

Planning Guidance: Open Space and Designing New Residential Developments

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Introduction

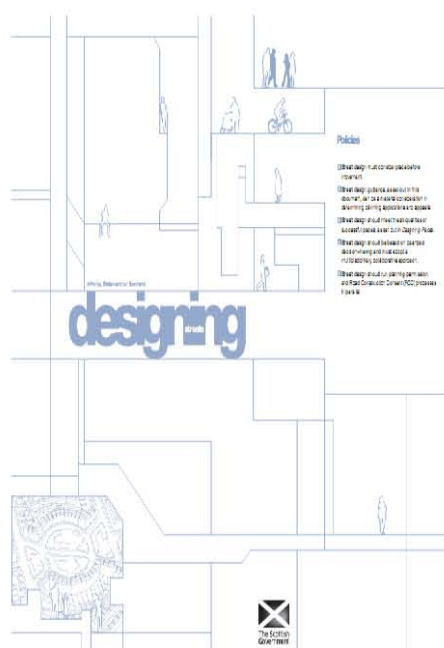
Introduction

The provision and treatment of outdoor open space, whether public or private is vital in achieving a successful and attractive environment and quality of life and is as much part of the design of a new residential development as the buildings and roads. It is essential that developers give considerable thought as to where open spaces would be best located within a new development, what function they will have and what activities they will facilitate, from the outset of the design process.

In recognising the importance of the design process, the Scottish Government has produced *Designing Streets: A Policy Statement for Scotland*. Designing Streets is the first policy statement in Scotland for street design and marks a change in the emphasis of guidance on street design towards place-making and away from a system focused upon the dominance of motor vehicles. The Council therefore expect all planning applications for residential development to confirm with the policy principles of Designing Streets; and open space provision must be considered as part of the overall design and layout of new residential development.

As a means of ensuring the Council performs its duties as Local Planning Authority, this SPG should complement the framework set out by Designing Streets, Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) and government Planning Advice Notes (PANs). This will ensure that open space, within residential development, is provided at suitable standards of quality and quantity.

Both SPP and PAN 65: *Planning and Open Space* require local authorities to conduct detailed audits of all their open spaces and prepare an open space strategy, in order to guide policy and determine planning applications. The Council's *Parks and Public Opens Spaces, Recreation & Landscape Strategy (2001)* and the *Analysis of Council Maintained Open Space within Main Urban Areas of Ayr, Prestwick, Troon, Girvan and Maybole (2001)* were both considered in preparing this SPG. While there is recognition that these documents are not up-to-date as advocated by both SPP and PAN65, the SPG builds in a certain amount of flexibility to account for areas where there may be less of a requirement to provide on-site open space or open space facilities such as the character of the local area may dictate. The Council is currently undertaking a review of its open space audit and until such time that the audit is completed, the historic quative standards (derived from the Council's Planning Policy No. 4: The Provision of Private and Public Open Space and Play Area within New Residential Area- PPN0.4) will remain. Once completed, the SPG can be amended to reflect the findings of the up-to-date audit.



Introduction



nature of the surrounding area) the Council requires to be satisfied as to why this is the case.

This SPG has been drafted in conjunction with the Council's Parks and Landscape Strategy Officer who is responsible for the management of the Council's owned public open space. Their advice will continue to be sought regarding the need for open spaces and facilities relating to new housing development.

It is important to stress that the purpose of this SPG is not simply to continue the standards as set out in PPNo.4. PPNo.4 standards were based on quantitative standards; and while the SPG does have a quantitative element, the SPG intends to drive the quality of open space and be responsive to quality residential developments with quality environments. The SPG seeks to achieve this by encouraging planning applications for residential development to be supported by a design statement (see below) which demonstrates the quality of the development as being justification for approval as opposed to minimum open space standards being met.

However in developing the SPG, dropping quantitative standards altogether was not the Council's favoured option as numerical standards are useful in resisting poor quality residential developments at overdeveloped sites which do not fit with their surroundings. It is important to have ample areas of public open space to ensure that there are opportunities for recreation and that developments are not overly dominated by roads and buildings. In circumstances where the minimum open space quantities are unachievable or unnecessary (due to the

How to arrive at a meaningful design solution

How to arrive at a meaningful design solution?

The Council considers that the most effective method of demonstrating that open space provision has been considered as part of the overall design of a new residential development is through the submission of a design statement. PAN68: *Design Statements* recognises that a competent design statement will help demonstrate the factors that have been taken into account in preparing the layout and design of a development.

The Council therefore expects planning applications for residential development to be accompanied by a design statement which has been prepared in accordance with PAN68 and demonstrates that the 5 stages in the design process (as detailed in Pan 58) have been met.



