

## Draft Supplementary Guidance 03

# Green Belts







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### Introduction

The purpose of this Guidance is to provide the rationale for the need and specific designation of Green Belts around Stirling, Bridge of Allan, Dunblane and Strathblane, including any specific boundary changes. The Guidance is also intended to assist the interpretation and implementation of Policy 4 on Green Belts, by providing information on the core role and function of designated Green Belts.

Green Belts are areas of land within the countryside outwith settlements, and are specifically designated for a planning purpose. It is not considered appropriate to designate Green Belts around all the settlements in the Stirling area. Only if they meet the main objectives of Green Belt policy, have areas been designated as Green Belt. The core roles and functions of particular Green Belt areas are consistent with the reasons for their designation as Green Belt.

### Objectives of Green Belts

(SPP) considers a key part of the settlement strategy and the objectives of Green Belts is to: -

1. Direct planned growth to the most appropriate locations and support regeneration;
2. Protect and enhance the quality, character, landscape setting and identity of towns and cities; and
3. Protect and give access to open space within and around towns and cities.



Stirling's Green Belts are one of a range of mechanisms that help to shape the City of Stirling and surrounding towns and villages by directing development to suitable locations as part of the long-term settlement strategy identified in the Plan. The Green Belt policy and the designation and boundaries for Green Belts provide clarity and certainty on where development should and should not take place, particularly for those settlements with a distinct character and identity that could be harmed by unplanned growth.

Green Belts are designated around Stirling, Bridge of Allan, Dunblane and Strathblane, to protect and enhance the quality, character, landscape setting and identity of these settlements. The landscape setting of historic features is a particularly important part of the identity of the City of Stirling and the surrounding area, and the designation of Green Belts reinforces the importance given to the protection of this setting.

The small scale of Stirling's Green Belts in relation to others in Scotland means that any built development within them is likely to have a significant impact, which could detract from their openness and undermine their objectives. The Green Belts in the Stirling area therefore require strong protection through Planning Policy in order to protect and enhance the countryside close to the main urban settlements.

Stirling's Green Belts are also important in providing opportunities for outdoor recreation for local people, maintaining biodiversity and enhancing the quality of life. Green Belts help to protect and give access to areas of open space and to protect habitats. They support the wider structure of open space and the objectives of the Green Network. To ensure Green Belt areas are successful for such purposes, they must be managed, maintained and enhanced – the approach to this will be dealt with through the development of the LDP Action Programme. [Green Belts have not been used as a designation to protect natural heritage, as there are other policies within the Plan to carry out these functions].

Preventing coalescence (maintaining settlement separation) and the relationship between settlements continues to be important in protecting the setting and identity of



settlements in the Stirling area. Preventing coalescence has therefore been used as a reason to designate Green Belts in certain areas where it allows for a more sustainable settlement pattern in terms of the Spatial Strategy, and where the designated area can also fulfill other Green Belt objectives.

## Designation of Green Belts in the Stirling area

Green Belts have been established within the development plan since 1999, within the Stirling Council Local Plan. Green Belts are designated at Stirling, Bannockburn, Bridge of Allan, Dunblane and Strathblane on the basis of the Central 2000 Structure Plan, which established the context to allow Local Plans to define specific Green Belt areas [although the idea of protection for these areas actually goes back as far as 1986 with the ‘Policy 35 areas’ in the Stirling Area Local Plan].

Green Belts were established principally to prevent the coalescence of settlements and/or to protect the landscape setting of towns. Preventing development, which would lead to the coalescence of Bridge of Allan with Stirling and Dunblane, and the Hillfoots towns including Blairlogie, was cited as a principal aim in establishing Green Belts in these areas.

They were also established in particular areas to protect heritage features of national and/or regional importance considered to be; Stirling Castle, Bannockburn Monument, Wallace Monument, Site of the Battle of Bannockburn and Cambuskenneth Abbey. The designated areas were selected not necessarily on the basis of their intrinsic landscape quality, but because of their relationship to settlements or heritage features – this reflected the objectives identified at the time in the former Government Circular 24/85.

The extension of the Green Belt to the east of Stirling (as part of Local Plan Alteration 2), in association with the proposed Major Growth Area, reflected the need to protect the sensitive landscape setting of Stirling and its historic views as well avoiding



coalescence.

Green Belts contribute to ensuring the long-term stability of sensitive areas adjacent to towns and cities, where they may be strong development demands. In Stirling this is most certainly still the case, and a review of existing Green Belts has confirmed that they should continue to be designated within the LDP, in the locations referred to above. This is to ensure they provide long-term certainty, reflecting the Vision and Spatial Strategy of the Plan, for at least 20 years.

The Spatial Strategy considers the need for development and the planned growth of settlements over a 20-year period up to 2033. The primary objective (1) is to consider how Green Belts can help to direct planned development to the most appropriate locations and support regeneration. In order to assist this, the landscapes around Stirling, Dunblane, Bridge of Allan and Strathblane have been considered in terms of how they protect and enhance the quality, character, landscape setting and identity of settlements (objective 2) and protect and give access to open spaces (objective 3).

