

Falkirk Council
Planning Performance Framework
2022-2023



Falkirk Council

Place Services

Annual Report
April 2022 – March 2023

Contents

Foreword	Page 2
Feedback on previous report	Page 2
Introduction	Page 4
Part 1: Qualitative Narrative and Case Studies	Page 4
Quality of Outcomes	Page 4
Quality of Service & Engagement	Page 7
Governance	Page 13
Culture of Continuous Improvement	Page 16
Case Studies	Page 19
Part 2: Supporting Evidence	Page 28
Part 3: Service Improvements 2021 – 2022	Page 29
Part 4: National Headline Indicators	Page 30
Part 5: Scottish Government Official Statistics	Page 34
Part 6: Workforce Information	Page 35
Part 7: Planning Committee Information	Page 36
Performance Markers	Page 37

Foreword

1. Falkirk Council is pleased to submit its twelfth annual Planning Performance Framework (PPF) to Scottish Government. The PPF is an annual report produced by all Scottish planning authorities. It sets out what we have done during the year to maintain and improve the quality of planning service that Falkirk Council provides and shows our commitment to continuous improvement. The structure of the report follows the PPF template and guidance produced by Heads of Planning Scotland. The report includes Scottish Government feedback on our performance in 2021/22 and provides a broad overview of our performance in 2022/23, and our plans for further improvement in 2023/24.

Feedback on Previous Report

2. The feedback we received from Scottish Government acknowledged the continuing challenges facing planning and the importance of the planning system being appropriately resourced to face those challenges. The Minister, Tom Arthur, noted that “performance has remained relatively stable. This is a testament to the hard work and flexibility of authorities during challenging times and I believe that overall, good progress continues to be made by Scotland’s planning authorities”.
3. Our 2021 – 2022 PPF was again assessed by Scottish Government against 14 performance markers using a red, amber and green rating. Falkirk Council received 12 green ratings and only 2 amber ratings, an improvement on the previous year. We received no red markers. We were commended for:
 - Having an up-to-date local development plan.
 - Our comprehensive suite of supplementary guidance covering a range of topics, including clear and proportionate guidance on developer contributions.
 - Regular liaison between planning and other Council services.
 - Encouraging early dialogue with applicants and agents supported by provision of a free pre-application service and website guidance.
 - Reduction in legacy cases.
4. We received an amber rating for our planning application decision making timescales which, except for householder applications, were below the Scottish average. Nonetheless, improvements were made in timescales for major and household applications compared with the previous year. Likewise, we received an amber rating on timescales for concluding legal agreements which, though faster than the previous year, were still below the Scottish average.

Introduction

5. The Falkirk Council area is at the centre of Scotland, at the heart of the road and rail network. It has a growing population (160,560 in 2020). It comprises a network of towns and villages, each with its own strong identity, Falkirk being the principal administrative and service centre. The area retains a strong manufacturing base within a diverse economy. Grangemouth hosts the largest petrochemical complex in Scotland and is also the country's busiest container port. The area has a diverse landscape character and a proud history stretching back to Roman times. The Falkirk Council area is dynamic and forward looking with popular tourist destinations such as the Falkirk Wheel, the Kelpies and Helix Park.
6. During 2022/23, Falkirk's planning service has continued to operate in a changing and often challenging environment. With the Covid 19 pandemic now officially over, working practices and patterns have to a large extent stabilised into a hybrid home/office regime. However, the Council continues to face an extremely difficult financial environment and a recruitment freeze is presenting some challenges in terms of adequately resourcing the planning service, especially as we continue to adapt to the significant changes brought in by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, not least the adoption of NPF4 as part of the statutory development plan . Meanwhile, the new service structure and senior management team is now bedded in, and a move to a new office base for Place Services has been progressed.
7. The delivery of LDP2 remains a key focus, with a number of major housing, business, infrastructure and greenspace proposals being steered through the planning process. Work on LDP3 has begun in earnest. The Council's Growth Deal projects continue to take shape with the key themes being net zero, placemaking and innovation. The restructuring and repurposing of Falkirk Town Centre, the delivery of a 'just transition' in Grangemouth, and the continued regeneration of the Falkirk canal corridor are a particular focus of this ambitious programme. Meanwhile the successful Forth Green Freeport bid, announced in January 2023, presents a further exciting opportunity to stimulate sustainable economic growth in the area. The planning service is a key lynchpin across all these initiatives.

Part 1: Qualitative Narrative and Case Studies

Quality of Outcomes

Place Quality

8. Falkirk Council's Local Outcomes and Improvement Plan – the Falkirk Plan – has as a key outcome that “social, community, and economic planning focuses on place, and reflects the needs and aspirations of the people that live there”. The planning service is central to delivering the spatial aspects of this outcome, engaging with our communities on how their places can be improved and made more sustainable through development planning, adding value to development through the planning application process, facilitating inclusive economic growth, and creating a quality green network which promotes health and well-being.
9. Falkirk Local Development Plan 2, adopted in August 2020, and its suite of updated Supplementary Guidance (SG) notes, provides the overarching direction on place quality, now complemented by the relevant policies in NPF4. This policy and guidance forms the primary reference point in discussions with applicants and stakeholders and provides a basis for negotiating high quality outcomes.
10. Examples are of where the impact of these policies, and the value added through planning, can be seen are set out in case studies 1 and 2 (pages 19/20).

Town Centres

11. Regeneration and repurposing in Falkirk Town Centre is a clear priority for the Council, given the high level of vacancies within the High Street and its two shopping centres. The key sites and opportunities are outlined in LDP2 and supported by elements of the Growth Deal. In order to provide a clear direction of travel, the Council has commissioned a Falkirk Town Centre Vision and Development Framework which is examining the challenges and opportunities around bringing new life and new uses back into the heart of the Town Centre, with a particular focus on four main opportunity sites. In tandem with this work, the Council has chosen a preferred location for a new Arts Centre which will provide a civic and cultural anchor on one of these sites - the Callendar Square shopping centre – and a catalyst for wider regeneration. Work on site acquisition is ongoing. A major public realm improvement project at Newmarket Street has also commenced, and is a further positive step for the regeneration journey.

12. Grangemouth Town Centre, which is the second largest town centre in the Council area, is also facing significant challenges arising from structural changes in retailing, high levels of vacancies and an ageing 1970s shopping precinct. Its regeneration will feature as part the Growth Deal's Greener Grangemouth programme, which is aimed at ensuring the needs and aspirations of the community are addressed as part of the town's wider 'just transition'. A masterplan exercise looking at repurposing and restructuring the centre will be progressed in the near future.

Greenspace

13. The implementation of the Falkirk Open Space Strategy continues, and work has begun on its replacement alongside the preparation of a Play Sufficiency Assessment as part of the evidence base for LDP3. Projects described below are priorities within the Strategy and LDP2.

14. Delivery of the £2.5m masterplan for Zetland Park in Grangemouth has been completed. The project was the overall winner at RTPI Scotland's 2023 Planning Excellence Awards, where it was heralded as an excellent example of community driven, local authority enabled local park regeneration (see case study 3, page 21).

15. A key success over the course of the year was completing the £761k Lionthorn Bing Greenspace Project utilising £583k from the Scottish Government's Vacant and Derelict Land Investment Programme together with planning obligation funds from a nearby housing development. The project was delivered through a partnership with the Green Action Trust and involved the creation of path links and access enhancements, installation of a grass 'kick about' pitch, and landscaping, bulb, and woodland planting to bring this derelict site back into productive use for the local community and fill in another gap in the wider green network around South Falkirk. Work completed in August 2022 (see case study 4, page 22).

16. Work also began on implementing phase 2 of the community led Herbertshire Castle Park masterplan in Dunipace. Phase 2 focuses on the improvement of the site's play facilities and involved the refurbishment of the site's play area (utilising funding from the Council's share of the Scottish Government's Play Renewal Fund and money secured by the Community Green Initiative from the Council's Community Choices participatory budgeting fund) together with the construction of a new pump track (utilising funding from Sportscotland, Foundation Scotland and planning obligations from nearby development).

