



National Planning Framework 4 Early Engagement – Policies

**MAXIMISING THE BENEFITS OF GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**

Scottish Planning Policy (2014):

*The **planning system** should:*

- *consider green infrastructure as an integral element of places from the outset of the planning process;*
- *assess current and future needs and opportunities for green infrastructure to provide multiple benefits;*
- *facilitate the provision and long-term, integrated management of green infrastructure and prevent fragmentation; and*
- *provide for easy and safe access to and within green infrastructure, including core paths and other important routes, within the context of statutory access rights under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003.*

***Development plans** should be informed by relevant, up-to-date audits, strategies and action plans covering green infrastructure's multiple functions. SDPs should safeguard existing strategic or regionally important assets and identify strategic priorities for green infrastructure. Local development plans should*

- *seek to enhance existing and promote the creation of new green infrastructure through a design-led approach, applying standards which facilitate appropriate provision, addressing deficits or surpluses within the local context.*
- *identify sites for new indoor or outdoor sports, recreation or play facilities where a need has been identified. They should provide good quality, accessible facilities in sufficient quantity to satisfy current and likely future community demand. Outdoor sports facilities should be safeguarded from development except where: it is ancillary to the principal use as an outdoor sports facility; it involves only a minor part of the facility; the facility would be replaced by a new facility of comparable or greater benefit that is convenient for users; there is a clear excess of provision.*
- *should safeguard existing and potential allotment sites. Plans should also encourage opportunities for a range of community growing spaces.*
- *should safeguard access rights and core paths and encourage new and enhanced opportunities for access linked to wider networks.*
- *should encourage the temporary use of unused or underused land as green infrastructure while making clear that this will not prevent any future development potential which has been identified from being realised.*

***Planning decisions** should ensure that:*

- *development of land allocated as green infrastructure for an unrelated purpose should have a strong justification.*
- *proposals that would result in or exacerbate a deficit of green infrastructure should include provision to remedy that deficit.*
- *consideration is given to the qualities of successful places in the design of green infrastructure.*
- *proposals affecting regional and country parks must have regard to their statutory purpose of providing recreational access to the countryside close to centres of population.*

## What has changed since 2014?

- In 2013, 67.6% of adults lived within a 5 minute walk of their nearest green or blue space compared to 65.3%, in 2018 – this is noted as performance maintaining in relation to the national indicator,
- The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 introduces new statutory duties for planning authorities to prepare Open Space Strategies, Play Sufficiency Assessments, and Forestry & Woodland Strategies. and supports the concept of blue-green infrastructure.
- Research undertaken by Ironside Farrar on the adoption of Scottish Planning Policy in local development plans<sup>1</sup> confirmed that green infrastructure policies are generally working well although there are issues around encouraging the temporary use of unused land and promoting the creation of new green infrastructure through a design led approach. It suggested that policies would be easier to apply through the introduction of clearer standards and minimum requirements. Flexibility is also required to deliver appropriate measures for both dense and rural areas. Concerns were raised that policies on community growing spaces were not being fully implemented and that green infrastructure policy commitments were being set aside to accommodate other priorities, for example a playing down of greenspace/green infrastructure requirements to ensure investment in affordable housing. The benefits of “green roofs” were highlighted.
- Scottish Natural Heritage’s research on *Maximising the benefits of green infrastructure in social housing*<sup>2</sup> included a number of recommendations on how green infrastructure standards should be embedded within planning policy, including exploring a national standard and a national requirement for green infrastructure to be included in all new developments.
- Research (2018) was also taken for CSGNT looking at green infrastructure policies in local development plans in the Central Scotland Green Network area to establish the quality of current and/or proposed green infrastructure relevant policies. It includes proposed example GI policy – with elements around : placemaking, water management, access networks, habitat networks, open space and stewardship.
- Examples of emerging policies elsewhere, such as the Mayor of London’s<sup>3</sup> green roof policy which requires “major developments proposals to be designed to include roof, wall and site planting, especially green roofs and walls where feasible, to deliver as many of the following objectives as possible:
  - a) adaptation to climate change (ie aiding cooling)
  - b) sustainable urban drainage
  - c) mitigation of climate change (ie aiding energy efficiency)
  - d) enhancement of biodiversity
  - e) accessible roof space
  - f) improvements to appearance and resilience of the building
  - g) growing food.

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<sup>1</sup> [Adoption of Scottish planning policy in local development plans](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Maximising the benefits of green infrastructure in social-housing - SNH 2018](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Mayor of London - Green roofs and development site environs](#)

- Guidance in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015<sup>4</sup> acknowledges and endorses the rising interest in community growing – both on allotments and through other grow-your-own (GYO) models, recognising the multiple benefits it can offer.

**Proposed key objectives of NPF4:** To protect, enhance and promote green infrastructure, including open space and green networks, as an integral component of successful placemaking.

**Questions for consultees:**

- What is the potential for green and blue infrastructure to support our wider objectives on climate change?
- What more should planning policies do to ensure that the benefits of green infrastructure are maximised, and to show increasing performance against the national indicator on access to green and blue space?
- Should the potential for national standards/requirements for green infrastructure be explored?
- Should NPF4 include policies specific to major developments to ensure that the potential for blue and green infrastructure is maximised?
- How can NPF4 best ensure that green infrastructure policies are given appropriate regard against other issues i.e. placemaking and affordable housing?
- What more can NPF4 do to support allotments/community growing places?
- Is there a need to safeguard areas of green infrastructure which provide flood risk management services, such as floodplains, river corridors and flowpaths?

## Get Involved

For more information and other resources



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<sup>4</sup> [Part 9 of the Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015 – Allotments: Guidance for Local authorities](#)