Public Open Space and New Residential Areas

Public open space within new residential developments should be incorporated within the overall design of the development and should be one of the central themes in providing a design solution for new sites from the outset. Public open space is valuable for

a number of reasons; it provides opportunities for physical recreation, it can have mental health benefits, it can support healthier lifestyles, and it can support habitats and provide opportunities for biodiversity.

Public open space should not be provided on spaces left over after the planning process has been concluded i.e. areas of land left over after the location of roads and buildings have been determined. This has been the case too often in the past and can lead to unusable or undesirable areas of public open space without any purpose.

Much of the emphasis in the past, in terms of open space within new residential areas, was placed upon achieving the necessary quantity of open space. A variety of different methods have been adopted to calculate these requirements such as open space dependent upon the volume of people living within a new development or open space dependent upon the number of units within a new development.

This has led to undesirable areas of open space with no clear function as it has often become the case that providing open space within new residential areas is simply a case of meeting the required numbers.

Key attributes of successful areas of open space

Key Attributes of Successful Areas of Open Space

There are some attributes which successful areas of public open space have in common; they are in the right place, readily accessible, safe, inclusive, welcoming, well maintained, well managed and performing an identified function. It is expected that every effort should be made to include these guiding principles within all new developments. Table 1 outlines each of these attributes in greater detail.

Table 1

Accessible

Open space should be located at the most accessible part of a new site, avoiding any potential conflict with busy roads. They should be linked in to local paths and should have well placed entry points to encourage safe access. Where multiple areas of open space are proposed within new developments, these should be distributed evenly throughout the site. However, the Council also welcome larger areas of open space within new residential areas which consolidate the open space requirements and which can accommodate a wider range of uses. These types of spaces are also more convenient from a maintenance perspective and for creating focal points for new communities.

Safe and Welcoming

Open space should be safe. This can be achieved by locating the spaces in areas which are overlooked by housing in order to provide natural surveillance and by ensuring that developments do not turn their backs on areas of public open space. Safety can also be achieved by ensuring that open space is properly lit and that there are no hidden areas within which people can feel more vulnerable. Access to open space should avoid having to cross any major hazards such as rail lines, major roads, waterways etc.

Spaces should be welcoming to encourage people to use them. This can be achieved by ensuring that the spaces are well signposted, encompass some soft landscaping features, contain high quality materials and have well maintained boundaries with an attractive appearance.

Maintenance

The management and maintenance of open space has become a crucial issue for the Council. Developers should ensure that open space is maintained through a factoring or management regime at no cost to the Council. The burden must not be passed onto future residents of a site through the inclusion of open space within property deeds. In all cases the factoring arrangements must be submitted and agreed as part of the planning application and must be to the full satisfaction of the Council.

It is recommended that details of the maintenance arrangements be included with planning applications as an integral part of the landscape/open space proposals. In some circumstances, the Council may require the developer to provide a landscape bond to ensure that newly installed landscaping will be maintained and kept thriving during the first year of the residential development.

Identified function

The quality of an area of open space will be dependent upon the function that the area is intended to facilitate and the ability of the area to fulfil that function. This should be clearly established upon the submission of any planning application which proposes areas of public open space. A document, published in 2008 by Greenspace Scotland, entitled *Greenspace Quality – a guide to assessment, planning and strategic development* provides some useful guidance in terms of measuring and assessing the quality of open space.

Types of public open space within new residential developments

Types of Public Open Space within new Residential Developments

New residential developments should contain three types of open space:

- residential greens;
- formal play areas; and
- amenity areas

The standards set out within this section will be applicable to all new housing developments of 6 or more units.

Residential greens

Although there will be occasions where formal sports pitches may be required, it is anticipated that residential greens will be the most common type of public open space. These greens should be able to facilitate a range of informal activities including kickabouts and semi-organised games. In order to protect the amenity of all properties within the vicinity, these areas should be located at reasonable distances away from the nearest properties. This should be established at the outset of the design process.

Larger areas of open space for outdoor sport will be required for larger developments. In some instances this may include formal sports pitches dependent upon existing provisions within the area and the scale of the proposed development. In such instances it may be beneficial to provide larger, consolidated areas of open space as opposed to smaller pockets scattered throughout a development. This can help to make the open space more functional, usable and capable of accommodating a wider range of activities.

Residential greens should be provided at a ratio of 1 hectare per 1000 population.

