Design Statements

Falkirk Council
Development Services

Welcome to this supplementary planning
guidance note on Design Statements. It is one
of a suite of such guides promoting
development quality in the built environment
and taking forward the Council's commitment
to sustainable development as set out in the
Development Plan.

Everyone admires well designed urban
developments that function well and give a
sense of place. This guidance is intended to
help achieve this through improved
communication and understanding in the
design process between Falkirk Council and
developers applying for planning permission.

A Design Statement is intended to enable an
applicant to outline the reasoning behind a
development proposal, using a range of
written text and graphics. It will be a
requirement to be submitted alongside
planning applications in certain sensitive
locations and for specific larger scale
developments.

This guide draws on the Planning Advice Note,
PAN 68 Design Statements, and provides a
useful template and checklist to assist the
applicant in the preparation of a Design
Statement.

The Council commends the advice set out in
this guide.

February 2007

Content

Falkirk Stadium

Front Cover :   Falkirk Wheel and the Drum Masterplan

1.0 Introduction

A Design Statement is a document which explains and illustrates the principles and concept behind the design of a proposed development and may be required to be submitted alongside a planning application. In this respect the term "design" relates to the physical and visual impact of built form and its external envelope on streets and public areas in our towns, villages and rural areas and is often termed "urban design".

This Guidance Note should be applied in conjunction with the Council's overarching Supplementary Planning Guidance Note on Sustainable Design.

Scottish Planning Policy SPP1: The Planning System notes that design, as defined above, is a "material consideration" in determining planning applications. A local authority therefore has the right to refuse a planning application solely on design grounds and to defend this position at an appeal.

This Guidance Note :

- ❖ distils information from the Scottish Executive Planning Advice Note 68 :Design Statements and applies it to the local Falkirk area context
- ❖ sets out the national and local planning policy background
- ❖ identifies the place of the Design Statement within a wider planning "toolkit" for addressing area design and topic guides and codes.
- ❖ describes the Design Statement, its purpose and operation, the circumstances where it will be required, what it should contain and how it should be presented.
- ❖ provides appendices which checklist the Design Process, the Design Toolkit and the Characteristics of the Well Designed Place (all drawn from national Planning Advice Notes)

Airth Primary School

The Drum

2.0 National and Local Planning Policy Background

The Scottish Executive has further demonstrated its intent to raise the quality of urban design across the country by publishing "Designing Places - a Policy Statement for Scotland" (November 2001). This has been followed by a series of Planning Advice Notes (PANs) either to guide the design of certain physical components of the built environment i.e. Housing Quality (PAN 67), Housing in the Countryside (PAN 72) and New Residential Streets (PAN 76) or advise on methods of planning control i.e. Conservation Area Management (PAN 71) and Design Statements (PAN 68), the latter informing this Supplementary Planning Guidance Note.

Falkirk Council's planning policies also aim to raise the standards of urban design within the area and, to assist in implementing this, now require that a "Design Concept Statement" accompany important planning applications (Structure Plan - Policy ENV.7 Quality of Design and Finalised Draft Local Plan - Policies EQ1 + EQ2 Sustainable Design Principles etc.). The term "Design Statement" will be used in this guide as being consistent with the wording used by the Scottish Executive.

3.0 Urban Design Toolkit

The Scottish Executive publications identify the Design Statement as one of a set of planning and urban design "tools", the others addressing:

❖ the design of significant or sensitive urban or land areas (Urban Design Frameworks, Master Plans and Development Briefs)

❖ topic design at the general and more prescriptive level (Design Guides and Codes)

❖ promotional measures (Local Design Awards and Design Competitions)

Responsibility for preparation of the different tools should be as follows:

❖ Master Plans by the owner or developer in consultation with the planning authority

❖ Other frameworks, briefs, guides and codes by the local authority or a consultant operating on its behalf.

NOTE : APPENDIX A
Checklist 4 sets out these complementary tools in greater detail.

Oswald Street, Falkirk

The Design Statement

What is a Design Statement for and how does it work?