17. Further works to improve the open spaces at Bo'ness Foreshore have been completed including the installation of a new nautical themed children's play area and the improvement of 3 pedestrian crossings on the Bo'ness to Kinneil railway to ensure they are navigable by all forms of wheeled active transport.

Nature Crisis

18. One of the key national responses to the ongoing international biodiversity crisis is the Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund (NRF). In year 2 of this fund the Council and its partners have delivered a further diverse range of projects utilising NRF funding.
19. Both the Local Biodiversity Action Plan and Open Space Strategy propose a review of the Council's open space maintenance regimes to establish a range of cutting options including some of increased benefit to wildlife. The findings of a pilot project on 35 sites conducted in 2021/22 were presented back to the Council Executive in October 2022. This demonstrated that the pilot reduced the Council's carbon footprint by approximately 30.93 t/CO₂/year, and significantly increased biodiversity at the pilot sites leading to a 775% increase in the number of different plant species and a 4300% increase in the number of different invertebrate species present. The Council has agreed to deliver a mainstreaming of the Sustainable Grass Management Project, with a focus on less high-profile sites and areas that are not accessed directly from residential properties or immediately overlooked by residential properties. As part of the mainstreaming phase, the Council has secured a grant of £41,000 from the Levelling Up Parks Fund to produce a Spaces for Nature Action Plan which will: identify and prioritise parks and greenspaces for sustainable management and enhancement; map the nature networks formed by these sites and associated greenspaces; prioritise sites for action based on the benefits they can deliver for biodiversity, climate and local communities; produce detailed designs for a suite of priority sites; and engage with local communities to develop site signage.

Climate Change

20. In August 2019, the Council declared a Climate Emergency, and is committed to assisting national efforts to achieve net zero emissions by 2045. Our Growth Deal bid is built around projects which will help tackle the climate challenge, particularly those focused on a just transition in Grangemouth.
21. Planning is represented on the Energy Management Working Group and is working with the Climate Change team on the development of the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES).

22. The Council continues to be an active partner in Inner Forth Futures which, following a funded development phase, submitted a delivery phase funding application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for its Climate FORTH project. This aims to support pilot schemes along the Inner Forth which will explore how new adaptive responses to change can safeguard, sustain, and repurpose the area's unique natural, cultural, and built heritage assets.

Historic Environment

23. The Lottery funded 'Rediscovering the Antonine Wall' project, delivered in partnership with the five local authorities traversing the wall and Historic Environment Scotland, has been completed. The project was shortlisted for the best project award at the RTPi Scotland's 2023 Planning Excellence Awards (see case study 5, page 23).
24. The historic listed Victorian bandstand in Glebe Park Bo'ness, which acts as the centrepiece to the annual Bo'ness Fair, was closed in 2019 following the discovery of unsafe decorative ironwork. A condition survey was commissioned and initial works carried out to make the bandstand safe for re-opening to the public. Further funding has been secured from the Scottish Government's Place Based Investment Fund to develop a feasibility cost plan that defines the various options for completing the restoration project and acts as a basis for further fundraising towards project completion.
25. The Carronworks programme, initiated in 2018 and which previously delivered the award winning 'Carron Dams - A Dam Fine Place' project, has turned its focus to the worsening condition of significant elements of iron heritage within Larbert Old Church Graveyard. One of key Industrial Heritage Monuments in Larbert Old Church is the Bruce Obelisk, a Category A listed iron memorial to James Bruce of Kinnaird, a descendant of Robert the Bruce. A contract has been let for the full restoration of the monument utilising funding from Historic Environment Scotland, the Scottish Government's Place Based Investment Fund and the Scottish Landfill Community Fund. Works involving the dismantling, off site renovation and on site reassembly of the monument are expected to complete in winter 2023/24.

Quality of Service and Engagement

26. With the Covid 19 pandemic now officially at an end, most staff have settled into a hybrid mode of working, which generally is working well. MS Teams is routinely used for meetings, general communication, and file sharing, but the benefits of face to face meetings are recognised and these are used where appropriate. Place Services'

current office base at Abbotsford House is being decommissioned, and the service is relocating to a new, fully modernised office base in the Falkirk Stadium.

Development Management: Support and Guidance for Applicants

27. We continue to encourage customers to use our pre-application and general enquiry services for all scales of development. Where workloads allow, officers follow pre-application enquiries through the entire process to a planning application decision. This allows for continuity of service and improves the customer experience.
28. In 2022 we dealt with over 1400 enquiries. In 2023 we have so far dealt with over 800 enquiries. Officers spend a significant amount of time providing this enquiry service and generally provide a written response in the form of an email or a virtual meeting. Officers liaise with other Council services and external agencies to provide detailed replies.
29. We have reviewed the information available on our website and published further planning advice and guidance to assist people to determine if planning permission is needed. Further improvements to our website are proposed within the next reporting period.

Processing Agreements

30. A template remains available on our website and agreements are promoted by officers at the pre-application stage or early in the assessment of applications. Take up remains low but we provide clear timescales to applicants on applications and keep them up to date with progress. Customers are generally satisfied that we have procedures in place to ensure applications are progressed to a reasonable timescale. We are very open with applicants and agents and are available by phone or email to talk matters through.

Legal Agreements

31. Advice and guidance is provided in development plan policy and supplementary guidance setting out the circumstances in which legal agreements will be required. Where financial contributions may be sought, the reasoning and amounts are explained in the supplementary guidance. This information is published on our website and referenced in pre-application discussions.
32. We continue to try and speed up the process. The heads of terms of legal agreements are progressed prior to recommendation. We use standard templates for instructions to the Council's legal services to draft agreements. This ensures all information

needed is provided by the Development Management Unit at an early stage and minimises potential delays. 'Minded to grant' recommendations are worded to set 6 month timescales for the conclusion of agreements or review of the minded to grant decision. The progress of legal agreements is closely monitored by the planning service and legal services.

Charters

33. Our Development Management Charter (February 2023) and Planning Enforcement Charter (November 2021) are available on our website. Our Planning Enforcement Charter will be updated by November 2023.

Complaints

34. The Council's complaints procedures are published on our website. It is a 2 stage procedure. The first stage is a frontline resolution. This aims to resolve complaints quickly and close to where we provide the service. Stage 2 deals with 2 types of complaint, those that have not been resolved at Stage 1 and those that are complex and require detailed investigation. Stage 2 investigations are carried out by Service Unit Managers, with the final complaint responses signed off at Head of Service level or above. Following investigation, if customers are still dissatisfied with our decision or the way we have dealt with their complaint, they can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to look at the matter. These procedures follow the SPSO model.
35. Each Council service has a nominated lead officer for complaints and a Complaints Officers Working Group. At a national level, a Complaint Handlers network has been established in conjunction with the SPSO and a Knowledge Hub forum so that Councils can share good practice and common queries. Falkirk Council is part of this group. An annual report on the Council's performance in dealing with complaints is published on our website.

Customer Feedback

36. We obtain feedback from a variety of sources. We have links to dedicated questionnaires on our email signatures and people can comment through our website or direct to officers. Performance is monitored and regularly reported to Members for their consideration at a Scrutiny Committee. This helps us improve our service and makes sure we are meeting the needs of the communities. We have received many positive comments this year. It's been a very difficult time and so we are particularly pleased that we have managed to maintain a high level of service. We have highlighted below just some of the comments we have received.

"I just wanted to say a huge thanks for all your support over the last year and for your representation today. We are delighted to have the approval granted."

"You are truly wonderful, if only everyone I dealt with was like you!"

"Please pass on my thanks from the Community Council to Bernard & yourself. Your time yesterday was very much appreciated."

"I would like to thank the council and the planning office for the work they are doing and giving me the chance to comment."

"I just wanted to thank you for taking the time to help me with my queries and questions on the phone the other day."

"Thanks for such a prompt response, really appreciated"

"I just wanted to send you a quick email to let you know we got the decision notice through for the proposals at Bo'ness. Thanks very much for all your help getting this one across the line. It's been lovely working with you."

