

Fields in Trust Standards

Creating great spaces for all

Planning Policy Context for

Scotland



Introduction

This Planning Policy Context note for Scotland accompanies the Fields in Trust Standards (the “FIT Standards”). It sets out the planning policy context for Scotland and explains how to use the FIT Standards when preparing planning applications for new developments or as part of the community-led planning process.

Introduction to the Planning System

The Scottish Government is responsible for creating the laws and regulations that set the rules for the planning system in Scotland, but local government administers much of the planning system, including preparing the local development plan for an area and determining most planning applications.

The planning system in Scotland is ‘plan-led’. This means that proposals for new development must be determined in accordance with the development plan for an area unless ‘material considerations’ indicate otherwise.

Relevance of the Fields in Trust Standards in Planning

National planning policy in Scotland recognises the importance of providing accessible, high quality open spaces to achieve sustainable development. The FIT Standards are recognised across the UK as a common approach for delivering accessible, high quality open space, sport and play provision in line with national planning policy. Using the FIT Standards from the beginning of the planning process embeds a focus on achieving better design outcomes from the start, and by incorporating benchmarks on quantity and accessibility as well as using the framework of 6 themes can help drive a broader agenda of quality and functionality.

Fields in Trust also work with developers, planners, community-planning groups and town and parish councils to assess and analyse current provision levels using their [Green Space Index](#) and identify where this does not currently meet the FIT Standards.

Planning Applications and Appeals

The FIT Standards can be used to help developers and consultants in securing planning consent for new developments through demonstrating compliance with local policy requirements for open space, sport and play provision. Following the FIT Standards is a policy requirement in many local authority areas in Scotland when integrating outdoor space into new developments. In many local authority areas, guidelines and standards on open space in local policy are a derivation of the FIT Standards and in local planning authority areas where no guidelines are in place, the FIT Standards are a useful tool to demonstrate appropriate levels of open space are being provided.

The FIT Standards can also be used as part of negotiations with local planning authorities to determine the level and standard of provision required cognisant of the local context and other facilities.

The FIT Standards can also provide a robust basis for decision-makers in planning appeals to assess the provision of open space where it is a material consideration in an appeal.

Local Development Plans

The FIT Standards have been developed to be directly referenced in Local Development Plans setting out the types of open space, outdoor sports and play spaces (quantity, accessibility and quality) that should be provided for different scales of new development.

Community-led Planning

The FIT Standards can be used by local communities to help identify the appropriate level of open space, sports and play provision for an area to be set out in the Local Place Plan.

The FIT Standards can also be used to help identify suitable open spaces to protect and enhance. There is no specific designation for local green space in Scotland but enhanced protection of green spaces for public recreational use can be achieved through Fields in Trust and a [Minute of Agreement](#) in partnership with the landowner. The FIT Standards can assist in defining the role of such spaces in meeting open space needs within the local community.



Sighthill, Glasgow. © Chris Swan

Policy Context

National Policy

National Planning Framework

The [National Planning Framework](#) (NPF) is a long-term spatial plan for Scotland which sets out the Scottish Governments' policies and proposals for the development and use of land at a national level. Part 1 sets out the National Spatial Strategy for Scotland 2045 and Part 2 sets out the national planning policy to deliver the strategy.

The policies in the NPF must be taken into account in preparing the Local Development Plan (LDP) for an area and it is a 'material consideration' in deciding planning applications. The regional spatial priorities for the five regions of Scotland set out in the NPF must also inform the preparation of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) and LDPs.

The primary objective of the NPF is to support the planning and delivery of 'Sustainable', 'Liveable' and 'Productive' Places.

Policy 21 (Play, recreation and sport) states that local development plans should provide a framework for the delivery of well-designed, high quality, accessible and inclusive play, recreation and sport provision. Local planning authorities should identify sites for sports, play and outdoor recreation in their local development plans, informed by the Play Sufficiency Assessment and Open Space Strategy for the area. The FIT Standards

are an important source of information for local planning authorities in providing open space and outdoor sport and play through the planning system.

Policy 21 also sets out clear protection for existing outdoor sports facilities and children's outdoor play provision.

Planning Advice Note 65: Planning and open space

[Planning Advice Note 65](#) provides advice on good practice when planning for open space. It recognises the importance of creating successful places and promotes effective links between the planning, design and management of open space. In particular it places emphasis on the role of Open Space Strategies in coordinating policy and assessing provision and need.

