality of existing open space; improve and expand the active travel network; improve and expand the habitat network; improve the ability of open spaces to mitigate the effects of climate change through reducing flood risk; and provide new open space functions in identified areas of deficit. Cumulatively significant positive effects on biodiversity; population and human health; water; material assets and landscape are therefore recorded</p>	
<p>Identifying Surpluses – Alternative 2 The Council will not facilitate the loss of open</p>	N	N	N	N	N	N	<p>In comparison with alternative 1 above, this alternative would avoid significant negative effects on landscape (through significant loss of open space) but it would not realise any of the</p>	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
space							significant positive effects. A neutral overall effect is therefore recorded.	
<p>Promoting Community Involvement in Parks and Open Space – Alternative 1 Where there is the opportunity for the public to influence decisions about proposed changes to parks and open spaces there will be consultation in advance of planning any work and the views of the community will be taken into account in any decision making. A fund will be set up to support local communities with external funding bids to improve parks and open spaces</p>	N	+	N	N	N	+	Involving the community in decisions about changes to parks and open spaces and supporting them in applications for external funding is likely to have a positive effect on population and human health (through increasing participation in outdoor recreation) and biodiversity, material assets and landscape (through helping to lever in additional resources to improve the quality of existing open spaces, habitats and paths)	
Promoting Community	N	+	N	N	N	N	Involving the community in decisions about	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
<p>Involvement in Parks and Open Space – Alternative 2 As per alternative 1 above, but the Council will not set up a fund to support local communities with bids for external funding</p>							<p>changes to parks and open spaces still has the potential to have a positive effect on population and human health (through increasing participation in outdoor recreation) but to a lesser degree than alternative 1 above.</p>	
<p>Sports Pitches and Sports Development – Alternative 1 The Council and Trust should work to encourage the development of a network of strategic football sites. In addition the Council should not: facilitate the provision of a new strategic football site to compete with existing nearby privately run facilities;</p>	N	-	N	N	+	+	<p>Encouraging the development of a network of strategic sports sites could either involve: the creation of new open spaces or the upgrading of open spaces with existing sports areas. This will have a positive effect on material assets (through the creation of new sports pavilions or the enhancement of existing sports pavilions) landscape (through improving the fitness for purpose of open spaces containing sports areas and the amount of open space)</p> <p>Refusing to fund or support youth football clubs without any form of SFA Quality Mark is likely to increase the quality of sports development offered by youth football clubs, but could, if non accredited football clubs go out of business</p>	<p>Grass pitches which serve a local demand (i.e. they are needed to ensure that all households are within 1200m of an open space containing a sports area) should not be ruled out as potential recipients for future enhancement.</p>