Falkirk Library

4.1 What is a Design Statement for and how does it work?

PURPOSE AND OPERATION

The purpose of a design statement is essentially twofold:

- ❖ to improve the standards of design ; and
- ❖ to foster a more collaborative approach between the applicant, agent and/or consultant and the planning authority.

Design quality should be enhanced where the appropriate design process has been followed through as set out below. This more thorough analysis of the design context will clearly require an appropriately qualified designer. At the same time the applicant, in requiring to justify the design of his/her proposal will be better informed to conduct negotiations with the planning officer, thus minimising conflict or costly delay.

Potential developers are positively encouraged to have pre-application discussions with the Council at an early stage in order to establish whether or not a statement is required. A part prepared statement, prior to finalising the design or, in certain cases, a form of master plan may be useful at this stage. A Design Statement will nevertheless be received sympathetically where it accompanies a planning application even where no pre-application discussion has taken place with the planning authority.

4.2 For which applications will a Design Statement be required?

REQUIREMENT THRESHOLD

The Council will determine in which locations a Design Statement will be required i.e. where development will have a significant impact on the built or natural environment. The important sites will be considered according to a threshold of sensitivity and scale.

Sensitivity
The key consideration will be the impact on the priority locations for enhancement identified in Schedule ENV6 of the Structure Plan and Policy EQ 7 in the Finalised Draft Local Plan i.e.

- ❖ Town Centres
- ❖ Town Gateways and Approaches
- ❖ Principal Transport Corridors
- ❖ Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape Value
- ❖ The Canal Corridor and other waterside/waterfront locations
- ❖ Falkirk Greenspace i.e. the urban fringe
- ❖ Urban Regeneration areas

Scale
In terms of scale all sites of:

- ❖ 2 hectares or more
- ❖ 50 units or more for residential developments
- ❖ will require a Design Statement.

Larbert Baptist Church

4.3 What should a Design Statement include?

CONTENT

PAN 67 Housing Quality defines the content of a Design Statement as follows :

"A Design Statement should explain and illustrate the design principles and design concept of the proposed layout; landscape; scale and mix; details and materials; and maintenance. It should show, as briefly as necessary, how these will help to achieve the qualities identified in Designing Places."

'Designing Places', PAN 68 and other design PANs include useful checklists which together establish the preferred Design Process template from which an applicant for planning permission is able to prepare a Design Statement.

PAN 68 Design Statements summarises the DESIGN PROCESS as follows:

1 Gathering of Background Information and Site Details

2 APPRAISAL of SITE and WIDER AREA

3 ESTABLISHMENT of DESIGN PRINCIPLES

4 ANALYSIS of above ...leading to ...

5 DESIGN CONCEPT(S)

6 Public Involvement (if appropriate)

7 Programme/ project phasing

8 DESIGN SOLUTION

Caledonian Produce, Bo'ness

NOTE: APPENDIX A
sets this framework out in greater detail i.e.

Checklist 1: adds basic detail to framework
Checklist 2: details Site and Area Appraisal
Checklist 3: sets out "Qualities of the Well Designed Place" - additional urban design conventions to inform Analysis/ Design Concept(s)
Checklist 4: sets out the other components of the urban design "toolkit".