Types of public open space within new residential developments

Formal play areas

The most important consideration when providing play areas within new residential developments is the safety of the end user. Play areas should be in accessible locations, ensuring that they can be accessed by avoiding any potentially dangerous hazards, they should be well lit and overlooked by surrounding properties, providing natural surveillance. Play areas should not be hidden away in backland areas and should not be overlooked by the gable ends of surrounding properties where the gable end has no windows. However, they should be located far enough away from housing boundaries to ensure that they do not cause any noise nuisance to residents of nearby properties.

Play areas should be large enough to accommodate a range of semi-organised games as well as incorporating appropriate play equipment for various age groups. The play equipment to be included within specific sites should be in full agreement with the Council's Parks and Landscape Strategy Officer.

Children's play areas are required to cater for a range of different age groups. For the purposes of this guidance they will be split into two groups; toddlers and children/teenagers. Toddlers' play areas require only a limited amount of equipment, are generally smaller areas and will be more localised. Play areas for children/teenagers require more challenging equipment, larger areas and can be located further away from the houses which they are intended to serve. However, in all cases every effort should be made to locate these areas within the application site.



The Council accepts that there will be circumstances where it would be impractical or unnecessary to provide play areas within new residential developments. Where such circumstances arise, developers will be required to provide a commuted sum in proportion to the size of the proposed development in order to contribute towards the upgrading of play facilities within the nearby area. This ensures that all new housing developments are contributing towards the play area needs generated by their development. The commuted sum will be required to be agreed with the Council's Parks and Landscape Strategy Officer and received by the Council prior to the issuing of any planning consent. The commuted payment calculations will be based on the standard costs for equipment, which have been developed from current rates of tendered contracts by the Council. These figures are reviewed regularly to take account of changing circumstances in relation to costs.

Sensitive landscaping treatment can be used to make play areas more attractive and welcoming. Appropriate species should be agreed in conjunction with the Council's Parks and Landscape Strategy Officer and approved as part of the accompanying planning application.

Types of public open space within new residential developments

In developments of 15 or more dwellings, formal play areas should be provided at a ratio of 0.2 hectares per 1000 population

Amenity Areas

Open space can be used to provide visual benefits to new residential areas. This type of open space is known as amenity open space. This can include structural planting, highway verges and landscaped areas for the purposes of making developments more welcoming and pleasant places to live and visit. They should be attractive and, as with all areas of open space, should be an integral part of the overall layout of residential schemes. Play areas should not take away from the requirement to provide amenity areas of open space.

Amenity areas will require to be provided within all new residential developments. The extent of amenity areas will be dependent upon the size of the development.

Amenity open space also presents opportunities to maximise biodiversity. Amenity open space can be landscaped and maintained not only to preserve the existing flora and fauna of the area but to enhance each, and so enrich the area for residents and visitors alike.

Amenity areas of open space should be provided at a ratio of 0.4 hectares per 1000 population.

strategic housing sites) the Council may ask for a sports pitch to be provided as part of a new development, over and above the open space requirements.

Playing fields are an important resource for sport and should be provided in sufficient quantity, quality and accessibility to satisfy current and likely future community demand. Local authorities are expected to develop a playing fields strategy as part of the wider open space strategy. As mentioned previously, the Council are currently undertaking a review of their open space audit and once completed the SPG can be amended to reflect the findings of the up-to-date audit.

Where such a need is identified by the Council, this should be progressed as part of the planning application process and will normally be set out within the development plan.

Playing fields

In some instances, where a need has been identified for new outdoor sports or recreation facilities in an area, (particularly in relation to

Private open space

Private Open Space

Private open space is generally split up into two areas; front gardens and rear gardens. The rear garden, in general, is a more private area within which some outdoor domestic activities can be accommodated. The front garden is generally a more open area which often contains paths and off street parking. Due to the different functions of these areas the Council considers that there should be different requirements in terms of the amount of open space within the two areas.

It is recognised that the extent of private open space within new residential developments can often be dictated by the design and layout of the development. The primary consideration in developing new residential areas will be the overall design quality of the proposed development, including how it complements the established character and amenity of the existing surrounding area. Design statements will have a key role to play in this respect.

Rear gardens

Rear gardens are particularly important private areas of open space. For this reason the Council will seek to ensure that in most circumstances the amount of open space within rear gardens meets the requirements outlined below. The purpose of this is to ensure that people have the opportunity to enjoy everyday outdoor domestic activities within the privacy of their own garden.

Detached, semi-detached and terraced properties should be provided with rear gardens in proportion to their size. Rear gardens will be expected to be a minimum of 1½ times the size of the ground floor area for detached and semi-detached dwellings and no less than 100m². This will generally include rear and side dwellinghouse gardens enclosed by fence/wall/hedge. For terraced dwellings the same rule will apply whereby the ratio provided should be 1.5 times the ground floor area of the property with a minimum area of 70m².