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
<p>Directly financially fund youth football clubs without any form of SFA Quality Mark; or enhance grass pitches and related pavilions unless there is a sound economic case for doing so.</p>							<p>have the effect of reducing participation in outdoor recreation. Negative effects on population and human health are therefore recorded.</p> <p>Refusing to enhance grass pitches and related pavilions unless there is a sound economic case for doing so is likely to have a neutral effect on material assets and landscape as the quality of existing the majority of existing sports pavilions and sports pitches will not be improved.</p>	
<p>Sports Pitches and Sports Development – Alternative 2 As per alternative 1 above, but the Council will enhance grass pitches (but not pavilions) where they are needed to serve a local demand (i.e. they are needed to ensure that all households are within 1200m of an open space</p>	N	-	N	N	+	++	<p>Previously predicted positive effects on landscape (through improvement of existing sports areas) are increased in magnitude to significant levels</p>	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
containing a sports area)								
Reducing Flood Risk – Alternative 1 Where the existing park and open space resource can be used to help deliver Flood risk management measures identified within Local Flood Risk Management Strategies, the Council will support the use of its parks and open spaces for this purpose.	+	N	N	+	N	-	<p>This alternative is likely to reduce overall flood risk but the extent that it will do this won't be known until the Local Flood Risk Management Strategies are identified unknown positive effects on water are therefore recorded.</p> <p>Some measures to reduce flood risk that could take place within open spaces such as planting to reduce run-off, re-naturalisation of water courses and creation of flood storage areas could have benefits to wildlife. The magnitude of positive effects will depend on the scope of the measures proposed, unknown positive effects on biodiversity are therefore recorded.</p> <p>Some measures to reduce flood risk, such as the creation of flood storage, could involve the loss of areas of open space. The magnitude of negative effects will depend on the scope of the measures proposed, unknown negative effects on landscape are therefore recorded.</p>	<p>If flood risk management measures which involve the loss of open space are supported in areas where the amount of open space is below the 5ha/1000 people standard or in areas where the loss of open space would cause the area to fall below the 5ha/1000 people standard then negative effects on landscape could be significant.</p> <p>A caveat could be added to note that, in such areas, the Council will have to carefully balance the benefits of reducing flood risk with the dis-benefits of losing open space before deciding whether to support the flood risk management measures.</p>
Reducing Flood Risk – Alternative 2 As per alternative 1	+	N	N	+	N	-	<p>The same effects overall effects as alternative 1 above are recorded but the magnitude of positive effects on biodiversity and water and</p>	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
above, but if flood risk management measures involve the loss of open space in areas which are below the 5ha/1000 people standard or are at risk of falling below the standard, then they will not be supported by the Council							negative effects on landscape will be reduced.	
<p>Playspace Rationalisation – Alternative 1</p> <p>Where a Council managed playspace has been identified as potentially surplus to requirements, it should remain in service subject to the following:</p> <p>1. When a play item is heavily vandalised or coming to the end of its useful life, it will be removed from service</p>	N	-	N	N	N	- +	<p>This alternative will lead to a gradual increase in the average distance from households to an open space containing a playspace. Negative effects on population and human health are therefore recorded in the short term with more significant negative effects in the long term.</p> <p>It will also cause the fitness for purpose of open spaces containing potentially surplus playspaces to reduce as their play value is run down. At the same time, revenue budget savings can be used to enhance the play value of the non surplus playspaces. Both positive and negative effects on landscape are therefore recorded.</p>	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
<p>and not replaced. 2. When the playspace has minimum play value e.g. aged or a single active play item only remains in active service it will be considered for removal and the playspace taken off the inventory. 3. Sites identified as having a high sustainable cost e.g. repeated vandalism by fire may be considered for priority removal.</p>								
<p>Playspace Rationalisation – Alternative 2 Where a Council managed playspace has been identified as potentially surplus to requirements it should be removed from service immediately.</p>	N	--	N	N	N	++	<p>This alternative will cause a sharp rise in the average distance from a household to an open space containing a playspace with significant negative effects on population and human health.</p> <p>Once these open spaces no longer have playspaces within them, they will no longer be assessed as such in the fitness for purpose assessment. The overall fitness for purpose of</p>	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health		Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
								affected open spaces is unlikely to reduce. Significant revenue budget savings will be able to be channelled into improving the play value of the remaining playspaces at a much faster rate than alternative 1 above, significant positive effects on landscape are therefore recorded.	
Standard of play provision – Alternative 1 In the remaining play areas and any new play areas created as part of new development, we will aim to provide play equipment to serve three different age groups.	N	+	-	N	N	N	++	This alternative should have a significant positive effect on population and human health (through increasing participation in outdoor recreation) and landscape (through improving the fitness for purpose of open spaces containing a playspace) Negative effects on population and human health are also recorded as teen provision in close proximity to existing residential areas could have cause an increase in nuisance noise.	Teen play provision in very close proximity to existing residential areas should not be promoted if it is likely to cause an increase in nuisance noise complaints.
Standard of play provision – Alternative 2 As per alternative 1 above but where the site is in very close proximity to residential properties,	N	++		N	N	N	++	The effects of this alternative are similar to those in alternative 1 above other than predicted negative effects on population and human health will not occur and the magnitude of positive effects on population and human health and landscape will be slightly smaller but are still likely to be significant.	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
teen provision may not be promoted								
Council Ownership – Alternative 1 The Council will redouble its efforts to digitise its ownership records and where necessary allocate additional resources to complete the exercise.	+	N	N	N	N	+ -	Details of which parks and open spaces the Council owns are still not comprehensively known. Once a comprehensive picture of its ownership is known the Council will be better able to improve open spaces where there is a local need for this, change maintenance regimes to ensure that maintenance of all Council owned open space is appropriate and sell off surplus open spaces to finance other open space improvements. This should lead to positive effects on biodiversity (through the introduction of more biodiversity friendly maintenance regimes where this is appropriate) and landscape (through improvement to the fitness for purpose of existing open space) but could also lead to negative effects on landscape (through enabling the loss of open space)	
Council Ownership – Alternative 2 The Council will continue to digitise its ownership records as and when	N	N	N	N	N	N	The Scottish Government have set a target for all public land to be registered with the Registers of Scotland by 2019. It is not considered to be a reasonable alternative for the Council to continue the current limited pace	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
resources allow.							of digitisation of its records.	
High Profile Parks and Open Spaces – Alternative 1 The quality of national level open spaces should be retained and improved	N	N	N	N	N	+	This alternative will act to mitigate the potential significant negative effect on landscape (through reduction in quality of open space) caused by the Council's chosen quality policy. Under that selected alternative 87% of the total number of national level open spaces could have been allowed to deteriorate in quality as they already scored above their target of 3.0 in the fitness for purpose assessment. This reduction in quality would no longer happen. Positive effects on landscape are therefore recorded.	
High Profile Parks and Open Spaces – Alternative 2 The quality of both national and regional level open spaces should be retained and improved	N	N	N	N	N	++	This alternative would further mitigate the effects of the Council's chosen quality policy as it would mean that 87% of the total number of national level open spaces and 73.1% of the total number of regional level open spaces would not experience a potential reduction in quality. A significant positive effect on landscape is therefore recorded.	
Signage within Parks and Open Spaces – Alternative 1 All parks and open	N	+	N	N	N	+	Making information available which clearly sets out how to report problems and who to report problems to should enable the users of park and open spaces to help the Council to sustain/	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
<p>spaces should have signage at the entrance to the site stating: the name of the park or open space, who manages it; and how to contact them to report problems/raise queries.</p> <p>For high profile sites, the welcome sign should also include: information about what can be found within the site; a map to help with navigation; and information about other nearby places of interest.</p>							<p>improve the quality of its open spaces. Positive effects on landscape are therefore recorded.</p> <p>Providing the users of high profile parks and open spaces with additional information about: what can be found within the site; and other nearby places of interest should help to encourage people to stay for longer within the open space and to visit other open space sites. Positive effects on population and human health are recorded do to the potential to increase participation in outdoor recreation.</p>	
<p>Signage within Parks and Open Spaces – Alternative 2 As per alternative 1 but the additional information proposed for inclusion of signs at the entrance to high profile</p>	N	++	N	N	N	+	<p>Similar to alternative 1 above but positive effects on population and human health through increasing participation in outdoor recreation are likely to be significant.</p>	

Alternative	Biodiversity	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Material Assets	Landscape	Assessment Commentary	Proposed Mitigation/ Enhancement measures
sites should be included on welcome signs for all sites.								