4.4 How should a Design Statement look?

PRESENTATION

The Design Statement may be fairly brief, perhaps no more than a page or two following the pattern of the attached checklists. However it must be suitably rigorous, avoiding textual and illustrative "padding". It may be in booklet form, an A4 or A3 document, a fold out sheet, a display board or a CD ROM. A range of illustrative media giving evidence of a design process may be included e.g. photographs, sketches, figure/ground diagrams, photomontages, concept diagrams, computer based images and artists impressions. Models or photographs of models may also be submitted. The illustrative material is intended to describe the process of the design, the final solution being presented as the planning application.
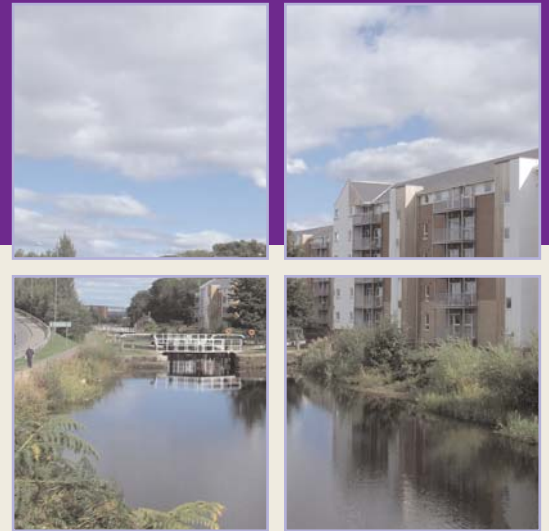
NOTE : APPENDIX B
Local Examples of Design tools:
Master Plans Design
Briefs, Design Guides
Computer Generated Images

NOTE : APPENDIX C
Local Example of Design Statement

Falkirk Police Station

Canalside Flats, Rosebank

CHECKLIST 1: Design Process

Interpreted from PAN68

Background Information	Name of the scheme Applicant Architect/developer/ urban designers/agents/advisors,etc. Description of client brief (if there is one) Date
Site details	Location and site plan - scale and north point Description History Ownership
SITE and AREA APPRAISALS **see Checklist 2**	Any specific points relating to: Context Identity Connection
DESIGN PRINCIPLES	National guidance Local authority development plan design policies Supplementary planning guidance Site specific development briefs Design guides
ANALYSIS **see Checklist 3** **Qualities of the** **Well Designed Place**	Design principles affecting site/area appraisal Qualities of the well designed place

DESIGN CONCEPT
see Checklist 4
Urban Design Toolkit
	Explanation of the proposed development with respect to:
	Layout, ie. context
	    streets and spaces
	    accessibility
	    safety and security
	    sustainability
	    energy efficiency
	Landscape
	Scale and mix
	Details and materials
	Maintenance

Public involvement	Outcome of consultation and public involvement
Programme	How will the project be phased?
DESIGN SOLUTION	Completed for Planning Application

CHECKLIST 2: Site and Area Appraisal
PAN 68 (back fold-out)

CONTEXT

Local area
Location of the site
General description of the surroundings, e.g. urban, residential and industrial
Is the site in or near a conservation area?

Site description
Planning history
Ownership of the site
Adjacent land uses, and relevant planning proposals
Heritage conservation - listed buildings
Focal points
Landmarks
Vistas
Views to/from/over site
Topography - contours on the site
Microclimate - wind, sun orientation, exposure, shelter

Services
Public utilities, e.g. underground services, drainage systems, overhead power lines
Public services available locally, e.g. schools, public transport

IDENTITY

Surrounding buildings
Building lines - groupings, rhythms and plot/feu sizes
Entrances - styles and sizes
Windows - styles and sizes
Active frontages
Scale - height and massing
Appearance - details and materials

Use of the space
Use of spaces between buildings - public/private
Day, night, seasonal variation of use
Prohibited activities, security arrangements

Hard landscaping
Location of street furniture
Condition and maintenance
How people use it
Public art/sculpture trail

Soft landscaping
Landscape character
Quality of landscaping
Need for ground modelling
Nature conservation area
Wildlife habitats
Tree Preservation Orders
Play space/recreational space

CONNECTION

Vehicular movement
Surrounding road and street layout
Access, parking and circulation
Bus & tram (not relevant) stops and routes, taxi stops, cycle routes
Areas of vehicular/pedestrian conflict
Use of traffic measures, e.g. speed humps, surfaces, crossing points, bollards
Servicing arrangements

Pedestrian access
Where are people coming from, going to?
Desire lines
Disabled access
Are people restricted from access due to any current aspects of design?

Dymocks Buildings Bo'ness

CHECKLIST 3: Qualities of the Well Designed Place
Interpreted from 'Designing Places' (pp 9-10,30-31) design PANs and PAN68

Distinctive

CHARACTER / IDENTITY
Contemporary character evolved from historic and existing context - building and natural features related to pattern of streets and open spaces, architectural form and detail and external finishes.