[The detailed analysis in terms of objectives 2 and 3 is contained within the Stirling Green Belt Study, 2009 and Strathblane Green Belt Study, 2009, and Stirling Major Growth Area Landscape Study, 2004, all produced by Land Use Consultants].

The Spatial Strategy seeks to direct planned development to the most appropriate locations by adopting a 'place-shaping' approach to new development, with the sustainable development of communities at its core. Informed by the City Visioning process, it sets out the following strategy for development: -

- Urban Consolidation – mainly urban brownfield development within the City, the main towns of Bridge of Allan and Dunblane.
- Regeneration – redevelopment and new development to help bring about the physical, social and economic regeneration of Raploch, Cornton, Cultenhove and the eastern villages.
- Strategic Development



(a) Expansion of the City along the City Corridor to strengthen City edges, define 'gateways' and key nodes, and strengthen the City's links with the University. Small-scale expansion of Dunblane to the east in the longer term to meet local housing needs.

(b) New settlement at Durieshill to reduce the pressure for development on other more sensitive Greenfield land.

- Rural Villages and Rural Development – small-scale development on the edge of the western rural villages and within the countryside to meet local housing needs.

The following sets out how the Plan responds to the analysis of Green Belt objectives: -

- Those areas that perform well in relation to the above objectives and are not required for future growth of settlements in terms of the long-term development strategy for the Plan are designated as Green Belt on the Proposals Maps.
- Those areas that do not perform well in relation to the above objectives and are not required for future growth of settlements in terms of the long-term development strategy for the Plan are removed from the Green Belt.
- Those areas that do not perform well in relation to the above objectives and are required for future growth of settlements in terms of the long-term development strategy for the Plan are removed from the Green Belt and are either allocated or long-term safeguarded for future development in the Plan.
- The following sets out the core role and function of the designated Green Belts proposed within the LDP:



## Green Belt - Stirling and Bannockburn

The area of Green Belt designated around Stirling City reflects the relationship between the landscape and the settlement, allowing appreciation of the historic settlement form. It is important in maintaining views to key landscape features important to settlement identity such as Castle Craig and Abbey Craig and historical built features such as the mill buildings at Cambusbarron. It is particularly important for protecting views of key features of national and/or regional importance including Stirling Castle, Wallace Monument and Cambuskenneth Abbey.

The area of Green Belt designated at Whins of Milton/Bannockburn and incorporating the Bannock Burn and Cat Craig is important in its associations with the site of the Battle, and in providing context for the understanding of the site, and the identity and character of Bannockburn. The Green Belt also contributes to the wider structure of green space and green corridors present in this area and the objectives of the Green Network.

The area of Green Belt designated to the east of Stirling allows appreciation of the historic settlement pattern, is also important in its associations with the site of the Battle of Bannockburn, and is important for settlement character and identity. It plays an important role by protecting the carse from inappropriate development and in providing physical separation between Stirling, Fallin and Bannockburn and perceptual separation of Stirling and Fallin. The area includes core path and cycle links between Stirling and Fallin and there is potential to enhance this open space role.

The Green Belt around the City helps to define and protect the character and identity of the settlement, whilst directing development to sustainable locations. The identification of strategic development (expansion of the city to the north and south) on previously designated Green Belt land, which made a contribution to the setting and identity of settlements and gave access to open space and recreation is recognized. However, these areas now need to provide for the future growth and planned development of



Stirling and the retention of substantial areas of Green Belt adjacent to these areas will ensure that the identity and character of the settlements is protected, and quality and access to open space can be enhanced.

## Green Belt - Bridge of Allan

The area designated as Green Belt around Bridge of Allan reflects the important visual relationship between the wooded hill slopes to the north and the town, and in the west is important to protect the setting and identity of Bridge of Allan and Stirling and maintain views to important landmarks.

The retention of Green Belt in association with the identification of strategic development (expansion of the city to the north) at Causewayhead and Bridge of Allan, ensures the separate identities of Bridge of Allan and Causewayhead/Stirling are maintained and access to open space in this area can be enhanced.

## Green Belt - Dunblane

The location of Dunblane within the valley of the Allan Water means it is largely hidden and has little or no visual relationship with surrounding settlements. This is an important quality and the Green Belt to the north and south of the settlement plays an important role in maintaining the distinct identity of Dunblane from Ashfield and Bridge of Allan. The Green Belt surrounding Dunblane is also important in maintaining the nucleated and secluded character of the settlement.

The identification of small-scale development expansion of Dunblane in the longer-term to the east is considered along with extended Green Belt designation to ensure development is contained within this expansion area and to maintain the historic settlement form within the valley landscape. The importance of a Green Belt to the east of Dunblane is reinforced by the significance of the battle of Sheriffmuir in this area and the proposal for the North Stirling Woodland Park.



## Green Belt – Fallin and Cowie

Although physically close to Fallin and Plean, Cowie maintains a distinct and separate identity contributed in part by the landform and nature of the road network which limit views of the settlement. The Green Belt to the north plays a key role in maintaining the separate identity between Cowie and Fallin, and to the west from Bannockburn, ensuring the character and setting of these settlements is retained.