Scottish Government Planning Guidance: Play Sufficiency Assessment

The [Play Sufficiency Assessment](#) guidance sets out the expectations for local planning authorities in undertaking mandatory Play Sufficiency Assessments (PSA) as part of the Local Development Plan process. The preparation of a PSA forms part of the Stage 1 processes as part of early engagement and data collection. It is intended to help ensure there is a good understanding of the sufficiency of both formal and informal play spaces for children across planning authority areas. The evidence gathered in the PSA should be used to inform provisions for play in the preparation of LDPs.

Regional and Local Policy

Regional Spatial Strategies

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 introduced a new duty requiring local planning authorities to work together at a regional level to prepare RSS' which will set out the long term spatial strategy for the strategic development of each region, but do not form part of the statutory development plan.

Local Development Plans

LDPs set out local planning policy and must have regard to the adopted RSS. LDPs are part of the statutory development plan alongside the NPF. Developed by the local planning authority, they set out the vision and framework for future development of the area, addressing local needs and opportunities as well as setting safeguards for the local environment.

As noted above, the FIT Standards are referenced in policies within many Local Development Plans in Scotland for developers and consultants to follow when integrating open space within new developments (and in other local authority areas local guidelines and standards are a derivation of the FIT Standards).

Local Place Plans

Local Place Plans are non-statutory documents which are community-led and should ideally be prepared collaboratively. They can set out priorities for future development, as well as how land is developed and used including a map and action plan. The local planning authority must take into account any registered Local Place Plans in the LDP.



Glasgow Science Centre. © Paul Upward

Open Space, Sports and Play Provision in New Developments

In Scotland, open space, outdoor sports and play provision is secured through national and local policy requirements, with the FIT Standards providing minimum guidelines for provision.

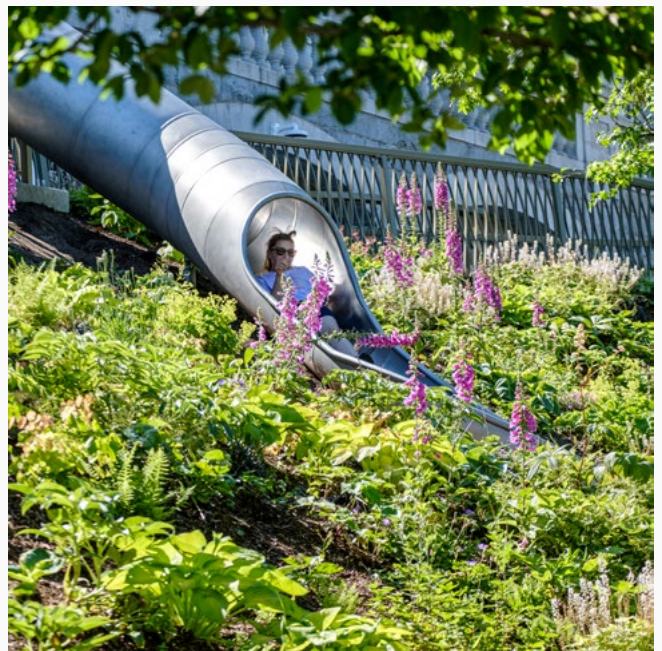
Local planning authorities use planning conditions and/or planning obligations to ensure that any agreed open space provision is delivered.

Planning Obligations

Under [Section 75 \(S75\) of the Town and Country Planning \(Scotland\) Act 1997](#), developers in Scotland may be required to provide planning obligations. Section 75 agreements are legally binding agreements entered into to secure planning obligations. Planning obligations are an important mechanism used by local planning authorities to ensure that certain work and/or financial contributions required to reduce the impact of the development are carried out, for example securing the required open space provision. The FIT Standards provide a basis for design discussions with the local planning authority regarding the open space provision to be secured.

Supporting biodiversity

Another key consideration for new developments is the enhancement of biodiversity. Policy 3b of the [National Planning Framework](#) requires all major development to include “significant biodiversity enhancements”. There may be opportunities to create space for nature that also provides other recreational benefits - where properly designed and considered, recreational benefits can be a key wider benefit of the enhancement of biodiversity. The 6 themes in the FIT Standards are designed to help drive a broader agenda of multifunctional green spaces.



Union Terrace Gardens © Chris Swan



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