Front gardens

Front gardens are fundamentally different to rear gardens and therefore require to be treated differently. Within new residential areas front gardens can vary in size. The Council considers that the most important issue should be the quality of the overall development in terms of its design and layout.

Developments which use varying sizes of front gardens and staggered houses, in terms of their positioning and siting, can often create interesting streetscapes. Houses facing each other, which are closer together due to smaller front gardens and smaller roads, can help to provide developments with a sense of enclosure thereby slowing traffic down and giving ownership of the street to pedestrians. However, it is important to ensure that people's privacy is not adversely affected by fronting habitable rooms directly onto opposing habitable rooms where the houses are within close proximity of each other.

To avoid the creation of monotonous streetscapes the Council does not consider that it is necessary to provide minimum standards for front gardens. The size of front gardens should be dictated by the overall design principles of a new development.

Private open space

Within front gardens the house should remain the dominant feature and should not be negatively impinged upon by the development of oversized garages or car parking arrangements. In particular garages should not extend beyond the building line of the individual plot. The only occasion where the building line should be breached is where a garage is physically connected to a house e.g. L-shaped configured houses.

Amenity and Privacy

Amenity and Privacy

Minimum Distances

The Council seeks to ensure that the amenity and privacy of all houses are protected. As such there has to be a minimum distance between the side elevation of houses. This is also required for the purposes of off street car parking. The minimum distance between houses shall be 4 metres. However, where a better streetscape can be created with reduced separation distances between houses this will be considered. The key consideration in this respect is the value added to the new development as a result of reduced separation distances between houses.

A minimum garden depth of 9 metres shall be required. This distance may be relaxed in the case of corner plots and on plots, with two or more frontages onto roads, subject to the minimum areas being satisfactorily provided. A minimum of 18 metres between habitable windows (including kitchens) shall be provided. This may have to be increased in certain circumstances, for example where a new development is backing onto an existing residential area or where the new development is greater than 2 storeys in height.

Flatted developments

Flatted Developments

The nature of open space within flatted developments is clearly different from that of detached, semi-detached and terraced units. It will normally be communal areas of space shared by everyone living in the particular block. While the quality of design and layout will largely dictate flatted developments, the Council considers it necessary to provide benchmark standards which will act as a guide. In all instances new flatted developments should display the qualities outlined within tables 1 and 2 of this document.

Open space within flatted developments should be in the form of residential greens which can accommodate informal outdoor play activities and amenity spaces which provide primarily a visual benefit. The method used to calculate open space requirements within flatted developments does not differentiate between the two types of open space (amenity and residential greens) in terms of how much space should be allocated to each of the types of open space. It is considered that open space within flatted developments does not function in the same way as open space associated with detached, semi-detached and terraced units. It is at the discretion of the developer in terms of how open space is divided up within flatted developments.

The quantitative standards for open space within flatted developments will be calculated using the following:

Open space/unit	
50m²/unit	
No. Of units	20
Calculation: (20x50) = 1000m²	

Flatted developments will also be required to provide a play contribution either onsite or by upgrading existing provisions within the nearby surrounding area. Whether the play areas are provided onsite or take the form a

financial contribution will be dependent upon the size of the development. In general, flatted developments of less than 15 units will not be required to provide play areas onsite.

Where an equipped play area is to be provided onsite the area required will be at a ratio of 0.2 hectares per 1000 population.

In relation to flatted development, there may be instances whereby a financial contribution is sought in lieu of a contribution for upgrading nearby play equipment. The commuted sum will be required to be agreed with the Council's Parks and Landscape Strategy Officer and received by the Council prior to the issuing of any planning consent. The commuted payment calculations will be based on the standard costs for equipment, which have been developed from current rates of tendered contracts by the Council. These figures are reviewed regularly to take account of changing circumstances in relation to costs.

Functional areas within flatted developments

Flatted developments will usually require external bin storage areas, drying areas and cycle shelters. Where these areas are to be provided they will be required over and above the normal open space requirements.

Infill developments and open space

Infill developments and open space

Infill developments can have a number of benefits both for the immediate areas in which they are found and in terms of the wider sustainability agenda. Infill developments normally take place within existing urban areas which reduces the need to identify new residential sites on greenfield land; they utilise existing public infrastructure such as roads, water and drainage and they can help to regenerate areas suffering from poor environmental quality.