Development Planning

37. LDP2 was adopted in August 2020 and remains a robust, up-to-date framework guiding development in the area. An updated Action Programme was produced in November 2022, as required by legislation, and provided a useful opportunity to take stock of progress on the spatial strategy and review stalled projects.
38. The adoption of NPF4, with its enhanced status as part of the statutory development plan, has been a significant milestone during the year. Development planning and development management staff have been working collaboratively to develop an understanding of the new national policies and how they can be applied effectively, including issues of how they interact with LDP policies.
39. Work has begun in earnest on LDP3. A Development Plan Scheme setting out the Council's intentions for the new plan was prepared and approved in January 2023. Three briefing sessions with elected members were held to discuss the changes to the legislation and the LDP programme. A programme of early engagement with public and stakeholders to gather views and information for the Evidence Report was launched in February 2023 and will run to the end of June 2023. This included:

- Separate online surveys based on the place standard for the public, children and young people, and business and organisations.
- Information points in public venues across the Council area
- Publicity via mailings and multiple social media channels, supported by a video
- A meeting and a training event with community councils
- Engagement with children and young people at various events (see case study 8, page 26)
- Meetings with key agencies and companies

40. Meanwhile evidence gathering is ongoing. The Housing Needs and Demand Assessment was accorded robust and credible status at the end of 2022. To assist the public with considering their places and responding to the early engagement exercise we have created an online spatial datasets atlas and a 20 minute neighbourhood tool (see case study 7, page 25). As part of our consideration of how place based data may be presented for the Evidence Report, we have created a pilot place profile for Denny (see case study 6, page 24), which we are rolling out for other communities. Review of our open space audit and scoping of the play sufficiency assessment has commenced.

41. The Council's suite of supplementary planning guidance associated with LDP2 has been fully updated over the last two years, with the exception of SG11 related to the Antonine Wall which has been delayed due to need to tie in with other local authority partners' processes. This year the Development Plan team, in conjunction with Children's Services, prepared an Education Capacity Statement which further enhances the information available through SG13 Developer Contributions (see case study 9, page 27).

Regional Spatial Strategy

42. Following the joint preparation of an indicative Forth Valley Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) in 2021, Falkirk, Clackmannanshire and Stirling Councils have continued to meet at officer level to consider the scope of the RSS and other issues of mutual interest. Contact is being maintained with the Forth Valley Regional Economic Partnership and emerging Regional Economic Strategy as well as the Forth Valley Connectivity Commission. However work on governance arrangements and project planning is paused pending the publication of RSS statutory guidance.

Local Place Plans

43. At the end of March, the Council published its official invitation to prepare local place plans. Our brief guide to local place plans was updated and includes a summary of the

support which the Council will offer to community bodies. A training session for community councils and other interested groups has been held.

Falkirk/Grangemouth Growth Deal

44. Following the signing of Heads of Terms in December 2021, the £80m Falkirk/Grangemouth Growth Deal has been progressing, with governance arrangements established and preparation of outline business cases ongoing. Eleven projects fall under two broad themes: Innovative Industry and Creating Great Places. Innovative Industry includes a Carbon Dioxide Utilisation Centre and Bioeconomy Accelerator Pilot Plant which will help drive the transition to net zero in Grangemouth. Creating Great Places includes a new Falkirk Central Sustainable Transport Hub, a Greener Grangemouth project, a new Scottish Canal Centre, and a National Outdoor Art Park. The planning service is providing significant input to the scoping of these projects.
45. The Council's Tax Increment Finance (TIF) initiative continues to progress. Phase 1 of the M9 Junction 5 upgrade, which will improve access to Grangemouth and Falkirk, is now complete, and improvements to the A9/A904 at Westfield are underway. The Grangemouth Flood Protection Scheme, which ranks as the top priority flood risk management scheme in Scotland, is progressing, and discussions with Scottish Government on funding are ongoing. The planning service continues to provide input through the project board and the technical working group.

Housing Delivery

46. Completions in 2021-22 showed further recovery from the low in the pandemic year of 2019/2020, and progress is being made on a range of strategic housing sites across the area, including both long standing allocations and newer LDP2 sites. However, viability issues are ever present, particularly where abnormal costs arise and sites are in less attractive market areas. Construction cost inflation, interest rate increases and the cost of living crisis are creating economic headwinds which suggest that the level of annual completions envisaged in LDP2 will be difficult to achieve in the short term.
47. Delivery of the Council's SHIP programme has also been affected by the economic conditions. Although some sites have been successfully delivered (case studies 1 and 2), larger sites in Denny and Banknock have been delayed. Planning continues to be represented on a suite of liaison groups which have been established to oversee both strategic planning and delivery of affordable housing.

Governance

Council Plan 2022-2030

48. The Council Plan 2022-30 is the overarching framework guiding the Council’s future activities, with a strong focus on modernising services and improving outcomes for local people. It sets out a vision of ‘strong communities where inequalities are reduced and lives improved’ and the priorities of

- Supporting stronger and healthier communities
- Promoting opportunities and educational attainment and reducing inequalities
- Supporting a thriving economy and green transition

49. The Council Plan is supported a number of other strategies and programmes including ‘Council of the Future’ which is our framework for transformation and improvement. It also links to the Falkirk Plan which is our Local Outcomes and Improvement Plan and sets priorities and actions for community planning to 2030, as well as providing a framework for locality planning and community action plans. Planning has a close working relationship with community planning colleagues to ensure integration and continuity with spatial planning.

Service Structure

50. Last year’s major service restructure, involving the transformation of Development Services into Place Services, has been bedding in over the course of the reporting year. The creation of a new delivery arm – Invest Falkirk – and the integration of certain Falkirk Community Trust functions back into the Council have been the most significant changes. The service structure is shown below.



51. Place Services brings together the broad range of development services and disciplines, facilitating integration of these related functions. The two units which comprise the planning service are located within the Growth, Planning and Climate division, alongside economic development, transport, environmental health, and culture/arts.
52. The Development Management Unit is loosely split into two geographic area teams. Each team has a co-ordinator but they share work allocation and staff management duties across both teams. The flexible area team structure is particularly beneficial for more complex applications, as it allows for effective sharing of information and discussion of issues, promotes staff development, and provides continuity of delivery if staff are absent.
53. The Planning & Greenspace Unit incorporates the development plan team, a small team of design/environmental specialists who mainly deliver projects, an outdoor access team including the ranger service, and the parks team. The synergy between these functions and skills works well allowing strong links between strategy and implementation, particularly in the area of greenspace and green networks. The development plan team is organised flexibly but staff have clear topic and area responsibilities, so customers and enquiries can be quickly directed to the most appropriate person.

Service Planning and Performance Monitoring

54. The Council, Place Services, Development Management, and Planning & Greenspace use the Pentana Risk system to facilitate corporate performance management and reporting. Our key performance indicators are logged in Pentana for inclusion in both corporate and service level performance reports. Key strategic tasks of the Development Management Unit and Planning and Greenspace Unit are included within the Place Services Strategic Delivery Plan 2023-27, which contains the priority objectives and actions necessary to take forward the Council's strategic priorities and achieve community planning outcomes. The plan is reviewed annually and monitored at a service level whilst operational activity and performance is monitored at a divisional level.
55. The Development Management Unit continues to use the Uniform and Enterprise case management systems to record and monitor case work. These systems allow officers and co-ordinators to monitor and review the progress of applications and planning enquiries. Co-ordinators regularly meet with officers to review case work and progress towards determination. Statistical information on decision making timescales is circulated weekly to co-ordinators and the service manager for review.

Performance is a standing item for discussion on the bi-monthly Development Management team meetings.

Staff Resources

56. Staff numbers in the planning service have reduced over the years in the core development management and development plan teams, as well as in terms of support from environmental specialists. The Council's challenging financial situation is creating further pressure on staff resources, and the significant additional savings being required of the planning service is likely to lead further staff reductions. A recruitment freeze is in place although a business case has successfully been made in the meantime to fill some vacant posts.
57. Notwithstanding these issues, our planning teams are highly experienced, and the relatively low turnover of staff gives good continuity of service and excellent knowledge of the area.