6.0 MITIGATION

6.1 Biodiversity - Flora and Fauna

6.1.1 The implementation of the Strategy is not likely to have any significant negative environmental effects on biodiversity.

6.2 Population and Human Health

6.2.1 The implementation of proposed accessibility standards and approach to playspace rationalisation within the Strategy are likely to lead to an increase in the average walking distance to open spaces containing a playspace and open spaces containing a sports area. To mitigate this effect the Council propose to slowly phase out playspaces which have identified as potentially surplus to requirements rather than withdraw them immediately. Although this will not reduce the ultimate significance of the effect, it will reduce the initial impact.

6.2.2 The implementation of the proposed quality standards within the Strategy is likely to lead to a reduction in the percentage of households with access to a fit for purpose open space within 400m as it will allow the quality of 130 settlement and neighbourhood level open spaces which scored “good” or better in the fitness for purpose assessment to deteriorate in quality to a point that they can no longer be considered as “good” quality. To mitigate this effect, a future open space audit will be able to assess whether this predicted reduction in quality has happened and if so, what effect that has had on the number of households with access to an open space which scored “good” or better on the fitness for purpose assessment within 400m. If an adverse effect is picked up, then these open spaces will be able to be identified as priorities for quality improvement within future reviews of the Strategy.

6.3 Soil

6.3.1 The implementation of the Strategy is not likely to have any significant negative environmental effects on soil.

6.4 Water

6.4.1 The implementation of the Strategy is not likely to have any significant negative environmental effects on water.

6.5 Material Assets

6.5.1 The implementation of the Strategy is not likely to have any significant negative environmental effects on material assets.

6.6 Landscape

6.6.1 The implementation of the proposed quantity standard and the proposed approach to identification of surplus Council owned open space

within the Strategy is likely to lead to the loss of a significant amount of open space. To mitigate this effect the standard is drafted to ensure that the rate of open space provision in any settlement area does not drop below 5ha/1000 people. This could be better enforced by drafting an appropriately worded quantity policy.

6.6.2 The implementation of proposed quantity policy within the Strategy is likely to enable the loss of open spaces in communities where the rate of open space provision is below the 5ha/1000 people standard. To mitigate this effect, the area strategies for these communities also seek to create new open space to raise local provision above this level.

6.6.3 The implementation of the proposed quality standard within the Strategy is likely to cause a reduction in the number of settlement and neighbourhood level open spaces which score “good” or better in the fitness for purpose assessment. To mitigate this effect a future open space audit will be able to assess whether this predicted reduction in quality has also affected the number of households with access to open spaces which score “good” or better in the fitness for purpose assessment within 400m. Where this is the case, a future review of the Strategy will be able to identify the affected open space as a priority for quality improvement.

6.6.4 The implementation of the proposed quality policy within the Strategy could lead to a reduction in the overall fitness for purpose of open space as there are 367 open spaces which are of a better quality than that appropriate to their place in the hierarchy of importance. Of these 367 open spaces: 23 of them could, if improved, increase the number of households within 400m of an open space scoring “good” or better in the fitness for purpose assessment so have been highlighted as priorities for improvement within the various area strategies; and 20 of them are national level open spaces will have their existing levels of quality maintained.

7.0 ASSESSMENT OF ALTERNATIVES

7.1 Reasons for Selecting the Alternatives

7.1.1 Although the SEA process has enabled the identification of the alternatives which have the greatest environmental benefits, the selected alternative is not always the most environmentally beneficial alternative, social and economic factors have also influenced decision.

7.2 How the assessment was undertaken

7.2.1 The approach to assessment was assess each option against the SEA Objectives (see Section 7.3) then to consider how each will be likely to perform and how they can be altered to enhance performance.

7.3 Possible Alternatives

Vision

7.3.1 Alternative 3 was preferred as it secured the most significant positive environmental effects.

Which parks and open spaces should we be seeking to improve?

7.3.2 Alternative 3 was preferred as it secured the most significant positive environmental effects and avoided any negative environmental effects.

What sports and play facilities should we be providing within our parks and open spaces?

7.3.3 Alternative 2 was preferred as it secured the most significant positive environmental effects and avoided any significant negative environmental effects.

How can we encourage more people to use our parks and open spaces?

7.3.4 Alternative 2 was preferred as it secured the most significant positive environmental effects.

How can we improve the range of benefits our parks and open spaces provide?

7.3.5 Alternative 2 was preferred as it secured the most significant positive environmental effects.

How should we address the inequality of park and open space provision across our communities?