Welcoming

ENHANCED ENTRANCE AND MEETING POINTS
Special character of gateways into and within the site, landmarks and focal points, revealing good views and built/ natural features and removing/ concealing eyesores, assisting navigation. Visual enhancement mainly following pattern of main gateways and focal points rather than random, self indulgent decoration.

Connected

EASE OF GETTING TO AND MOVING AROUND
Routes linking different areas, community focal points and transport corridors, stations and shops. Density of development to reflect this, accessing and supporting public transport, encouraging walking and cycling and better use of/ more attractive and therefore safer route linkages.

Safe

PUBLIC SPACE AND SOCIAL NUISANCE
Accessible built frontages with lively window openings to public space designed to enhance surveillance. Back garden areas secured by building enclosure/ no continuous rear footpaths. Busier main routes are more self policing with quieter smaller semi-gated enclaves off these. Neighbourhood centres benefit from 24-hour life/ living above the shop. Clear definition of private from public space - low, penetrable enclosure.

Adaptable

MIXED USE
Aiming for an integrated environment for living, working and recreation, providing compatible and linked groups of land/ building uses and avoiding zoning , bad neighbour interfaces and after hour deadness - see Safe (above).
Single function buildings should be capable of sub-division or different use.

Resource efficient

ENERGY, BUILDING CONSERVATION, MATERIALS, PRODUCTION METHODS, FINANCE, HEALTH, BIODIVERSITY
Minimising use of earth's energy sources and cost saving i.e.. through physical integration, building orientation and sheltering techniques for solar and climatic benefit, re-using existing building and landscape structures, energy saving site construction techniques and component manufacturing on brownfield land and all locally sourced. Long life, loose fit, low energy.

CHECKLIST 4:   Urban Design Toolkit

Interpreted from 'Designing Places' (pp 38-39,44), design PANs and PAN67 Housing Quality (p 26)

The other urban design "tools" which complement the Design Statement are:

AREA DESIGN

There is an accepted overlap in the operation of the different tools and also the responsibility for their preparation between the local authority and any appropriate developer. Nevertheless the following identifies the distinctive character of each tool:

❖ **Urban Design Frameworks:**   For urban areas where the likelihood of significant physical change calls for concerted action and only parts of such areas are available for immediate development. The treatment of connections to and overlap with other areas are of particular importance. These frameworks could co-ordinate more detailed Master Plans or Development Briefs.

❖ **Master Plans:**   For sites where an organisation owns or controls the development process and will be responsible for the plan preparation in consultation with the Planning Authority. The Master Plan is essentially a proposal at a wide scale explaining how the site or a series of adjacent sites will be developed. It will describe how the proposal is to be implemented, setting out the costs, phasing and timetable for such.

❖ **Development Briefs:**   For specific sites significant in scale or sensitivity, with a clear boundary mainly available for development/ redevelopment. There may still be significant planning constraints on such a site, e.g. a listed building.

TOPIC DESIGN

❖ Design Guides and Codes: Urban design guidance which extends development plan or other policies at a more detailed level for specific topics such as shop fronts, house extensions, estate layout and conservation areas. The difference in emphasis of these tools is between guidance which offers optional approaches to the solving of an identified problem and a set of prescriptive standards.
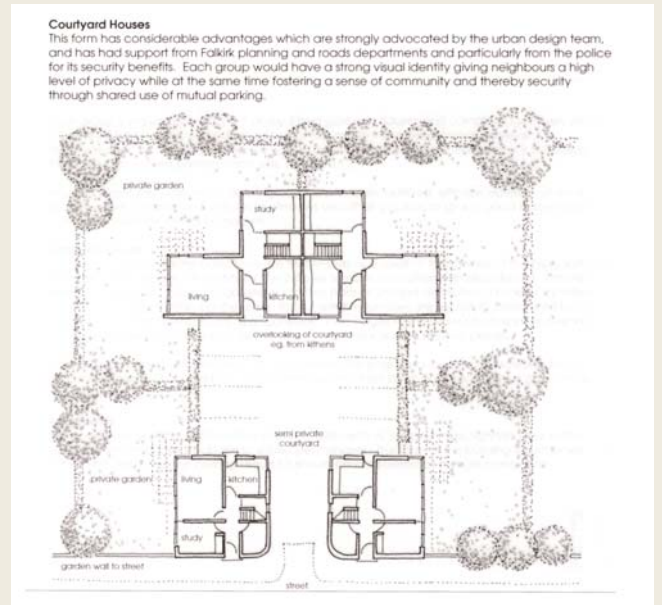
PROMOTIONAL MEASURES