Budgets and Financial Management

58. As noted previously, the Council continues to operate in a very challenging budgetary environment, with a revenue budget gap of some £69m over a four year period. The Council's Financial Strategy looks to map out how financial sustainability will be achieved over the medium term. As part of this, services and units are reviewing their longer term priorities, and identifying where savings can be made or additional income generated.
59. On a day to day basis, financial management is guided by the Council's Contract Standing Orders and Scheme of Delegation and through monitoring by Internal Audit and the Council's Best Value Forum. Council procurement rules and procedures are followed. Regular monitoring of budgets is undertaken between the Unit Managers and the Planning Service accountant.

Collaborative Working

60. Collaboration between the Planning Service, other Council services and other key agencies remains an important part of everyday working. Groups meeting on a regular basis include:
- Education and Planning Liaison Group
 - Housing and Planning Liaison Groups
 - Council Housing Planning Delivery Group

- Planning Obligations Monitoring Group
- Community Engagement Action Team
- Council/SEPA/Scottish Water Tripartite Group
- Forth Valley RSS Officer Working Group
- NHS Forth Valley Planning Liaison Group

Decision Making

61. Decision making is governed by the Council’s Scheme of Delegation, under which most planning applications are delegated to officers. The number of delegated decisions remains above 90%. The scheme allows local and major applications that are in accordance with the development plan to be determined by officers unless called in by any Councillor for consideration by the Planning Committee following publication of the weekly list of delegated recommendations. Where an application is called in the Councillor must state their planning reasons. The applicant/agent is informed of the call in, and the reason given. Councillors are encouraged to discuss applications with officers before making a call-in request. The delegation scheme ensures that the number of applications considered by the Planning Committee is generally small and limited to more controversial applications where a greater degree of public scrutiny is justified.
62. For the key stages of the LDP, decisions are reserved to full Council. Otherwise, development plan or planning policy matters are generally reported to the Council’s Executive. Information may be formally brought to the attention of councillors through information bulletins which are attached to the full Council agenda, but do not require consideration unless a specific question is asked.

Culture of Continuous Improvement

Staff Support and Development

63. Staff development and support remains a priority for the Council and is of particular importance in the hybrid working environment where there is less face to face contact with colleagues. Regular team meetings are held across the planning service, and 1-1 reviews are held between managers and individual team members on an annual basis using the Council’s ‘Good Conversations’ model.
64. Staff are able to access a wealth of training and CPD opportunities through the Improvement Service’s Planning Skills programme and events run by the RTPI Central Chapter. Extensive use is also made of the HOPS network and the associated

Knowledge Hub Forums which allow cross authority discussion and sharing of issues and good practice. Staff are also active on the RTPI's Central Chapter committee and attend events.

Digital Transformation

65. Digital transformation is a key priority in terms of both the 'Council of the Future' agenda, and the Scottish Government's Digital Strategy for Planning.
66. The development plan team continues to strive to make more information available in an accessible digital format. Examples of this developed during the year are our place datasets atlas, 20 minute neighbourhood tool (see case study 7, page 25) and pilot Place Profile in storymap format (see case study 6, page 24). These online resources are aimed at supporting communities in their engagement with LDP3 and in the preparation of LPPs. At the same time, we are working to create a spatial data portal where source shapefiles for a wide range of planning data can be readily accessed from our web site. We expect this to save time currently spent dealing with Freedom of Information requests. Meanwhile, we continue to supply data to the Improvement Service's Spatial Hub.
67. Our commitment to the digital agenda is evidenced by the creation of an additional planning technician (GIS) post to assist with the management and presentation of spatial data in digital form.

Engagement

68. As noted previously, this has been an active year for the development plan team in terms of engagement, and we have worked hard to maximise the impact of our LDP3 awareness raising campaign with the resources available, and to drive as many people as possible towards our online place standard survey. We have used the Council's full range of social media channels, but have also made extensive use of partners' social media and e-newsletters to spread the word, including CVS Falkirk and Young Scot. We have used two adapted versions of the place standard for primary age children and high school/young adults, but have nonetheless struggled to get a significant response. However, our strategy of using events to engage face to face with young people has proved successful (see case study 8, page 26).
69. The Community Engagement Action Team continues to facilitate valuable dialogue on engagement across Council services. This helps to share best practice and resources in engagement as well as mapping out and ensuring co-ordination between the many different consultation exercises being undertaken by services.

70. Looking ahead, the Council is procuring a new online consultation platform which will better meet the needs of services and communities. We expect this to have a spatial mapping capability which will be particularly beneficial for planning related consultations.

Case Studies

Case Study 1: Affordable Housing Schemes	
Location and Dates:	
Bainsford and Torwood, 2021-2023	
Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of Outcomes • Quality of Service and Engagement 	
Key Markers (please select all that apply):	
2,3,12	
Key Areas of Work (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development Management Process • Collaborative working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project management • Design
Stakeholders Involved (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Planning staff • Other Council staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scottish Government
Overview:	
<p>Two new Council housing schemes have been completed at Bainsford and Torwood, together providing a total of 43 new homes. The developments offer a mix of flats and houses designed to accommodate different household sizes. Pre-application discussions between the Council’s Housing, Building Design and Planning staff and consultation with members and communities were vital to ensuring the delivery of these developments on brownfield sites within existing settlement boundaries. The Torwood site was allocated for residential development in the Falkirk Local Development Plan. As a result of early engagement in the design of the scheme the Council was able to use its permitted development rights under Class 33(a) of the Town and Country Planning (General permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992, as amended, to secure a Certificate of Lawfulness (Proposed Development). The Bainsford site was not an allocated housing site and submission of a planning application was required. However, the collaborative approach taken by all stakeholders ensured required information was submitted and matters arising dealt with timeously. This enabled the application to be determined under delegated powers.</p>	
Goals:	
The objective was to deliver high quality, affordable, energy efficient homes that cater to the varying needs of the local communities.	
Outcomes:	
<p>Both projects contribute significantly to affordable housing provision across the Council and represent significant investment from Scottish Government grant funding and Falkirk Council Housing Services. At Bainsford, the redevelopment of a brownfield site has assisted with the ongoing regeneration of the area and support of local services, contributing to local living. At Torwood, a prominent brownfield site on the edge of the village has been sensitively redeveloped as a seamless extension to the settlement through careful design and use of materials.</p>	
Name of key officer	
Various	

Case Study 2: Rosebank Distillery

Location and Dates:

Falkirk, 2017 - 2023

Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Quality of outcomes
- Quality of service and engagement

Key Markers (please select all that apply):

2,3,12

Key Areas of Work (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Design• Regeneration• Conservation | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Economic Development• Development Management Process |
|--|---|

Stakeholders Involved (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Council Planning staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Other Council staff |
|--|---|

Overview:

Rosebank Distillery was featured in PPF 2021 when consent was granted. The feature is again now that construction is complete and the quality of the project evident. The prominent B-listed distillery building lies adjacent to the Forth & Clyde Canal at the western gateway of Falkirk Town Centre and had lain vacant since 1993. Efforts have been made over many years to find a viable development option, supported by a planning brief. In 2017, Ian McLeod Distillers acquired the site and in 2019 planning permission and listed building consent were granted to bring the building back into use as a distillery. Following commencement of development, it became clear that the building was more fragile than originally thought. Through positive, collaborative working between the applicant's agents, Council planning staff and HES, an acceptable revised scheme was agreed, and the project was kept alive. Implementation of the works has required further revisions and agreement of details and ongoing positive engagement between the parties.

Goals:

The objective was to ensure that this important building at risk was brought back into beneficial use, in a way which would support the regeneration of the canal corridor and Falkirk Town Centre.

Outcomes:

The project is now just about complete and the quality of the conversion, in tandem with the contemporary new build elements, has provided a fitting landmark for the town.