7.3.6 Alternative 1 was preferred as it secured the most significant positive environmental effects.

How can we foster community cohesion through open space investment?

7.3.7 Alternative 1 was preferred as it secured a positive environmental effect.

How can we maintain our parks and open spaces more efficiently?

7.3.8 Alternative 2 was preferred as it avoided significant negative environmental effects.

What is the best way to improve overall performance against the Council's various open space accessibility standards?

7.3.9 A combination of all alternatives was preferred. In the case of alternative 2,3 & 4 they were preferred as they provided some environmental benefits. In the case of alternative 1, this was preferred as the financial resources are not available to make the investment necessary to significantly improve performance against the accessibility standards contained within the 2010 Open Space Strategy.

How can we maximise the improvements achieved through Council investment?

7.3.10 Alternative 2 was preferred as it secured the most significant positive environmental effects.

How should we raise money for investment in parks and open spaces?

7.3.11 Alternative 2 was preferred as it secured the most significant positive environmental effects and avoided any significant negative environmental effects.

Quantity Standard

7.3.12 Alternative 1 was preferred as it secured the most significant positive environmental effects and these were considered to outweigh the significant negative effects it could also cause.

Quantity Policy

7.3.13 Alternative 3 was preferred as it was considered important to allow the Council and communities the flexibility to endorse the loss of open space within communities which have a deficient amount of open space, where there is particular support for development or material considerations outweigh the need to retain the open space. The ability to mitigate the significant negative effect by simultaneously promoting the creation of new open spaces within these communities was also a factor in the decision making process.

Quality Standard

7.3.14 Alternative 3 was preferred as the financial resources are not available to implement a more ambitious quality standard. The ability to partially mitigate the significant negative effects through: identifying where a drop in the quality of an open space had also resulted in a decrease in the number of households with access to an open space that scored “good” or better in the fitness for purpose assessment; and promoting those open spaces as priorities for improvement in a subsequent review of the Strategy was also a factor in the decision making process.

Quality Policy

7.3.15 Alternative 1 was preferred as it secured significant positive environmental effects. The ability to partially mitigate the significant negative effects through: maintaining the quality of national level open spaces; and promoting the enhancement in quality of a select number of settlement and neighbourhood level open spaces whose quality could otherwise have deteriorated was also a factor in the decision making process.

Accessibility Standard 1

7.3.16 Alternative 1 was preferred as it secured some significant positive environmental effects and because the financial resources are not available to achieve a more ambitious alternative.

Accessibility Standard 2

7.3.17 Alternative 2 was preferred as it secured the most significant positive environmental effects and avoided any significant negative environmental effects.

Accessibility Standard 3

7.3.18 Alternative 3 was preferred because 10 minutes is still considered to be a reasonable amount of time to expect to walk to reach an open space containing a playspace and because the financial resources are not available to achieve a more ambitious alternative without causing a reduction in overall play value within Council owned playspaces.

Accessibility Standard 4

7.3.19 Alternative 2 was preferred because 15 minutes is still considered to be a reasonable amount of time to expect to walk to reach an open space containing a sports area and because the financial resources are not available to achieve a more ambitious alternative without causing a reduction in overall sports development value within Council owned sports areas.

Accessibility Standard 5

7.3.20 Alternative 1 was preferred because 15 minutes is considered to be a reasonable amount of time to expect to walk to reach a natural/ semi natural

open space and because the financial resources are not available to achieve a more ambitious alternative without causing a reduction in the biodiversity and nature conservation value within existing natural/ semi natural open spaces.

Accessibility Policy

7.3.21 Alternative 2 was preferred as it secured significant positive environmental effects.

Commercial Use of Open Space

7.3.22 Alternative 1 was preferred as it secured some positive environmental effects.

Identifying Surpluses

7.3.23 Alternative 1 was preferred as the significant positive environmental effects it could secure were through generating funding for open space improvements were considered to outweigh the potentially significant scale of cumulative open space loss.

Promoting Community Involvement in Parks and Open Space

7.3.24 Alternative 1 was preferred as it secured more positive environmental effects.

Sports Pitches and Sports Development

7.3.25 Alternative 1 was preferred as the funding is not available to promote the enhancement of grass pitches which only serve a local demand.

Reducing Flood Risk

7.3.26 Alternative 1 was preferred as the potential benefits of reducing flood risk were considered to outweigh the dis-benefits of losing open space in communities where the rate of open space provision is below the Council wide standard.

Playspace Rationalisation

7.3.27 Alternative 1 was preferred as it avoided short term significant negative environmental effects and this was considered to outweigh the benefits of freeing up resources to improve the standard of play provision more quickly.

Standard of Play Provision

7.3.28 Alternative 2 was preferred as it avoided any negative environmental effects.

Council Ownership

7.3.29 Alternative 1 was preferred as it represented the only reasonable alternative.

High Profile Parks and Open Spaces

7.3.30 Alternative 1 was preferred as financial resources are not available to pursue a more environmentally beneficial alternative.

Signage within Parks and Open Spaces

7.3.31 Alternative 1 was preferred as financial resources are not available to pursue a more environmentally beneficial alternative.

