



Open Space

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Planning in the Cairngorms National Park

Planning in the Cairngorms National Park is unique. It involves the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) working alongside the five local authorities which operate in the Park – Aberdeenshire, Angus, Highland, Moray and Perth & Kinross.

Due to the expansion of the National Park in October 2010, to take in part of Perth & Kinross, different planning policies apply there.

The following paragraphs set out what planning policies apply in the National Park, and how planning applications will be dealt with.

Planning Policies

The Cairngorms National Park Local Plan, and this Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), covers the Aberdeenshire, Angus, Highland and Moray parts of the National Park only. This SPG sets out detailed advice to help you meet the requirements of the policies in the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan. It is recommended that it is read in conjunction with the policies in the Local Plan and other relevant SPG.

The Cairngorms National Park Local Plan and this SPG does not cover the Perth & Kinross area of the Park. The Perth & Kinross Highland Area Local Plan, or the Perth & Kinross Eastern Area Local Plan, and any associated SPG, apply. Please see www.pkc.gov.uk for further information.

Planning applications

All planning applications submitted within the Cairngorms National Park must comply with the relevant Local Plan and SPG (see paragraphs above on planning policies for details).

Planning applications should be submitted to the relevant local authority in the normal manner. The local authority ensures all the necessary information is supplied and registers receipt of the application. The CNPA is informed by the local authority and has 21 days to decide whether to call-in the application. Only applications which are of general significance to the aims of the Park are called-in. The CNPA determines called-in applications. In instances where planning applications are not called-in, the local authority will determine the application.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 This guidance provides additional information relating to Open Space, as outlined in Policy 36 of the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan.

Policy 36 Other open space provision

Developments which improve or add to current levels of public and amenity space, and include specific details on improving and maintaining current provision to develop open space networks will be supported. The development of all housing/employment/community sites identified within the proposals maps will be required to make a contribution in space or by a commuted sum towards the provision and maintenance of open space within the site or the affected community.

There is a presumption against development that would result in a loss of existing provision, particularly where the affected site has been identified within the Local Plan proposals maps or Open Space Strategy. The loss of such open space will only be supported where:

- a) an open space audit demonstrates the development will not result in a deficit of open space provision to serve the affected community, and that no alternative site is available; or
- b) compensatory provision is made elsewhere within the community area of at least equal size and quality, or
- c) a commuted sum is made towards future provision of an appropriate alternative.

- 1.2 This policy aims to protect and enhance existing open space, and to ensure adequate provision is made for new open space within new developments.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The Cairngorms National Park is well known for its expansive open landscape. This is valued by people for many reasons. Whilst this is a key feature of the Park, there is also a need for planning policies to address issues relating to open space within the towns and villages of the National Park. Because there are large areas of open space outside the settlements, this doesn't mean it is not important to ensure existing open space within settlements is protected, and additional open space is provided within new developments.
- 2.2 This guidance focuses on open space within settlements. It is concerned with open space that is available to the community, including parks, sports pitches, playing fields, allotments, civic spaces, play areas and smaller informal green spaces. It seeks to ensure that people have access to adequate amounts of open space and that the quality of the open space maximises its benefits.
- 2.3 Open space within settlements is important for many reasons. It helps create more sustainable places for people to live in, by providing opportunities for recreation amenity, benefits to health and wellbeing, and opportunities for climate change adaptation. Scottish planning policy also highlights the role of open space for nature conservation and biodiversity.
- 2.4 Planning policy, both national and local, seeks to secure the provision of open space to meet the needs of current and future generations. This is to be achieved by safeguarding and enhancing current provision and creating additional provision where demand or need is identified.
- 2.5 The Cairngorms National Park Local Plan defines Open Space as 'greenspace consisting of any vegetated land or structure, water or geological feature in an urban area and civic space consisting of squares, market places, playgrounds and other paved or hard landscaped areas with a civic function'.

3.0 Purpose of this guidance

- 3.1 The guidance sets out the issues that must be considered for all development of more than four houses. It will address what type and amount of open space is required for new developments and give guidance on designs, location and the quality expected, as well as proposals for maintenance and management.

4.0 Open space in the Cairngorms National Park

- 4.1 The towns and villages in the Cairngorms National Park all have easy access to the open countryside, with a network of paths enhancing these opportunities. Nevertheless it is important that there should be an adequate provision of open space within towns and villages and that the provision should be, not only sufficient in quantity, but also in quality. Therefore it is vital that any open space is appropriately maintained to serve its intended function.
- 4.2 Open space in settlements performs a number of functions and, where established, is generally afforded protection from development. Where new development is planned, adequate open space is required:
- 4.3 In developing this guidance, an open space audit was carried out in the five strategic settlements identified in the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan. These are Aviemore, Ballater, Grantown-on-Spey, Kingussie and Newtownmore. It identified different types of open space present in the five settlements (see Table 1, p6) and it led to an assessment of:
 - a) how much open space there currently is in the Park;
 - b) what function it serves; and
 - c) whether or not it meets the needs of those who use it, or could better meet those needs.

- 4.4 From the audit it was found that, generally, there is a good standard of open space provision which is generally well maintained and well used. However, there are types of open space where there are low levels or no provision at all.
- 4.5 The audit will be reviewed on a regular basis.