Name of key officer

Donald Campbell

Case Study 3: Zetland Park Restoration

Location and Dates:

Grangemouth, 2015-2022

Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Quality of outcomes
- Quality of service and engagement

Key Markers (please select all that apply):

2,12,13

Key Areas of Work (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regeneration • Conservation • Greenspace | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Engagement • Placemaking • Biodiversity |
|--|---|

Stakeholders Involved (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Public • Local Organisations • Key Agencies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Planning Staff • Other Council Staff • Local Businesses |
|---|---|

Overview:

Zetland Park is a Victorian Park at the heart of the community of Grangemouth which by the mid 2010s was in a state of decline. Following approaches by the Friends of Zetland Park, the enhancement of the park was highlighted as a top priority in the Open Space Strategy and included in LDP2. Funding was secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund and a masterplan was developed for the restoration of the park. Key physical elements of the project included the creation of a new, inclusive, heritage themed play park and pump track; the restoration of the listed war memorial and historic fountain; transformation of the derelict boating pond into a wildlife pond; creation of a new performance and events space; creation of a heritage themed sundial; restoration of the rose garden including a rain garden; rewilding elements; and other path and landscape improvements. However, just as important were the softer elements of the project: community involvement through a variety of events and arts, oral history, sports and performing arts programmes. The total value of the project was £2.5m.

Goals:

The key objective of the project was to 'restore Portonian pride' by regenerating the park, celebrating the heritage of the town, providing a fantastic recreational resource, addressing climate change and nature recovery issues, improving the local economy, and acting as a catalyst for community regeneration, well being and empowerment in a town with significant deprivation issues.

Outcomes:

The project was successfully delivered, in spite of the significant challenges posed by the Covid 19 pandemic. The restored park now has a critical mass of attractions and has been hugely popular, with increased footfall. A new café has opened in a previously vacant kiosk. Surveys of park users have shown improved physical and mental health. There is a high level of volunteering. The increase in community capacity and pride will provide a good foundation for further projects in the town which are planned through the Falkirk/Grangemouth Growth Deal. The project won the overall award in the RTPi Scotland Awards for Planning Excellence.

Name of key officer

Danny Thallon

Case Study 4: Lionthorn Policy Bing Greenspace Project

Location and Dates:	
Falkirk, 2022	
Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of outcomes 	
Key Markers (please select all that apply):	
2,6,12	
Key Areas of Work (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greenspace Biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Placemaking Regeneration
Stakeholders Involved (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council Planning Staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Green Action Trust
Overview:	
<p>Lionthorn Bing is a large site in South Falkirk which was formerly occupied by the Callander Policy Colliery. Following the closure of the mine in the late 1960s, the site was cleared and converted to blaes sports pitches, but by the 1980s poor drainage and deterioration of the surface led to it falling into disuse. In the early 2000s, developer contributions from nearby housing development provided a resource through which the improvement of the area could be addressed. A first phase of the Lionthorn greenspace project focusing on the area surrounding the pitches was carried out in 2011/12 involving tree planting, habitat and path creation. As a second phase, a masterplan to turn the blaes area itself into an area of recreational parkland was prepared and consulted on in 2018-2020. A successful application for £538k from the Scottish Government's Vacant and Derelict Land Investment Programme, together with the residue of developer contributions, enabled the delivery of the masterplan in 2022. Delivered through partnership with the Green Action Trust, the works comprise a comprehensive landscaping scheme with bunding, tree and bulb planting to provide structure, shelter and interest. A kickabout pitch forms the heart of the scheme, and path creation has further enhanced access. Parts of the area where natural regeneration was occurring are being managed as a wilder area for nature. The total value of the project was £761k.</p>	
Goals:	
<p>The key goal was to bring this derelict site back into productive use for the community, providing a recreational resource for local people, and filling a gap in the green network around the town of Falkirk as part of the Council's long term Falkirk Greenspace Initiative.</p>	
Outcomes:	
<p>The transformation of the Lionthorn Bing area through successive phases of landscaping and path creation has created a varied area of parkland that is very popular with local people for walking and playing, contributing to placemaking, and health and wellbeing outcomes. The project has demonstrated the value of a long-term phased approach to the delivery of large greenspace projects, and the continuing success of the Council's ongoing partnership with the Green Action Trust.</p>	
Name of key officer	
Danny Thallon	

Case Study 5: Rediscovering the Antonine Wall

Location and Dates:

Antonine Wall, 2017-2022

Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Quality of outcomes

Key Markers (please select all that apply):

2,6,12

Key Areas of Work (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conservation• Placemaking | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaborative Working• Community Engagement |
|--|--|

Stakeholders Involved (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Antonine Wall Local Authorities• Historic Environment Scotland | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• General Public |
|---|--|

Overview:

The project arose out of the Antonine Wall Management Plan 2014-19. It was taken forward by a partnership of all five of the Antonine Wall planning authorities, with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and LEADER. Within Falkirk, since the delivery phase of the project began in 2018, the project has delivered a new Roman themed playpark in Callendar Park, new public realm in Falkirk Town Centre incorporating a specially commissioned distance stone reflecting the native population's perspective on Roman occupation, as well as public artworks in Bonnybridge and at Kinneil Estate and Douglas Park in Bo'ness. An extensive programme of outreach, educational and access projects has complemented the physical works.

Goals:

The objectives of the project were to promote awareness and understanding of the Antonine Wall, realise its full potential as an education and learning resource, and strengthen engagement with local communities.

Outcomes:

The physical projects have been successfully delivered and have contributed to placemaking and quality of life in the relevant communities. The outreach and access programmes have successfully raised the profile of the Antonine Wall as an outstanding cultural and educational resource, and an asset of which the communities along the Wall can be proud. The project was shortlisted for the best project award at the RTPi Scotland's Planning Excellence Awards in 2023.

Name of key officer

Danny Thallon

Case Study 6: Denny Place Profile Pilot

Location and Dates:

Denny, 2022

Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Quality of service and engagement
- Culture of continuous improvement

Key Markers (please select all that apply):

6,9

Key Areas of Work (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local Development Plan• Community Engagement | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data and Information• Digital practice |
|---|---|

Stakeholders Involved (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Council Planning Staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• General Public |
|--|--|

Overview:

As part of the Development Plan team's consideration of place based evidence, and how this might be made available in an accessible and attractive form, a Place Profile for Denny was developed in ArcGIS Story Map format as a pilot, and made available on the Council's web site. This contained information on environment, people, housing, work and infrastructure and services, with embedded interactive mapping, photographs and links to further local information and further web sites. Also included was the 20 minute neighbourhood tool allowing readers to check accessibility to services and facilities in the local area.

Goals:

The objective was to test the place profile format and its usefulness in providing information to local people on their places, supporting local place plan preparation and potentially forming part of the Council's LDP3 Evidence Report.

Outcomes:

The Place Profile pilot has been well-received and attracted favourable comment from public and agencies. It is now being rolled out to the other settlement areas and will form part of the package of support offered to communities in developing local place plans. It will also be included as supporting background material to the LDP3 Evidence Report.

Name of key officer

Andrew McNair/Allan/Ogilvie

Case Study 7: 20 Minute Neighbourhood Tool

Location and Dates:

Area Wide, 2022

Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Quality of service and engagement
- Culture of continuous improvement

Key Markers (please select all that apply):

6,9,12

Key Areas of Work (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local Development Plan• Digital Practice | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Placemaking |
|---|---|

Stakeholders Involved (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Council Planning Staff | |
|--|--|

Overview:

The 20 Minute Neighbourhood concept is now embedded in national planning policy, and planning authorities are required to promote connected and compact communities in line with the concept. The tool has been developed to allow users to assess the extent to which their places fit with the 20 minute neighbourhood aspiration. It consists of a ArcGIS map with layers of information on local facilities from park and play spaces, to bus stops, GP surgeries and shops. Users can feed in a location and set a buffer (0.8 km for a 20 minute neighbourhood). The tool then identifies the accessible features as a list and on the map.

Goals:

The objective is to provide communities with a tool through which they can get to understand what 20 minute neighbourhoods are and how closely the model fits their places. It can be used to identify deficiencies in local provision. This should be of use in helping people participate in LDP3 and may support communities wishing to prepare local place plans. The tool can also be used by planners to assess planning applications and the extent to which proposals comply with NPF4 Policy 15 on local living.

