

## Introduction

The Highland Council made a commitment as part of the Open Space in New Residential Development: Supplementary Guidance to complete a Highland Wide Audit of Greenspace. The audit will be used to:

- support the principles and implementation of the Open Space in New Residential Developments: Supplementary Guidance;
- form part of the evidence base for the emerging area local development plans; and
- used as a material planning consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Benefits of greenspace are dependant on a number of issues which can vary greatly across an area. Therefore the identification of current and future requirements will identify the provision which will be allocated in new local development plans. The results of the audit will help to guide the future of open space in Highland to ensure it is managed to optimise the benefits for local communities, secure best value and to provide a prioritised framework for investment, maintenance and management.

The extent of, and interconnection between, elements of the greenspace network is vital to the biodiversity of settlements and enriches places to contribute towards creating a high quality living environment that provides for children and adults to enjoy outdoor leisure. Greenspace can also help to promote social inclusion, the health and well-being of residents and is an important education resource. These ideas are explored further in the Green Networks: Interim Supplementary Guidance.

Greenspace can also provide opportunities for the local people to become actively involved in the management and enhancement of their local environment thus helping to foster a sense of local ownership and community pride.

Greenspace is a vital resource for a range of functions including sport, play, improving health, visual amenity, nature, moderating climate, facilitating renewal and attracting economic development.

## Purpose

The aim of this study was to create a digital map of greenspace for the Highland Council in line with Scottish Planning Policy. The study involved the completion of a Geographical Information System based audit of towns and villages through out Highland based upon the settlement hierarchy set out in the Highland wide Local Development Plan. The audit will support::

- the policy approach set out in the Highland Wide Local Development Plan;
- implementation of the Open Space in New Residential Developments: Interim Supplementary Guidance;
- Implementation of the Green Networks: Interim Supplementary Guidance; and
- Support the production of the area Local Development Plans.

It is important to note that the audit is not a single piece of work but is the first stage in an ongoing process. The information recorded during the audit will be updated when it is appropriate and added to as work is undertaken to ensure the information remains current and correct.

## How to use this document

### Development Planning

In the preparation of the Local Development Plans for the area this audit will be used when allocating sites. This audit will identify sites which should be safeguarded from development unless there are overriding reasons for its development. If this is the case it will be based on criteria set out in the Highland wide Local Development Plan.

### Development Management

This audit can be used as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The document identifies where there are shortfalls of particular types of open space and it can be used in negotiations with developers on the delivery of new/improved open space related to new residential developments following the methodology suggested in the Open Space in New Residential Development: Supplementary Guidance. A methodology for carrying out qualitative assessments of open spaces is included in this audit document.