8. MONITORING

8.1 Legislative Requirement

8.1.1 Monitoring of the environmental performance of the Plan during its life is a key requirement of SEA. The SEA Act schedule 3 para 9 requires 'a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with section 19'. The monitoring measures proposed are based on the different environmental issues identified as potentially being subject to significant environmental effects from the Local Development Plan.

8.2 Monitoring Proposals

10.2.1 Table 28 overleaf sets out the details of the proposed monitoring to monitor the achievement of the SEA objectives, the rationale for the selection and the methods and measures of monitoring. Monitoring will be conducted by the Council, in their capacity as the Responsible Authority for this SEA. The primary tool for monitoring environmental effects is the open space audit. This has been carried out twice: in 2007 and 2013-14. The audit involves on the ground field work at 632 separate open spaces and is very resource intensive as such it is unlikely that it will be carried out again until the next review of the Open Space Strategy. Carrying out monitoring through the compilation of an environmental baseline for the SEA Scoping Report of the next review of the Open Space Strategy is therefore considered to be a more pragmatic approach than the production of a stand alone monitoring report.

Table 28: Monitoring Proposals

SEA Objective	Monitoring Proposed	Rationale	Methods & Measures
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna			
<p>Habitats – Maintain or extend the extent of priority habitat types associated with parks and open space spaces across the Council area.</p>	<p>The extent of open mosaic habitat on previously developed land, urban greenspace and urban wildlife corridors in the Council</p>	<p>If the extend of this habitat associated with surveyed open space is maintained or extended then this objective will be met.</p>	<p>GIS analysis of future updates to the phase 1 habitat survey and future updates to the open space audit</p>
<p>Habitat Networks - Enable parks and open spaces to contribute towards expanding the wider Falkirk Integrated Habitat Network(IHN).</p>	<p>Size of the integrated habitat network and percentage of network which is of favourable status</p>	<p>If the Strategy encourages the development of new parks and open spaces or the changed management of existing parks and open spaces and this expands the size of the integrated habitat network then this SEA objective will be achieved.</p>	<p>Falkirk Council does not currently plan to update the data it holds on the integrated habitat network in the short to medium term. It may be that the data is updated as part of the research being undertaken to underpin the Central Scotland Green Network. In the absence of any new data we will keep a record of where improvements have taken place which were intended to expand the size of the IHN either within existing parks and open spaces or within new parks and open spaces</p>
	<p>Total area of the parks and open space resource which also forms part of the IHN</p>	<p>If the total area of the parks and open space resource which forms part of the INH increases then this SEA objective will be</p>	<p>GIS analysis of the open space audit and the IHN data.</p>

SEA Objective	Monitoring Proposed	Rationale	Methods & Measures
		achieved.	
Woodland - Increase the rate of woodland planting across the Council area	The rate of woodland planting across the Council area	If the rate of woodland planting increased then this could, in part be attributable to projects promoted within the Strategy	This data is currently collected by the Central Scotland Green Network Trust
	Delivery of projects involving woodland planting which have been promoted within the Strategy.	If the Strategy promotes projects which increase the rate of woodland planting then this SEA objective will be met.	Through monitoring the implementation of the Strategy through the Parks Development Plan (Appendix 5 of the Strategy)
Species Biodiversity - Help to implement the aspirational projects set out in the Falkirk Area Biodiversity Action Plan (FABAP)	Projects set out in the FABAP which have been enabled by the Open Space Strategy	If this Strategy enables projects set out in the FABAP then this SEA objective will be met.	Through liaison with the Council's biodiversity officer.
Protected Sites - Help to secure the appropriate management of sites protected for their nature conservation value	Number of sites protected for their nature conservation value which have active management plans	If the number of sites protected for their nature conservation value with active management plans increased then this could, in part be attributable to monies received through this SG	Through liaison with the Council's biodiversity officer
	Financial contributions secured which have been put towards: the development of management plans for sites protected for their nature conservation value; or the	If this SG enables the development of management plans or the ongoing management of sites protected for their nature conservation value then this SEA objective will be met.	Through liaison with the Council's developer contributions implementation group and biodiversity officer.

SEA Objective	Monitoring Proposed	Rationale	Methods & Measures
	ongoing management of sites protected for their nature conservation value		
Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Value of Open Spaces - Improve the biodiversity and nature conservation value of parks and open spaces	Monitoring of the average “biodiversity and nature conservation” score achieved by parks and open spaces during the fitness for purpose assessment carried out as part of any future open space audit.	The Strategy should have a significant positive effect on the biodiversity and nature conservation value of open spaces	Analysis of data from a future open space audit.
Population and Human Health			
Quality of Accessibility within Open Space - Improve the quality of accessibility within parks and open spaces	Monitoring of the average “quality of accessibility” score achieved by parks and open spaces during the fitness for purpose assessment carried out as part of any future open space audit.	The various area strategies identify a number of parks and open spaces as priorities for quality improvement. Part of this improvement process could involve enhancements to the quality of accessibility within those parks and open spaces. If the average “quality of accessibility” score achieved by parks and open spaces improves in any future open space audit, then this SEA objective will be achieved.	Analysis of data from a future open space audit.
Accessibility to Open	Percentage of households	If performance against this	Through undertaking spatial analysis