Outcomes:

The tool has been well received by those that have used it, including development management colleagues. We have successfully demonstrated it at consultation events with young people. We hope to further develop it by incorporating full path network functionality so that it provides more accurate accessibility measurements rather than a simple 'as the crow flies' buffer as at present.

Name of key officer

Allan Ogilvie/Natalie Bushell

Case Study 8: Children and Young People LDP3 Engagement Events

Location and Dates:

Callendar Park and the Helix, March 2023

Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Quality of service and engagement
- Culture of continuous Improvement

Key Markers (please select all that apply):

6,9

Key Areas of Work (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Engagement• Place Standard | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local Development Plan |
|---|--|

Stakeholders Involved (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Council Planning Staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children and Young People |
|--|---|

Overview:

As part of early engagement on LDP3, there was a need to reach out to children and young people and discover how they felt about their places. We launched online surveys, adapted to their needs, but felt that face to face contact would be best and that events where large numbers of young people would be present offered an opportunity. We took stalls at an Eco Schools event at Callendar Park and two STEM events at the Helix and engaged with large numbers of children on the place standard and 20 minute neighbourhoods.

Goals:

The objective was primarily to get evidence from children and young people on how they feel about the places they live as part of early engagement on LDP3 and to meet our statutory duties. However, there was also a wider opportunity to raise awareness of the role of planning in shaping the environment around about them.

Outcomes:

Children showed a lot of interest in both the place standard and 20 minute neighbourhood tools, and we came away with a wealth of information on their awareness of place and the issues they experience in their places.

Name of key officer

Alex Lewis

Case Study 9: Education Capacity Statement	
Education Capacity Statement	
Location and Dates:	
Area Wide, 2021	
Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of service and engagement • Culture of continuous improvement 	
Key Markers (please select all that apply):	
6,15	
Key Areas of Work (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplementary Guidance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative Working
Stakeholders Involved (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Planning Staff 	Other Council Staff (Children’s Services)
Overview:	
<p>Many of the schools within the Falkirk Council area are subject to capacity constraints largely as a result of the population growth which the area has experienced over the last 25 years. The scale and location of constraints varies from year to year and is monitored through school roll projections. Capacity constraints are a key factor for prospective housing developers, with contributions sought where capacity enhancement is necessary, and the provision of information to housebuilders is important. In SG13 on Developer Contributions, the Council committed to providing an annual Education Capacity Statement. Working in collaboration with Children’s Services, this has now been prepared and provides data on the capacity situation in each school by high school cluster as well as current and projected investment in the school estate. The statement is accompanied by a summary of the roll projections and an interactive web map of school catchment boundaries.</p>	
Goals:	
<p>The objective is to provide accessible and transparent information to developers on education capacity constraints so they can factor in contribution requirements into their development appraisals at an early stage.</p>	
Outcomes:	
<p>The statement has been well received and the provision of the information on the Council’s web site avoids the need for potentially time consuming individual requests for information to planning and/or education officers.</p>	
Name of key officer	
Andrew McNair	

Part 2: Supporting Evidence

[Council Plan 2022-30](#)

[The Falkirk Plan 2021-30](#)

[Development Plan Scheme 2023](#)

[LDP2 Online Version](#)

[LDP2 Supplementary Guidance](#)

[Housing Land Audit](#)

[Employment Land Audit](#)

[Development Plan Newsletter March 2023](#)

[Local Development Plan 3 Video](#)

[20 Minute Neighbourhoods Tool](#)

[Denny Place Profile](#)

[Place Datasets Atlas](#)

[A Brief Guide to Local Place Plans](#)

[Education Capacity Statement](#)

[Falkirk Council website](#)

Case Study Topics	Issue covered in PPF	Case Study Topics	Issue covered in PPF
Design	X	Interdisciplinary Working	
Climate Change		Collaborative Working	X
Conservation	X	Community Engagement	X
Biodiversity	X	Placemaking	X
Regeneration	X	Charrettes	
Environment		Place Standard	X
Greenspace	X	Performance Monitoring	
Town Centres		Process Improvement	
Masterplanning		Project Management	X
LDP & Supplementary Guidance	X	Skills Sharing	
Housing Supply		Staff Training	
Affordable Housing	X	Online Systems	
Economic Development	X	Data and Information	X
Enforcement		Digital Practice	X
Development Management Processes	X	Transport	
Planning Applications		Active Travel	

Part 3: Service Improvements

In the coming year (2023-24) we will:

Service Improvement	Timescale
Secure Council approval of LDP3 Evidence Report	March 2024
Complete Open Space Audit	December 2023
Complete Play Sufficiency Assessment	December 2023
Go live with Spatial Data Portal	September 2023
Implementation of discretionary planning charges for non-material variations, discharge of planning conditions and pre-application enquiries	December 2023
Review Scheme of Delegation	March 2024
Improvements to S75/S69 monitoring processes	December 2023
Improve decision making timescales	March 2024
Review Enforcement Charter	November 2023
Review/upgrade document management/case work system	December 2023

Delivery of our Service Improvement Actions in 2020-21:

Service Improvement	Complete?
Prepare, consult on, and approve Development Plan Scheme	Yes. Development Plan Scheme approved by Council Executive in January 2023.
Commence pre-Evidence Report engagement with communities and key stakeholders	Yes. Engagement programme launched in February 2023 and will run to June 2023.
Issue LPP invitation and prepare package of LPP support measure for community bodies	Yes. LPP invitation issued in March 2023 along with package of support measures
Secure robust and credible status for HNDA	Yes. Robust and credible status secured in December 2022
Review and republish LDP2 Action Programme	Yes. Update published in November 2022.
Consider resource implications arising out of Planning (Scotland) Act 2019	Yes, implications are being considered in assessment and delivery of services.
Report to members and seek approval for a scheme of discretionary charges	Yes. Report to committee approved in December 2022 and changes being implemented.
Draft business case for purchase of hardware to aid site inspections/remote working	Yes, business case drafted.

Part 4: National Headline Indicators

A: NHI Key Outcomes – Development Planning

Development Planning	2022-23	2021-2022
Local Development Planning		
Age of LDP at end of reporting period	31 months	19 months
Will the LDP be replaced by its 5 th anniversary according to current development plan scheme?	No (Note 1)	No (Note 1)
Has the expected date of submission of the plan to Scottish Ministers changed over the past year?	Yes (Note 2)	N/A (Note 3)
Were development plan scheme engagement/consultation commitments met during the year?	Yes	N/A (Note 4)
Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs		
Housing approvals (units)	720	477
Housing completions over the last 5 years (units)	1993	2109
Marketable employment land supply (hectares)	235.7	271.8
Employment land take up during reporting year (hectares)	0	6.1

Note 1: Indicator is effectively superseded by Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 which envisages 10 year review period. Transitional arrangements seek new style LDPs to be adopted within 5 year period of development plan regulations coming into force which, in terms of the 2023 Development Plan Scheme, the Council expects to achieve.

Note 2: 2021 DPS was an early interim document based on assumptions about progress in implementing the new development planning system. Delays in implementation have caused the start date of the process to slip back in 2023 DPS, hence the change in the submission date.

Note 3: 2021 DPS was the first DPS for LDP3

Note 4: The Council was not formally engaged in plan preparation during 2021/22.