❖ Local Design Awards and Design Competitions: These have a role in encouraging and rewarding and thereby promoting inspirational design.
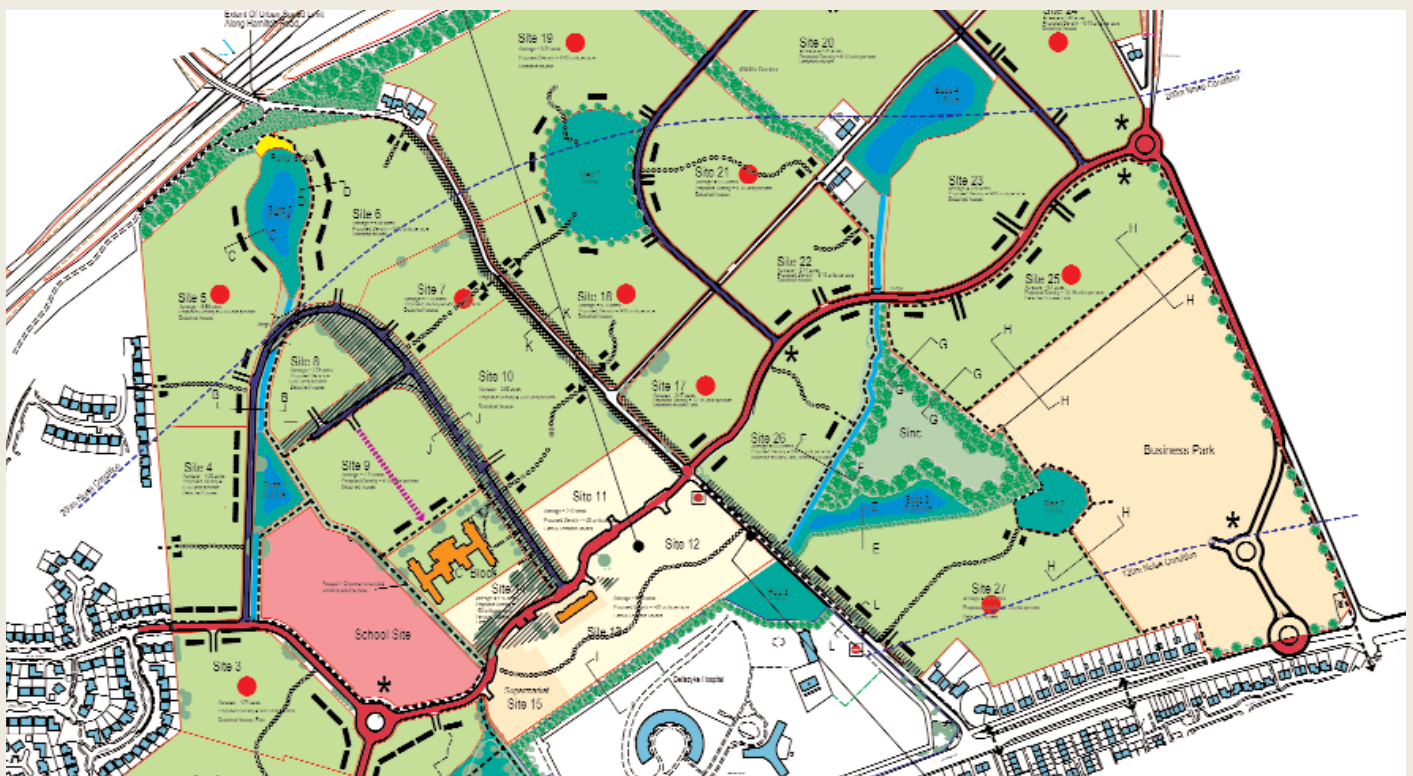
Master Plans