Open space requirements within infill developments will be the same as those for new residential areas. However, the Council recognises that there may be circumstances where higher or lower open space standards may be necessary when taking into account the established character and amenity of the existing surrounding area. In all cases one of the key considerations will be the ratio of built form to open space. This should be reflective of the existing surrounding area unless overriding design considerations indicate otherwise.

In all circumstances the quality of the open space and the overall design principles of the site, including how it complements the established character and amenity of the existing surrounding area will be considered to be of prime importance. A design statement will be a key tool in this respect.

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems and Open Space

SUDS are now an integral part of almost every new residential development. The Scottish Environmental Protection Agency and Scottish Water are in favour of SUDS within most new developments. SUDS can be designed in a number of different ways. The type of SUDS to be included within a development will determine whether or not it will be able to contribute towards the site's open space requirements. Any SUDS contributing towards open space requirements must be appropriately designed, fit for purpose and should not be fenced off.



PAN 61 states that SUDS may contribute to satisfying a site's open space requirements. The Council considers that there may be circumstances under which this may be acceptable. However, this will be primarily dependent upon health and safety issues, how often the SUDS are predicted to retain water and how high the water levels will be. In all circumstances the Council will consider the welfare of future residents as being of paramount importance and will seek assurances from the developer in this respect.

New areas of open space can often support a range of different plant species, depending upon the type and function of the open space. Where appropriate, new developments should give consideration to the biodiversity value of the site and should seek to capitalise upon opportunities for the creation of natural habitats. Schemes which incorporate Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems provide good opportunities in this regard.

Applicant's checklist

Applicant's Checklist

Prior to submitting a planning application for residential development it is considered appropriate to utilise the checklist provided below and to ensure that all of the points raised have been comprehensively addressed within the proposal. In certain circumstances the Council may ask for information showing how each of points raised within the checklist have been addressed.

- How do all areas of open space within the site benefit from natural surveillance? (Natural surveillance is a design concept directed primarily to maximise visibility and foster positive social interaction)
- Why have the areas selected for open space/play been chosen and how does that help to facilitate the function of the open space?
- How has the safety of the end user been taken into consideration in terms of the location of play areas and in the development as a whole?

Calculating Open Space Provision

Residential greens

Areas for outdoor sports, including residential greens require to be calculated at 1 hectare per 1000 population. This will be based upon the average household size within South Ayrshire at the last census. Residential greens will be required in developments of ten or more units. An example of how this would be calculated is provided below:

Example

Development of 50 units:

- 1 ha per 1000 pop. (10m² per person).
- Average size of South Ayrshire household = 2.27 per household (2001 census)
- Number of units proposed = 50
- Calculation:
- $2.27 \times 50 = 113.5 \times 10\text{m}^2 = 1135\text{m}^2$

Formal play areas

The benchmark figure for children's play areas is set at 0.2 hectares per 1000 population in developments of 15 dwellings or more. There are different types of play areas containing different equipment which are suitable for children of different age groups. Developments should provide a mix of both toddlers' play areas and play areas for children and teenagers.

The type of equipment to be included within each of these different types of play areas should be in full agreement with the Council Parks and Landscape Strategy Officer.

Formal play areas will be required in developments of 15 units or more. For developments of between 5 and 15 units applicants will be required to provide a play contribution in order to contribute towards the play area needs generated by the development. The contribution will be worked out on a per unit basis. Applicants will be required to submit their play area contribution fee prior to the issuing of any planning consent.

An example of how to calculate the amount of open space required for play space is provided below:

Development of 50 units:

- 0.2 ha per 1000 pop. (2m² per person).
- Average size of South Ayrshire household = 2.27 per household (2001 census)
- Number of units proposed = 50
- Calculation:
- $2.27 \times 50 = 113.5 \times 2\text{m}^2 = 227\text{m}^2$

Amenity Areas

A minimum area of 0.4 hectares of amenity open space should be provided per 1000 population. At 2.27 persons per household (2001 Census average for South Ayrshire) this would result in 454 sq m per 50 dwellings with individual areas being not less than 100sqm.

Applicant's checklist

Amenity areas of open space will be provided in all developments of 10 units or more. However, it is accepted that there may be circumstances where smaller developments would benefit from amenity areas of open space. Pre-application discussion with the Planning Authority will be essential in this regard.

An example of how to calculate the provisions for amenity open space is provided below.

Example:

Development of 50 units:

- 0.4 ha per 1000 pop. (4m² per person).
- Average size of South Ayrshire household = 2.27 per household (2001 census)
- Number of units proposed = 50
- Calculation:
- $2.27 \times 50 = 113.5 \times 4\text{m}^2 = 454\text{m}^2$

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