Sources: Housing Land Audit 2022-23
 Employment Land Audit 2023

B: NHI Key outcomes – Development Management:

Development Management:	2022-23	2021-22
Project Planning		
Percentage and number of applications subject to pre-application advice	120 23.2%	139 19.3%

Percentage and number of major applications subject to processing agreement	3 60%	1 33.3%
Decision Making		
Application approval rate	94.5%	97.4%
Delegation rate	94.7%	96.3%
Validation	44.9%	44.9%
Decision-making Timescales		
Major Developments	143.8 weeks	54.5 weeks
Local developments (non-householder)	15.2 weeks	14.6 weeks
Householder developments	8.2 weeks	8.1 weeks
Legacy Cases		
Number cleared during reporting period	6	13
Number remaining	16	16

C: Enforcement activity

	2022-23	2021-22
Time since enforcement charter published / reviewed Requirement: review every 2 years	16 months	4 months
Complaints lodged and investigated	46	66
Breaches identified – no further action taken	8	16
Cases closed	54	44
Notices served	0	4
Direct Action	0	0
Reports to Procurator Fiscal	0	0
Prosecutions	0	0

D: NHI Key Outcomes – Commentary

Commentary
Local Development Planning
LDP2 was adopted on 7 August 2020 and remains up-to-date. The LDP3 process has now been commenced and the first firm programme published in the 2023 DPS. Adoption date is anticipated to be 2027, which is within the 5 year timescale from the Development Plan Regulations coming into force (May 2028).
Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs
Housing approvals have bounced back from a low of 477 units the previous year to 720 units reflecting more typical levels over recent years. However, the 5 year rolling completions figure continues to fall, notwithstanding the release of substantial new housing allocations in 2020 through LDP2. This is reflective of ongoing viability/market issues and the time it is taking to resolve increasingly complex constraints on larger sites. Marketable employment land has reduced due to a reappraisal of the extent of available land at Ineos and Grangemouth Port. There has been no take-up of sites during the reporting year.
Project Planning
There is still little interest from developers and agents to enter into processing agreements despite our willingness to do so and the guidance and sample template published on our website. Developers and agents appear to be satisfied that we use informal project plans, are willing to give pre-application advice, give clear timescales, seek to resolve issues arising and are contactable and regularly monitor caseloads.
Decision Making
Our approval and delegation rates remain high and have increased slightly since the last reporting period. The percentage of applications that we can validate on first receipt has decreased. This is despite the clear guidance on our website on what information should be submitted with an application and targeting agents who frequently make invalid submissions.
Decision Making Timescales
Most of the applications we received were for householder development. Our decision making timescales for these applications is better than the national average. However, our timescales for determining local and major applications are below average. This has been due to a combination of factors. The statistics do not take account of ‘stop the clock’ adjustments and so do not accurately reflect the time taken by the Council to determine applications. Due to long term sickness absence, we did not have opportunity to adjust the statistics before submission. Scottish Government advise this will be noted in the published statistics. The figures are being reviewed to more accurately show decision timescales. Ongoing IT problems with our case management/document management system regularly crashing has caused us a number of problems and lost time this reporting period. The system is being reviewed and an upgrade is being considered to address this matter.

Budgetary pressures and staff vacancies have impacted on the ability of the development management unit and key internal consultees to respond timeously. As a result, we have been more flexible with applicants and agents in allowing time for responses to requests for additional necessary information.

Officer caseloads are being monitored and regular case officer/line manager meetings are in place to check case progress. Staff vacancies are being addressed as far as currently possible within budget restrictions.

Legacy Cases

We continue to monitor legacy cases. Older cases are regularly reviewed by line managers in conjunction with legal services. Where appropriate, minded to grant decisions are reviewed and reported back to the Planning Committee for further consideration and determination. The number of legacy cases we have has remained constant since the last reporting period.

Enforcement

We still have one part time planning enforcement officer. Enforcement case load is regular monitored using the Uniform and Enterprise record management systems and cases reviewed by the Development Management Co-ordinators. Planning officers assist our enforcement officer with investigation of enforcement complaints. Our enforcement charter was updated before November 2023.

Part 5: Scottish Government Official Statistics

A: Decision-making timescales (based on 'all applications' timescales)

Timescales	Total	Average Timescale	
	Decisions	(weeks)	
Overall	2022-23	2022-23	2021-22
Major developments	5	143.8 weeks	54.5 weeks
Local developments (non-householder)	201	15.2 weeks	14.6 weeks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local: less than 2 months Local: more than 2 months 	(42.9%) (57.1%)		
Householder developments	241	8.2 weeks	8.1 weeks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local: less than 2 months Local: more than 2 months 	(80.0%) (20.0%)		
Housing Developments			
Major	1	92 weeks	92 weeks
Local housing developments			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local: less than 2 months Local: more than 2 months 	51 (10.0%) (90.0%)	19.4 weeks	19.4 weeks
Business and Industry			
Major	0	N/A	N/A
Local business and industry developments			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local: less than 2 months Local: more than 2 months 		N/A	N/A
EIA Developments	0	N/A	N/A
Other Consents	66	8.1	8.6 weeks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>As listed in the guidance</i> 			
Planning/legal agreements	2		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major: average time Local: average time 		237.1 weeks 74.2 weeks	54.5 weeks 47.2 weeks

B: Decision-making: local reviews and appeals

Type	Total number of decisions No.	Original decision upheld			
		2022-23		2021-22	
		No.	%	No.	%
Local reviews	2	1	50%	2	40%
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	5	3	60%	1	33.3%

C: Context

Comments on our decision-making timescales are provided in Part 4 of the PPF. We continue to closely monitor the progress of legal agreements, set timescales for conclusion, seek withdrawal of applications, determine, or agree extensions of time where there are delays and make use of 'stop the clock' procedures. Where the determination of applications is delayed it is a consequence of delays by applicants and agents or because extensions of time have been agreed.

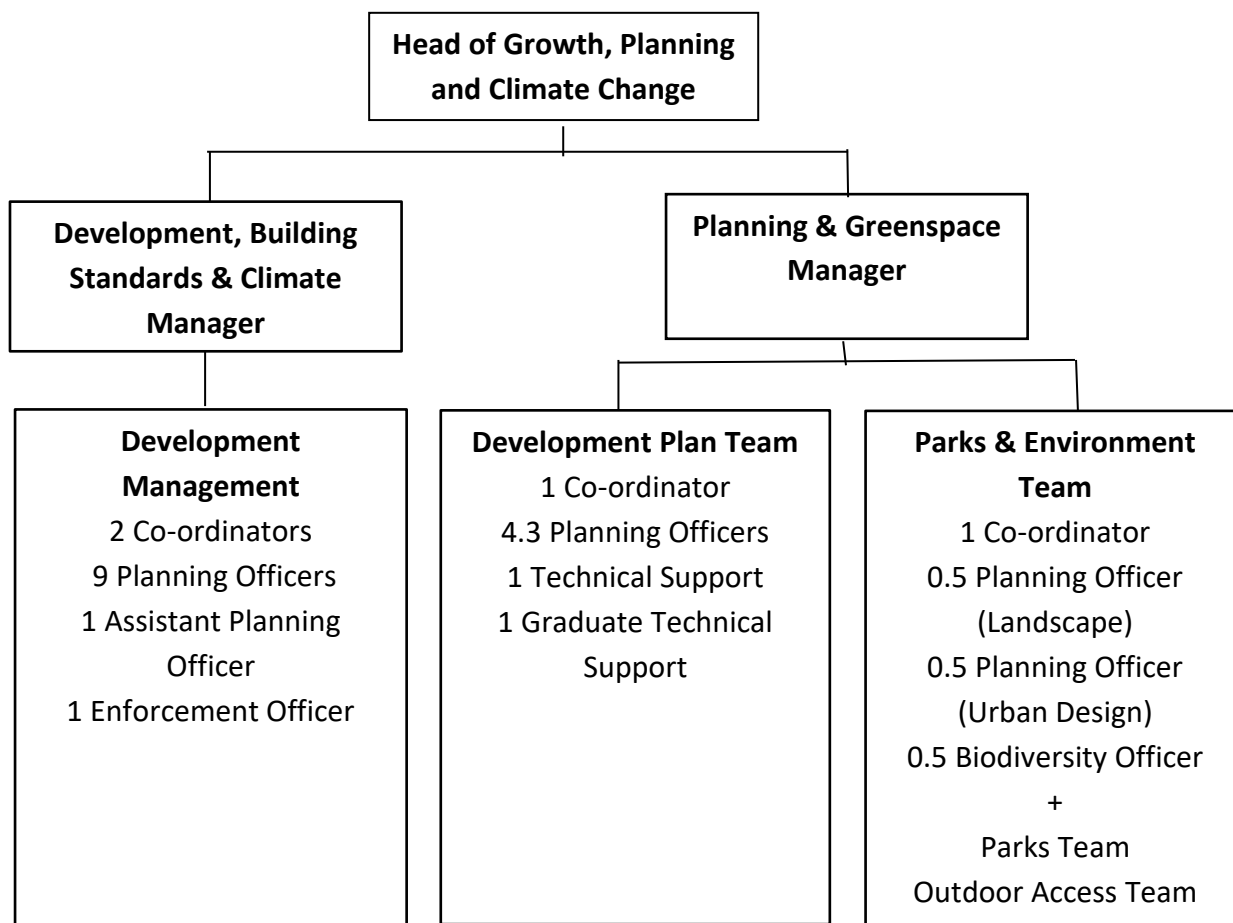
Part 6: Workforce Information

	Tier 1 <i>Chief Executive</i>	Tier 2 <i>Director</i>	Tier 3 <i>Head of Service</i>	Tier 4 <i>Manager</i>
Head of Planning Service				X