Courtyard Houses
This form has considerable advantages which are strongly advocated by the urban design team, and has had support from Falkirk planning and roads departments and particularly from the police for its security benefits. Each group would have a strong visual identity giving neighbours a high level of privacy while at the same time fostering a sense of community and thereby security through shared use of mutual parking.

Copyright Cadell Architecture & Urban Design

Copyright CALA/ Turley Associates

Design Briefs
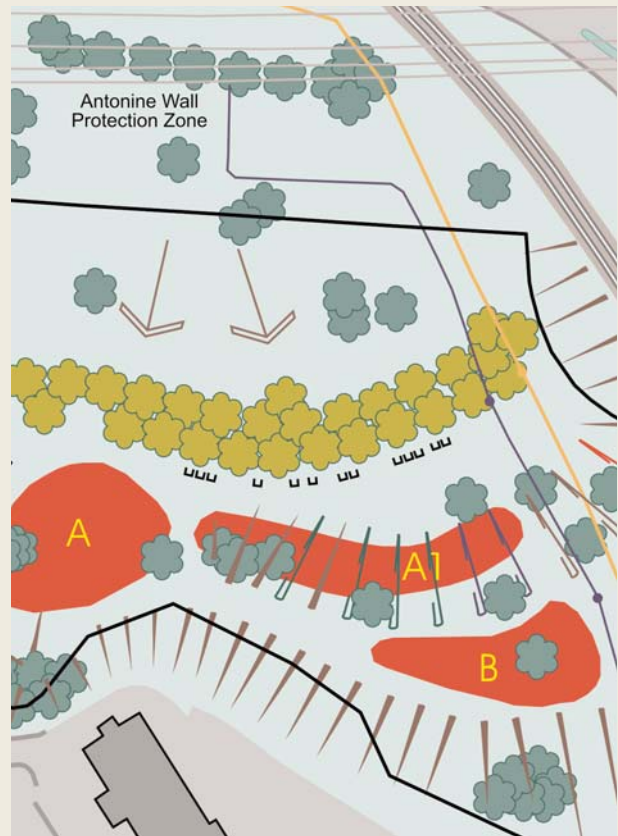
Design Guides
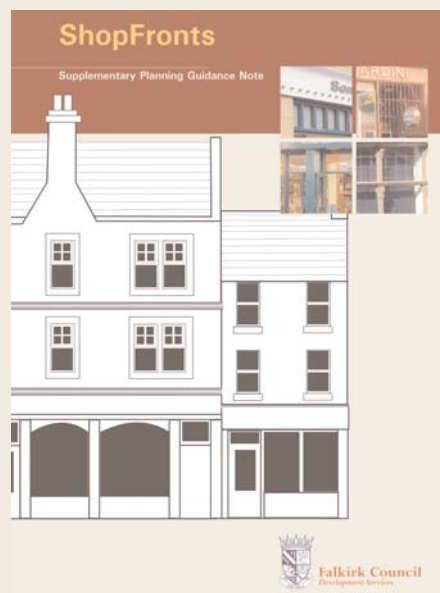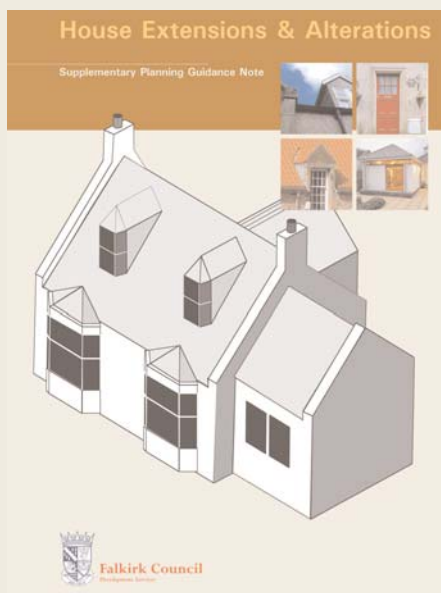
Computer Generated Images