### Developers

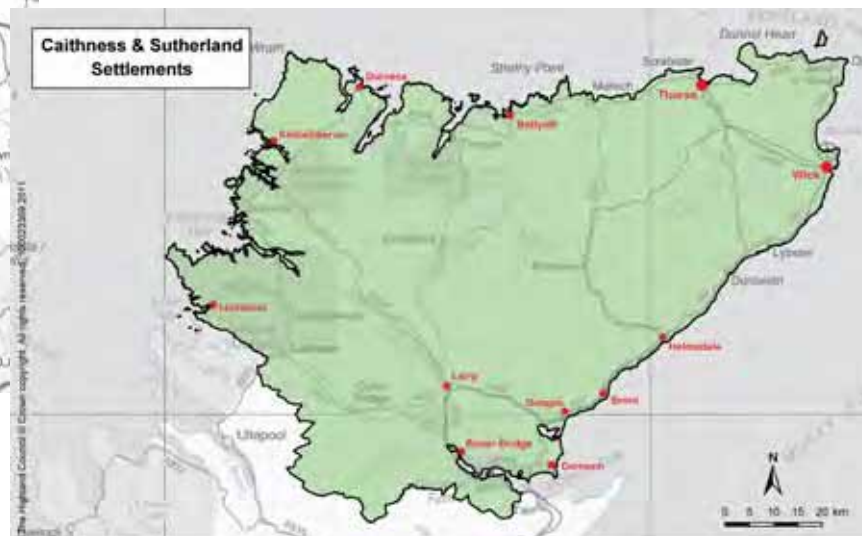
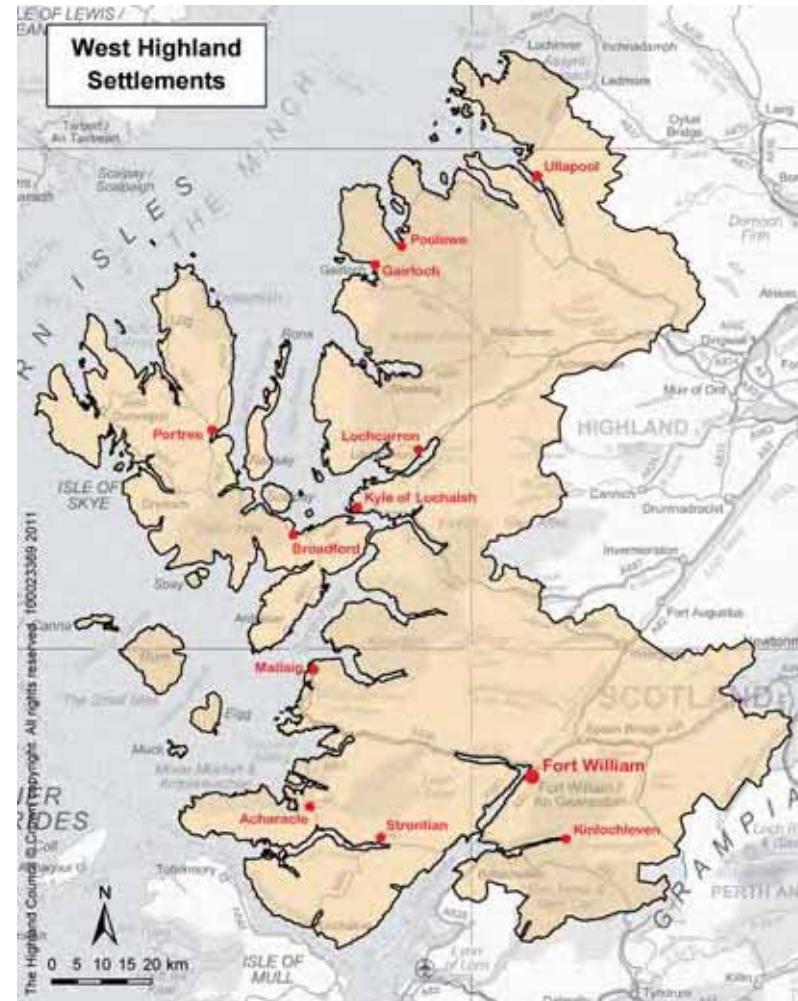
Developers can use this audit to gauge the most appropriate open spaces to be included in their development based upon the surrounding open space and any deficiencies in the area. The audit must be read alongside the Open Space in New Residential Developments: Supplementary Guidance and Policy 76 – Open Space of the Highland wide Local Development Plan. The online Open Space Contributions Calculator can be used to assess the level of open space provision required for any new residential development.

## Study Extents

The audit covers of all The Highland Council area except that covered by the Cairngorms National Park Authority. A map showing the individual towns and villages which have been audited by the Highland Greenspace Audit is shown below. The study area has been split into the areas covered by the emerging area Local Development Plans.

The type and level of detailed information gathered for each of these settlements will be consistent throughout each of the settlements.

In the larger settlements of Inverness, Nairn, Fort William, Thurso, Wick, Alness, Dingwall, Invergordon and Tain, the Council have worked with Greenspace Scotland to look at the provision of greenspace in more detail. In these areas we have expanded the typology of open space from Planning Advice Note 65 and used a combination of Ordnance Survey Master map and aerial photography to determine the types of open space. We have done this to enable the Council to feed into the State of Scotland's Green Space 2 report to be published in 2011.



The table below identifies each of the settlements which has been audited and the type of information which has been gathered on each site.