5.0 Standard for new development

- 5.1 This section sets out the minimum standards of open space required within each new development by the relevant planning authority. The need for open space of the types detailed in Table 1 (see p6) will be determined by the characteristics of the development and the site.
- 5.2 A typical standard of 20 per cent of the overall site area will be required for open space. This figure was calculated from the current level of open space provision within the five strategic settlements.
- 5.3 The actual types and mixtures of open space preferred for each development will depend on the potential and needs of the site and the most appropriate way of complementing or improving what already exists.
- 5.4 Where open space is sought, developers must ensure that sites are designed carefully and are integral to the overall design concept of new development. This will include ensuring it complements existing landscape character, is accessible, and incorporates appropriate provision for children and wildlife.
- 5.5 It is very important that formal and informal open space is integrated into the whole design process of a development and not seen as an afterthought.

Table 1 Types of open space in the Cairngorms National Park

Type	Description
Public parks and gardens	Areas of land normally enclosed, designed, constructed, managed and maintained as a public park or garden. These may be owned or managed by community groups.
Private gardens or grounds	Areas of land normally enclosed and associated with a house or institution and reserved for private use (for example private gardens, school and institutional grounds).
Amenity greenspace	Landscaped areas providing visual amenity or separating different buildings or land uses for environmental, visual or safety reasons and used for a variety of informal or social activities such as sunbathing, picnics or kickabouts.
Playspace for children and teenagers	Areas providing safe and accessible opportunities for children's play, usually linked to housing areas.
Sports areas	Large and generally flat areas of grassland or specially designed surfaces, used primarily for designated sports (including playing fields, golf courses, tennis courts and bowling greens) and which are generally bookable.
Green corridors	Routes including river corridors and old railway lines, linking different areas within a town as part of a designated and managed network and used for walking, cycling or horse riding, or linking towns to their surrounding countryside. These may link green spaces together.
Natural/semi-natural greenspaces	Areas of undeveloped or previously developed land with residual natural habitats or which have been planted or colonised by vegetation and wildlife, including woodland and wetland areas (can include open water).
Allotments and community growing spaces	Areas of land for growing fruit, vegetables and other plants, either in individual allotments or as a community activity.
Civic space	Squares and streets, predominantly of hard landscaping that provide a focus for pedestrian activity and can make connections for people and for wildlife.
Burial grounds	Includes churchyards and cemeteries.
Other functional greenspace	May be one or more types as required by local circumstances or priorities, for example caravan and camping sites.

6.0 General design principles

- Open space should be an integral part of the development and should usually be a central feature.
- Open space should incorporate significant existing landscape features wherever possible, including mature trees and watercourses, even if they are not located centrally.
- Open space provision, form and function should be considered in terms of the wider context of the development site; both its surrounding and links to other areas of open space, and how the site links to the use of the surrounding area.
- Play areas should be overlooked by the fronts of houses and from well used pedestrian routes.
- Open space that is specifically designed to be a Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDs) will not be classified as open space provision under this guidance. However, SUDs can provide multifunctional spaces which contribute to the wider open space network, and therefore we encourage natural-looking SUDs, such as ponds and wetlands, to help enhance developments.
- Open space should not be located in peripheral areas of the site, unless it can fulfil a specific function, such as a buffer strip for flood storage, or if the particular location is well placed for links to the open space network surrounding the development itself.
- Awkwardly shaped and left over areas of land should not form part of the open space provision.

7.0 Implementation

- 7.1 Developers are advised to discuss open space requirements with planning officers at an early stage in order to ensure that it can be incorporated, if appropriate.
- 7.2 Once the need for open space has been identified, the amount and type of provision required in each case will be assessed. Appropriate arrangements will be made to ensure that any new open space or facilities remain available and maintained. The exact requirements will vary from site to site and will be the subject of discussion in each case.
- 7.3 Open space provision will be implemented in one (or a combination) of these ways:
 - Where strategic landscaping and open space provision is provided as part of the planning application and its implementation and maintenance addressed through planning conditions and Section 75 agreements;
 - Where this is not possible, the strategic landscaping and open space may be provided on other land in the applicant's control; and
 - If neither of the above options are feasible, a monetary contribution might be considered, which could be used to provide new space or to augment existing facilities, where appropriate.
- 7.4 Where payment of a commuted sum and/or a new public space is required, conditions will be imposed on the planning consent and included within any legal agreement to specify when this has to be provided. For further information on the payment of a commuted sum, please refer to the Supplementary Planning Guidance on Developer Contributions.

8.0 Maintenance of open space


- 8.1 Poorly managed or neglected open spaces not only fail to meet the needs of the communities, but can also seriously detract from the quality of the local environment. Therefore, open space provision should not only be well designed and accessible it should also be well managed and maintained.
- 8.2 Developers must show how the open space will continue to be maintained to a proper standard. This will either involve an agreement with the relevant planning authority or the appointment of an appropriate company to manage and maintain the area. The community should be involved in agreeing management arrangements.
- 8.3 If the relevant local authority is taking responsibility for the area, the developer will be required to provide a commuted sum for this purpose. If there is no agreement then the relevant planning authority will need to be satisfied that the developer has made appropriate alternative arrangements.

9.0 Supporting information

- 9.1 Planning applications must contain details of the location, layout, contouring, planting and the types of equipment for children's play areas. The community should be consulted on the type of equipment. The quality of design and layout is as important as providing the minimum quantity of open space.

10.0 Further guidance

- 10.1 It is recommended that the following sources of planning advice are read in conjunction with this guidance.
 - Scottish Government
www.scotland.gov.uk
The consolidated Scottish Planning Policy, 2010
Planning Advice Note 65
Planning and Open Space
 - Cairngorms National Park
Supplementary Planning Guidance
 - Sustainable Design Guide
 - Developer Contributions
 - Natural Heritage
 - Water Resources**www.cairngorms.co.uk**



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