SEA Objective	Monitoring Proposed	Rationale	Methods & Measures
Space - Improve access to different types of open space	with access to different types of open space within an acceptable walking distance as defined by the Open Space Strategy	indicator improves then this SEA objective will be being met.	of data collected to inform the Falkirk Open Space Strategy.
Health and Wellbeing Quality of Open Space - Maximise the contribution that existing open space makes towards peoples' health and wellbeing	Monitoring of the average "health and wellbeing quality" score achieved by parks and open spaces during the fitness for purpose assessment carried out as part of any future open space audit.	The various area strategies identify a number of parks and open spaces as priorities for quality improvement. Part of this improvement process could enhance the contribution that these open spaces make towards people's health and wellbeing. If the average "health and wellbeing quality" score achieved by parks and open spaces improves in any future open space audit, then this SEA objective will be achieved.	Analysis of data from a future open space audit.
Participation in outdoor recreation – Increase the levels of participation in outdoor recreation	Monitoring of: the frequency of visits made to the outdoors; how often people use their nearest usable greenspace and frequency of visits made to open space.	If the frequency of visits made to the outdoors and open space increases and use of the nearest greenspace increases in regularity then this SEA objective will be achieved	Data extracted from the Scottish Household Survey and surveys of Falkirk Council residents.

SEA Objective	Monitoring Proposed	Rationale	Methods & Measures
Soil			
Vacant and Derelict Land - Decrease the amount of vacant and derelict land	Monitoring of the amount of vacant and derelict land	Sometimes the most appropriate use for vacant and derelict land is as greenspace. Where there is a deficiency in access to particular types of open spaces, the area strategies identify actions to investigate how these deficiencies can be met. One way of meeting these deficiencies could be through the creation of new open spaces on areas of vacant and derelict land. As well as meeting the deficiency, this would also lead to a reduction in the amount of vacant and derelict land.	Monitoring of data collected for the Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land Survey
Vacant and Derelict Land - Increase the amount of vacant and derelict land rehabilitated as open space	Monitoring of the amount of vacant and derelict land rehabilitated as open space		
Water			
Ecological status of the water environment - Prevent deterioration in and improve the status of the water environment	Monitoring of the ecological status of the water environment	A number of the priority actions within the area strategies could act to improve the ecological status of the water environment	Status of the water environment data held by SEPA
Flood Risk - Contribute to the mitigation of floods and droughts	Monitoring of local flood risk data held by SEPA	The Strategy commits to supporting the implementation of measures identified within Local Flood Risk Management	Flood risk data held by SEPA
Flood Risk - Reduce overall			

SEA Objective	Monitoring Proposed	Rationale	Methods & Measures
flood risk		Strategies which involve the use of open space	
Material Assets			
Active Travel Links - Increase the connectivity of the core path network and the open space network	Monitoring of the number of open spaces which are cross by and which are in close proximity to the core path network	If the numbers increase then connectivity of the networks will have increased	GIS analysis of open space audit and core paths data.
Active Travel Links – Increase the percentage of people who travel to parks and open spaces by active forms of travel	Monitoring of the percentage of people who travel to parks and open spaces by active forms of travel	If the percentage increases then the objective will be met.	Surveys of Falkirk Council residents.
Landscape			
Quantity of Open Space - Ensure each community has access to 5ha/1000 people of open space.	Monitoring of the ratio of open space provision within each settlement	The Strategy indicates that the standard for the quantity of open space within each settlement is 5ha/1000 people. The area strategies propose the creation of new open space within settlements which currently fall below this standard. If the ratio of open space provision rises to above 5ha/1000people in all communities then this SEA objective will be met.	Analysis of data from a future open space audit.

SEA Objective	Monitoring Proposed	Rationale	Methods & Measures
<p>Design and Aesthetic Quality of Open Space - Enhance the design and aesthetic quality of open spaces</p>	<p>Monitoring of the average “design and aesthetic quality” score achieved by parks and open spaces during the fitness for purpose assessment carried out as part of any future open space audit.</p>	<p>The various area strategies identify a number of parks and open spaces as priorities for quality improvement. Part of this improvement process could involve enhancements to the design and aesthetic quality of those parks and open spaces. If the average “design and aesthetic quality” score achieved by parks and open spaces improves in any future open space audit, then this SEA objective will be achieved.</p>	<p>Analysis of data from a future open space audit.</p>
<p>Fitness for Purpose of Open Space - Enhance the overall fitness for purpose of parks and open spaces.</p>	<p>Monitoring of the average score of parks and open spaces in the “fitness for purpose” assessment carried out as part of the open space audit</p>	<p>If the average score of parks and open spaces in the fitness for purpose assessment increases then this SEA objective will be achieved.</p>	<p>Analysis of data from a future open space audit.</p>
	<p>Monitoring of the percentage of the total number of open spaces and total area of open space which scores “good” or better in the fitness for purpose assessment</p>	<p>If the percentage of the total number of open spaces or total area of open space which score “good” or better in the fitness for purpose assessment increases then this SEA objective will be achieved.</p>	<p>Analysis of data from a future open space audit.</p>

9.0 NEXT STEPS

9.1 Consultation

9.1.1 The consultative draft Strategy along with this Environmental Report has been made available to the public as well as the Consultation Authorities (Scottish Environmental Protection Agency, Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic Environment Scotland) for comment, in accordance with the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act, 2005.