RTPI Chartered Staff	Headcount	FTE
Development Management	9	9
Development Planning	5	4.3
Other	2	2
Total	16	15.3
Non RTPI Chartered Staff	Headcount	FTE
Design/Environment Specialists	3	1.5
Technical Support	6	4
Enforcement	1	0.5
Total	10	6

Staff Age Profile	Headcount
Under 30	2
30-39	2
40-49	7
50 and over	15

Planning Service Staff Structure (as at 31st March 2022)



Part 7: Planning Committee Information

Committee & Site Visits	Number per year (2022)
Full council meetings	11
Planning committees	9
Committee site visits	13
Local Review Body	1
LRB site visits	0

Performance Markers

Performance Marker	Council Response/Evidence
Driving Improved Performance	
<p>1</p> <p>Decision making: authorities demonstrating continuous evidence of reducing average timescales for all development types</p>	<p>The majority of applications received are for householder development. Our performance is above the national average. Our decision-making timescales for local and major developments is below the national average but there are reasons for this. We have not been able to apply ‘stop the clock’ adjustments to our Scottish Government returns because of long term staff sickness absence. IT record management system problems have impacted on our handling and recording of applications. Budgetary pressures and vacancies have impacted on the ability of Development Management Unit and key internal consultees to respond timeously.</p> <p>PPF Reference</p> <p>Part 4: National Headline Indicators, page 30 Part 5: Scottish Government Official Statistics, page 34</p>
<p>2</p> <p>Project management: offer of processing agreements (or other agreed project plan) made to prospective applicants in advance of all major applications <u>and</u> availability publicised on planning authority website</p>	<p>We promote the use of processing agreements. There is guidance and a template on our website. Agreements are invited during pre-application discussions and in correspondence with applicants and agents.</p> <p>Although there is general reluctance from applicants/agents to enter into formal agreements we have procedures in place for case officers and line managers to monitor and review the progress of applications</p> <p>PPF Reference</p> <p>Part 4: National Headline Indicators, page 30 Case Studies 1 and 2 Processing agreements, para 30, page 8 Service Planning and Performance Management, para 55, page 14</p>
<p>3</p> <p>Early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • availability and promotion of pre- 	<p>We encourage early dialogue with applicants and agents and offer a free pre-application advice service. Guidance is published on our website.</p>

	<p>application discussions for all prospective applications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear and proportionate requests for supporting information 	<p>PPF Reference</p> <p>Case studies 1 and 2 Pre-application, para 27 – 29, page 8 Charters, para 33, page 9 Development Planning, para 37 – 41, page 16 Collaborative Working, para 60, page 15</p>
4	<p>Legal Agreements: conclude (or reconsider) applications within 6 months of ‘resolving to grant’³</p>	<p>The progress of applications subject to legal agreements is closely monitored and applications are reported back to Planning Committee for reconsideration if not determined within 6 months.</p> <p>PPF Reference</p> <p>Legal agreements, para 31 – 32, page 8</p>
5	<p>Enforcement Charter updated/re-published</p>	<p>The Charter is up to date.</p> <p>PPF Reference</p> <p>Charters, para 33, page 9</p>
6	<p>Continuous Improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report 	<p>Our commitment to continuous improvement is evidenced throughout the report and exemplified by the case studies</p> <p>PPF Reference</p> <p>Case studies 1-9 Quality of Outcomes, para 8-25 Quality of Services and Engagement, para 26-47 Culture of Continuous Improvement, paras 63-70</p>
Promoting the Plan-Led System		
7	<p>Local Development Plan less than 5 years since adoption</p>	<p>LDP2 was adopted in August 2020 and was 2 year and 7 months old at the end of the reporting period.</p> <p>PPF Reference</p> <p>Part 4: National Headline Indicators, page 30</p>
8	<p>Development Plan Scheme demonstrates next LDP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On course for adoption within 5 year cycle • Project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale 	<p>DPS for LDP3 was approved in January 2023. This projects an adoption date of 2027. With the commencement of the new development plan provisions, the 5 year cycle is no longer applicable. Transitional requirements seek replacement of the plan within five years of the LDP regulations coming into force, i.e. May 2028, which will be achieved according to the DPS.</p> <p>PPF Reference</p> <p>Part 4: National Headline Indicators, page 30</p>

9	Stakeholders including Elected Members, industry, agencies, the public and Scottish Government are engaged appropriately through all key stages of development plan preparation	<p>Early engagement on LDP3 was commenced during 2022. Engagement took place with stakeholders on the content of the participation statement in late 2022, along with meetings with key agencies. A major ‘Call for Evidence’ consultation exercise was launched in February 2023 including a ‘Tell us About Your Place’ survey based on the Place Standard, and a Business & Organisations Survey. Member briefings held.</p> <p>PPF Reference Development Planning, para 39, page 10</p>
10	No longer applicable – gap kept for data continuity	
11	<p>Regular and proportionate policy advice, for example through SPGs produced on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information required to support applications; and • Expected developer contributions 	<p>The suite of supplementary guidance has been comprehensively reviewed and updated over the past 2 years following on from the adoption of LDP2.</p> <p>Where relevant the SGs provide guidance on the information required to support applications and checklists for applicants to ensure that all the relevant issues have been considered and addressed pre-submission, to give the applications the highest chance of prompt assessment and determination.</p> <p>A consolidated and refreshed SG on developer contributions was adopted in July 2021. This sets out required developer contributions and provide clear guidance on the circumstances in which contributions will be required, the scale of those contributions, how the contributions are derived, and how development viability may be taken in account, thereby demonstrating proportionality. Education Capacity Statements are now prepared annually to provide further guidance to housing applicants on where education pressure points exist and education contributions are likely.</p> <p>PPF Reference Pre-application, para 27-29, page 8 Legal Agreements, para 31 – 32, page 8 Charters, para 33, page 9 Development Planning, para 41, page 11 Collaborative Working, para 60, page 15</p>

Simplifying and Streamlining		
12	Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit	<p>Regular liaison meetings between planning and other Council services are held on a range of topics such as housing, education, open space, economic development, and delivery of the Council’s SHIP programme, monitoring of planning obligation receipts and spend.</p> <p>PPF Reference Case studies 1-5 Pre-application, para 28, page 8 Development Planning, para 41, page 11 Falkirk/Grangemouth Growth Deal, paras 44-45, page 12 Housing Delivery, para 46-47, page 12 Legal Agreements, paras 31-32, page 8 Service Structure, paras 50-51, page 13 Collaborative Working, para 60, page 15 Engagement, para 69, page 17</p>
13	Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities	<p>Staff have attended forums, conferences, training events and RTPI Chapter events. The Knowledge Hub is used to share information and experience. We have hosted visits to our award winning project at Zetland Park and shared our early LDP evidence report work online.</p> <p>PPF Reference Case Studies 1-9 Staff Support and Development para 64, page 16</p>
Delivering Development		
14	Stalled sites/legacy cases: conclusion/withdrawal of planning applications more than one-year-old	<p>We have cleared legacy cases during the reporting period and continue to work with applicants and agents to keep numbers to a minimum. Deadlines are set and cases monitored. Minded to grant decisions are reconsidered within 6 months if not determined.</p> <p>PPF Reference Part 4: National Headline Indicators, page 30 Processing agreements, para 30, page 8 Legal agreements, para 31 – 32, page 8</p>