Copyright Young and Gault Architects
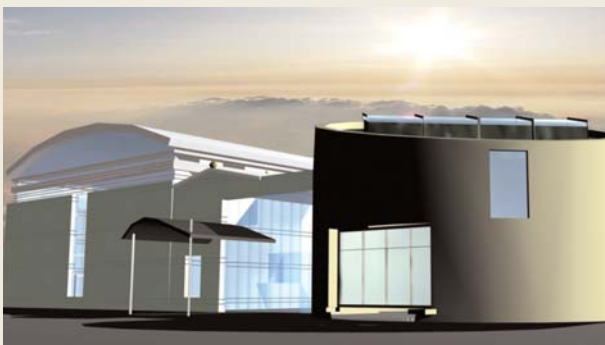
Falkirk Council

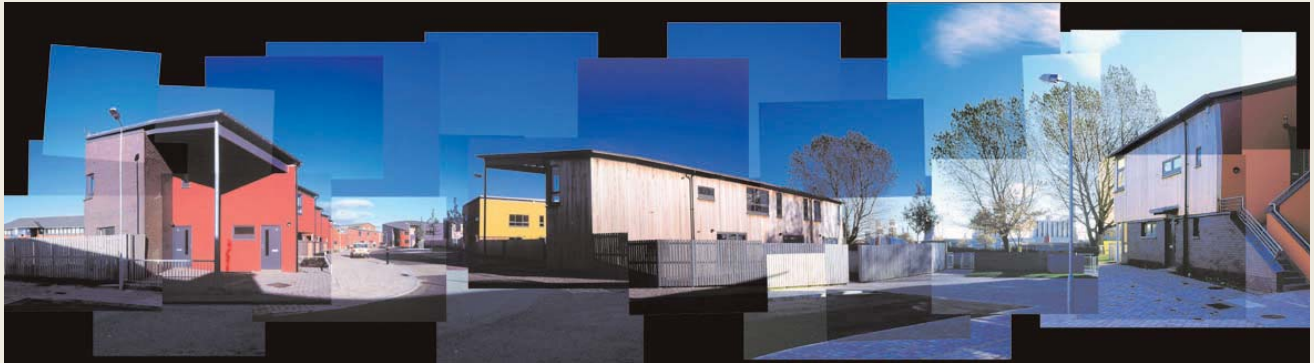Falkirk Council
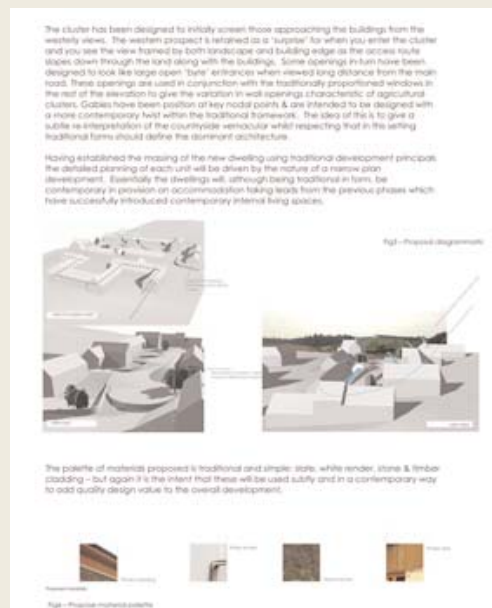
Design Statement

Copyright OMI Architects

NOTE :

To view Design Statement case study from Planning Advice Note 68 Design statements visit : www.cda-group.co.uk/udr.pdf

Photomontage

Westerton Road, Grangemouth

Copyright Page & Park Architects

Falkirk Council
Development Services