9.1.2 The public consultation and Statutory Consultation will run for a period of 12 weeks. Comments and responses to this Environmental Report will be considered once the consultation period is complete, so that any revisions can be made before the Strategy is finalised and adopted.

9.2 Adoption of the Strategy

9.2.1 Following the consultation and any necessary modifications, a finalised Strategy will be presented to the Council's Executive for approval.

9.3 SEA Post-Adoption Statement

9.3.1 Shortly after approval, the SEA Post-adoption Statement will be produced. The Statement sets out how environmental considerations have been integrated into the Framework, how the findings of the Environmental Report have been taken into account, and how the consultation responses have been addressed.

9.3.2 The SEA Post-adoption Statement will also finalise the framework for monitoring the environmental effects of the Strategy's implementation and the responsibilities for monitoring.

Appendix 1 – Record of Scoping Comments

Consultation Authority	Comment	Response
Historic Scotland (HS)	As you will be aware, in our response at the screening stage (dated 2 June 2014) we were content to agree that significant effects on the historic environment were unlikely as a result of the strategy review. Subsequently I note that the historic environment has been scoped out of the assessment. I can therefore confirm that I am content to agree with this approach	Comment noted
Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA)	Scope and level of detail - We note your intention to scope out Water, Air and Climatic Factors from the Environment Report (ER). After considering in more details the aims and details of the reviewed strategy, we agree with the justification for scoping out Air and Climatic Factors, on the basis that the environmental effects are unlikely to be significant. We would however suggest to scope in Water as we consider that the strategy may result in positive significant environmental effects in relation to the protection and enhancement of the water environment.	Comment noted. Water has been scoped into the environmental assessment.
SEPA	Scope and level of detail - The justification for scoping out Water refers to the OSSR not affecting significantly the water quality of the Falkirk Council area because urban diffuse pollution is a significant pressure on water quality in any watercourse within the Falkirk Council area. We consider that not just water quality and urban diffuse pollution need consideration, but the quality of the water environment, which is wider in its definition than just water quality, and other pressures to the water environment which may arise from the OSSR. The Strategy could have significant environmental effects on the ecological status of the water environment. The term ecological status includes water quality, water quantity, ecology and physical impacts	The ecological status of the water environment has been scoped into the Environment Report as a sub-issue of the water topic.

Consultation Authority	Comment	Response
	<p>(including culverting and engineering of watercourses) and the water environment includes all surface waters (including wetlands and transitional waters) and groundwater (including drinking water supplies). Please refer to our standing advice on SEA scoping and to the www.seaguidance.org for further details, in particular in relation to the River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) and the Forth Area Management Plan. Please do not hesitate to contact me for further details and assistance about this.</p>	
SEPA	<p>Scope and level of detail - We understand that flood risk has been covered by the SEA of the Local Development Plan and will be considered as part of the Local Flood Risk Management Plan. While we agree with this, we would welcome an SEA sub-objective related to the avoidance and or/reduction of flood risk as part of the assessment under the SEA Topic of Water, in order to ensure consideration of this important aspect as part of the OSSR, with links to the Local Flood Risk Management Plan as appropriate.</p>	<p>Flooding has been scoped into the Environmental Report as a sub-issue of the water topic.</p>
SEPA	<p>Alternatives, mitigation and enhancement - We are content with the level of detail proposed for the assessment and the approach for the consideration of alternatives. We welcome the intention to assess the cumulative effects of individual recommendations through the environmental assessment of the conceptual strategy for each settlement area.</p>	<p>Whilst it was our initial intention to environmentally assess the individual area strategies for each settlement area, given the breadth of environmental assessment already undertaken on the vision, strategic proposals and standards and policies of the Open Space Strategy and the fact that these dictate the content of the individual area strategies, it was not considered to</p>

Consultation Authority	Comment	Response
		be proportionate or necessary to carry out further environmental assessment of the individual area strategies.
SEPA	<p>Alternatives, mitigation and enhancement - One of the most important ways to mitigate significant environmental effects identified through the assessment is to make changes to the OSSR itself so that significant effects are avoided. The ER should therefore identify any changes made to the OSSR as a result of the environmental assessment. We understand however that significant negative effects are not expected, we welcome the reference to enhancement opportunities and therefore expect these to be integrated in the Strategy following the environmental assessment in order to make it even more positive.</p>	<p>SEA is an iterative process carried out in tandem with the preparation of the open space strategy. It is not practical to identify where changes were made to the Strategy as a result of environmental assessment. The SEA process has certainly informed decision making but it very difficult to precisely document what is a fairly symbiotic relationship. If SEPA are aware of emerging good practice in the area then we would be interested to learn about it so we can consider this for future SEA production.</p>
SEPA	<p>Methods - We are content with the proposed assessment matrix and the SEA objectives proposed, however as we suggest to consider Water in the assessment, please find example of SEA objectives and relative questions in the water section of the sea guidance website.</p>	<p>Comment noted. Water has been scoped into the environmental assessment.</p>
SEPA	<p>Monitoring - Although not specifically required at this stage, we would welcome the early consideration of monitoring requirements to be included in the ER. Wherever possible and appropriate, existing monitoring frameworks and indicators can be used effectively to meet</p>	<p>Comment noted. Draft monitoring proposals are included at section 8 of the Environmental Report.</p>