Audit Area	Assessment information
<b>Inner Moray Firth</b> Inverness Nairn Culloden Beaulay Drumnadrochit Fort Augustus Muir of Ord Dingwall Tain Invergordon Alness Fortrose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Selection of accessible greenspace sites omitting areas to which access can not be gained at times of audit (ie some school grounds, private gardens)</li> <li>•Open Space falling below the provision standard (set out in Open Space in New Residential Developments: Interim Supplementary Guidance) in terms of size for a fit for purpose open space has not been audited for quality.</li> <li>•Inclusion of all other appropriate types of open space.</li> <li>•All sites mapped on GIS database</li> <li>•Site visit, analysis and photographic record.</li> <li>•Allocation of type of greenspace category.</li> <li>•Quality, quantity, accessibility, fit for purpose assessments.</li> <li>•Recommendations for future work</li> <li>•Information recorded in a database.</li> <li>•Desk based local plan review.</li> <li>•Recreational links to the wider area.</li> </ul>
<b>West Highlands and Islands</b> Fort William Ullapool Gairloch Poolewe Portree Broadford Lochcarron Kyle of Lochalsh Mallaig Aracacle Strontain Kinlochleven	
<b>Caithness and Sutherland</b> Thurso Wick Golspie Dornoch Brora Helmsdale Lairg Bonar Bridge Lochinver Kinlochbervie Durness Bettyhill	

## Methodology

The typology which has been used to classify open space was developed from advice contained within Planning Advice Note 65. This typology can be broken down into more detailed subsections. A typology used in the audit can be found below. For clarity on all maps these have been grouped only by their PAN 65 typology:

PAN 65 Typology	Full land use classification
Public parks and gardens	Public park and garden
Private Gardens or grounds	Private grounds
	School grounds
	Institutional grounds
Amenity Green Space	Amenity – residential
	Amenity – business
	Amenity – transport
Playspace for Children and Teenagers	Playspace
Sports Areas	Playing fields
	Golf courses
	Tennis courts
	Bowling greens
	Other sports
Green Corridors	Green access routes
	Riparian routes
Natural/Semi-Natural greenspace	Woodland
	Open semi-natural
	Open water
Other Functional Greenspaces	Allotment
	Churchyard
	Cemetery
	Other Functional Greenspace ie Caravan Park
Civic Space	Civic Space

## Quantity

The quantity of open space was gathered using two methods one for the larger settlements (over 10,000 population) and one for the smaller settlements.

### Larger settlements

In these settlements the methodology provided by Greenspace Scotland was used to first sieve out all sites which could have an element of greenspace included in them from Ordnance Survey Mastermap data. Then Aerial Photograph Interpretation (API) was used in accordance with the guidance offered by Greenspace Scotland to identify the type of open space the type of open space. In these larger settlements if more than one type of open space has been identified then this has been given a secondary land use to identify the other uses. This work was carried out by Aecom on behalf of Greenspace Scotland who had agreed to carry out the work at no charge to The Highland Council.