## Green Belt – Strathblane

The principle purpose of the Green Belt at Strathblane is its role in relation to the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Belt, where it prevents development in the countryside between Strathblane and Milngavie to the south eroding these settlements' separate identities. A secondary function of the Green Belt is to protect the more immediate setting of Strathblane itself. The area of (formerly designated) Green Belt at Auchineden and Dumgoyach makes little contribution to the setting and identity of Strathblane at a local or strategic level and plays a limited role in terms of open space.

The identification of small-scale development around Strathblane recognises the valuable role of the Green Belt in protecting the identity and setting of Strathblane. Therefore substantial areas of Green Belt continue to be identified which extend beyond the settlement boundary to ensure that this identity is protected.

## Establishing Green Belt Boundaries

In designating Green Belts, there is a need to define new boundaries and review existing boundaries to ensure that they are robust and defensible over the period of the Plan. The inner boundary of the Green Belt is defined in such a way as to allow scope for planned development over the 20-year period to help direct development to the most appropriate locations in accordance with the Spatial Strategy of the Plan.



In particular locations where long-term planned development is proposed, the inner Green Belt boundary has been defined to allow for this i.e. pulled back. This land is not allocated for development at this time but safeguarded for the longer-term (2023 to 2033), to ensure a sufficient land supply is maintained within the Plan area.

In defining the detailed boundaries for Green Belts, SPP advises that Green Belt Boundaries must be clearly identifiable on the ground, using strong visual or physical features, including rivers, tree belts, railways or main roads and landscape features that form the horizon, depending on their location and the settlements to which they relate. The Council has sought, wherever possible to utilise existing visual or physical features which are clearly identifiable on the ground. Hedges and field enclosures have also been used in some instances but where possible these have been used in combination with other stronger physical or visual features.

Enduring green belt boundaries are those that combine a number of the suggested SPP features, creating an easily read physical relationship between the developed settlement and the countryside, and the initial review for the Local Development Plan was carried out using the existing boundary, which was created in 1999, as a base, and a comparison with the following key features:

- 0 Landform, eg. slope;
- 1 Water, eg. rivers;
- 2 Vegetation, eg. woodland, mature trees;
- 3 Field boundary, eg. fence, hedges;
- 4 Garden boundary, eg. fence, hedge;
- 5 Built feature, eg. main road, minor road, railway;
- 6 Highlighted anomalies or areas of the boundary where a change was required, ie. new build.





Using ArcGIS data capturing, and following the existing boundary, each feature was selected, line by line, with a GIS Editor tool, downloading the coded information and measurements straight into a spread sheet, and showing colour coding on the map base.

Each settlement was marked up on an AO Plan, at a scale of 1:10000. Scaled aerial photographs, dated 2007, have been used where coverage allowed, and this helped clarify, i.e. the differences between mature woodland and vegetation, and recently built areas.

The updated data that was captured was saved as shapefiles, and the detailed numeric data saved in an Excel spreadsheet, using the key feature code system to itemise the information.

Various anomalies were identified with the 1999 boundaries as a result of specific development boundaries being later confirmed through the submission of planning applications. This affected sites allocated within the 1999 Local Plan at Dunblane (Montgomery Crescent, Hillside Farm, and Grant Drive areas), which were all recently built residential schemes and in Stirling at the new Wallace High School site, recent residential building at Westhaugh, Cornton; Queenshaugh, Riverside; Hillfoots Road; The Homesteads and Whins of Milton.



## Planning Policy on Green Belts


The following planning policy is contained within the LDP. It recognises the role and function of the designated Green Belt areas (including the importance of the Green Network) and seeks to protect this through only supporting particular types of development in these locations.





## Policy 4 Green Belts

Green Belts are designated around Stirling, Bannockburn, Bridge of Allan, Dunblane and Strathblane. Development should preserve the openness of Green Belts and should not undermine their core roles and functions by individual or cumulative impacts. New development should demonstrate conformity with Green Network objectives and will only be supported where it is for the purposes of:

- (a) agriculture, woodland, forestry and/or horticulture uses (including allotments);
- (b) recreational uses compatible with an agricultural or 'natural' setting.
- (c) essential infrastructure (such as electronic communications, electricity grid connections and new transport infrastructure supported by the National,  Regional and Local Transport Strategies);
- (d) re-using redundant rural vernacular buildings (see also Pol. 14, and for further design guidance SG11).

Exceptionally, support may be given to developments that demonstrate diversification of the rural economy by promoting new employment opportunities and/or other community benefits, and that cannot be accommodated elsewhere. (Further guidance on the function and roles of Green Belts is given in SG03).

Green Belts are also referred to in relation to other policies within the Plan.

- Primary Policy 1 on Place-making requires all development to respect existing and proposed Green Belts.
- Policy 14 'Housing in the Countryside' indicates that new housing within Green Belts will be significantly constrained but allows for particular opportunities as specified within the Supplementary Guidance 10 on Housing in the Countryside.
- Supplementary Guidance 33 on Wind Turbines identifies Areas of Significant Protection and Areas of Search for wind turbines, some of which fall within designated Green Belt areas.





## Further Information

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