Consultation Authority	Comment	Response
	the SEA monitoring requirements.	
SEPA	Next Steps - We are satisfied with the proposal for a six week consultation period for the ER.	Comment noted. Given the likely level of public interest in the Open Space Strategy, the consultation period has been lengthened to 12 weeks.
Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)	General approach - We are content with the general approach to be undertaken which is clear and methodical.	Support welcomed
SNH	<p>Baseline information – The Baseline information is comprehensive and informs the SEA issues, objectives and questions to be taken forward in the assessment. However, some of the terminology used within this framework is unclear. The report refers the reader to the recent Open Space Audit for an explanation of these terms and it is also noted that the terminology is used in the current Open Space Strategy. However, it would be more useful for the SEA document itself to explain the terms simply, without the need to refer to these other documents, especially since it forms the assessment questions and general approach throughout the SEA. This would make the assessment process more easily understood and accessible for all. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of Accessibility within open space. Does this mean the state of the path network, or the extent of paths, or if it's for all users? A brief description would make this clear. In 'existing problems', it says that 47.5% of open space scores good or better, so the rest fail – why? A better explanation of what these statistics mean in terms of what is the problem and therefore what you want to improve/achieve would also be 	Comments noted. A more detailed explanation of these terms has been included with the environmental baseline at section 4 of the Environmental report.

Consultation Authority	Comment	Response
	<p>useful i.e. do you want proposals to increase path quality or extent, etc.? What is it you want the strategy to achieve and therefore assess in the SEA?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Wellbeing Quality of open space. As above, what does this mean? What will the open space strategy/targets want to achieve? Design and Aesthetic Quality of open space. Does this mean landscaping, placemaking? • Similarly, what is it that makes a good biodiversity and nature conservation site? • Fitness for purpose of open space. What does this mean and why have some open spaces better fitness for purpose rating than others? Does this mean that they are well used? Or does it relate to how well designed the open space is for its intended use? What is it you want to improve to get better ratings? Again, a brief explanation would improve clarity. 	
SNH	<p>Baseline information - It is noted that some similar themes fall under different baseline topics. For example, green infrastructure relates to biodiversity, active travel, etc. It should be ensured that links between these topics are made throughout the assessment to fully recognise their multi-functional benefits.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>
SNH	<p>Scope - We agree with the topics and sub-issues that have been scoped in. Where certain sub-issues have been scoped out, for example green infrastructure under Material Assets, there is scope to highlight the multi-functional benefits of green infrastructure under the assessment of other topics where it relates to sub-issues which have been scoped in, such as the active travel or habitat network sub-issues.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>

Consultation Authority	Comment	Response
SNH	Assessment methodology and monitoring - The draft SEA objectives and assessment questions are comprehensive and linked to the Open Space audit and future strategy. The questions are posed for the 'alternatives' but will equally apply to the strategy/actions. It is unclear why only alternatives are referenced in the methodology framework.	The purpose of the SEA process is to inform better decision making. The Environmental Report sets out the likely environmental effects of the implementation of the Strategy and its reasonable alternatives. The Strategy is essentially made up from a selection of preferred alternatives. It has never been our intention to limit environmental assessment only to non-preferred alternatives.
SNH	Assessment methodology and monitoring - The summary matrix will be a useful summary of the assessment results, but again, this matrix should be for the results of the overall SEA assessment of the strategy and its actions, rather than just for the alternatives.	As above
SNH	Assessment methodology and monitoring - No proposed monitoring or indicators have been drafted at this stage so no comment can be made at present. However, we are happy to provide advice to the council on this in due course and advise that it is worth thinking about the SEA questions being asked in the assessment and how these might inform indicators or monitoring; or, think about monitoring already undertaken by the council and how that might help define questions.	Comment noted. Draft monitoring proposals are included at section 8 of the Environmental Report.
SNH	Assessment methodology and monitoring - Although comprehensive with a good range of SEA questions, some of the SEA objectives and questions are relatively vague and it's not always clear what is being assessed. This relates to the comments made on the Baseline section	Comment noted. The SEA objectives in table 26 at section 5 of the Environmental Report have been revised to address these issues and

Consultation Authority	Comment	Response
	<p>and clarity of terminology (see above). Again, we note that some of this stems from the existing strategy or previous assessment, and therefore our comments are focused on ensuring that the assessment process is clear and transparent. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The question under Habitats (Biodiversity issue), Table 23, 'does...encourage the needs of local biodiversity to be taken into account in the location and design of new open space'/'ensure open spaces are of sufficient diversity, quality and distribution to meet the needs of local biodiversity'. How can this be assessed or measured? What exactly does it mean and what would the actual Strategy actions be to achieve this? • Similarly, what is meant by 'maximise the contribution that new and existing open space makes towards peoples' health and wellbeing', and how can this be measured and assessed? • What does 'enhance the overall fitness for purpose of open spaces' and 'ensure new open spaces are fit for purpose' mean in terms of assessment? • Similarly, what do the design and aesthetic quality objectives and questions actually mean and how can they be assessed or measured? They obviously relate to good place- making principles and fit with the context of sites but in their current form, are the questions easy to answer? 	<p>draft monitoring proposals at section 8 of the Environmental Report should further clarify these issues.</p>