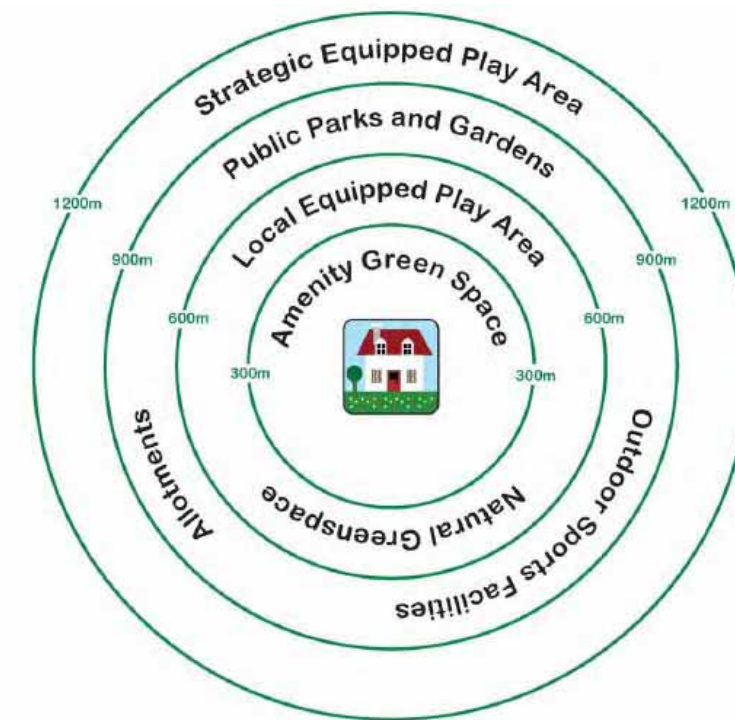
### Smaller Settlements

In these settlements all open space has been identified from historical records, consolidation of data from the Council's GIS system, use of Ordnance Survey mapping and site visits to each of the settlements.

Information for both larger and smaller settlements have been digitised and are now included in a comprehensive GIS dataset for all the areas.

## Accessibility

The Accessibility standards expressed in the Open Space in New Residential Development: Supplementary Guidance as distance thresholds will be applied to each site of open space identified in the audit. This will allow the Council to identify which areas within settlements have a deficiency of a particular type of open space. This will be done through the manipulation of data within the GIS dataset. The distance thresholds are expressed in the diagram below.



### Quality

An audit of the quality of most of the sites identified within the audit has been undertaken. There are limitations to this as it is the opinion of one person on one day albeit following a framework.

While this will provide a valuable asset management tool for the qualitative and quantitative assessment and record of assets and value. There are no 'absolute' standards for the assessment of value and quality as it is a subjective measure, however there is some guidance within the Open Space in New Residential Development: Supplementary Guidance which lend itself to be used as a partial assessment of quality.

The Score Sheet which should be used is adjacent. By publishing this information it will allow the community, developers and development management to make an assessment for the purposes they require and it would be consistent with the methodology used by the Council.

ID:		Site Name:		Location:		Category:		Sub-Category:	
Area (ha):		Date of Site Visit:		Site Description:					
Access Points:		Access Type:							
Condition of Site:									
Function		Condition		Quality		Misc.			
Diversity of Use	/5	Security/Lighting	/5	Material	/5	Frequency of Use	H/M/L		
Legibility	/5	Maintenance	/5	Character/Ident.	/5	Fut. Regular Invst.	H/M/L		
Adaptability	/5	Areas of Neglect	/5	Signage/Interp.	/5	Priority for Maintn.	H/M/L		
Accessibility	/5	Path Condition	/5	Biodiversity	/5	Timescl. for Invst.	S/M/L		
Edu/User Value	/5	Entry points/barrier	/5	Continuity	/5	Priority for Action	S/M/L		
Problems			Monitoring		Opportunities		Recommendations		
Physical Features					Functional Features				
Benches		Kick about grass		Bog/Marshland		Gen. Hard Space			
Bins		Sports pitch		Amenity Planting		Gen. Soft Space			
Lighting		Public Toilets		Ornamental Planting		Soft Tiled Play Area			
Protective Fencing		Disabled Access		Landscaped Features		Scrub woodland			
Signage		Car Park		Formal Paths		Shelter Belt			
Play Park		Restricted Public Access		Tracks		Tree Planting			
Storage Huts				Cut Grassland		Water pond/burn			
Other Site Observations:				Rough Grassland		Semi-natural WL			
				Managed Grassland		Mixed Plantation WL			

Each site should be assessed and given a score between 1 and 5 (low and high) for each of the assessment categories. The scores should then totalled, giving an overall score for each factor.

A well equipped and maintained formal park may score highly and equally, a diverse semi-natural greenspace, with well maintained links by also score highly. The information gathered by an audit of the quality of the site is intended to supplement the priority action assessment and will allow cross comparison on a site by site basis.

With this information assessment can be made to highlight any trends and deficiencies and to give an overall indication of quality. However further investigation would be necessary on a site-by-site basis before decisions are made as to the future development of the site.