



ORKNEY
ISLANDS COUNCIL

Orkney Open Space Strategy: Planning for Open Space



Supplementary Guidance
April 2014

Planning in Orkney

The Orkney Local Development Plan (the Plan), together with Supplementary Guidance sets out the policies and criteria against which planning applications submitted in Orkney will be considered. All of the policies in the Plan are afforded equal weight in the determination of planning applications. It is therefore important to ensure that your proposal accords with all relevant policies.

This guidance sets out detailed advice to help you meet the requirements of the Plan. It is therefore recommended that the document is read in conjunction with the policies contained within the Plan and any Supplementary Guidance relevant to the type of development proposed.

The Council's Development Management Officers deal with planning applications and they would welcome the opportunity to discuss development proposals before any application is submitted.

Copies of this document

This document is available as a hard copy or in digital format. Please see www.orkney.gov.uk

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A glossary of planning terms used within the Council's planning policy documents and supplementary guidance can be found online at:

www.orkney.gov.uk/Service-Directory/G/Glossary-of-Planning-Terms.htm

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Introduction

1.1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1.1 Open space is recognised as a key resource which contributes to the quality of the natural environment, biodiversity, visual amenity, personal health and well-being. This *Orkney Open Space Strategy: Planning for Open Space Supplementary Guidance (OOSS: Planning for Open Space SG)* aims to safeguard existing open space within the County as well as improve the provision of open space available to communities through the planning process. The guidance forms part of the overarching *Orkney Open Space Strategy: Vision and Action Plan (OOSS: Vision and Action Plan)*, which details the strategic vision, objectives and action plan for the delivery of wider initiatives and projects that contribute towards the quality and accessibility of open space in Orkney. The *Orkney Open Space Audit (Annex 1)* supports the implementation of this guidance by providing a detailed assessment of the condition of publicly accessible open spaces within Orkney's settlements. The audit provides current information on the use, condition, accessibility and potential improvement of publicly accessible open spaces to inform planning decisions in accordance with Policy D6 of the *Orkney Local Development Plan*.

1.2 PLANNING POLICY

- 1.2.1 As required by Scottish Planning Policy, this guidance outlines the principles to be followed as part of the long term management of open space within Orkney. This supplementary guidance accompanies Policy D6 of the *Orkney Local Development Plan*. For new developments, open space provision can play an important role in supporting the delivery of policies SD2 Transport and Travel; SD3 Infrastructure Delivery and Developer Contributions; SD4 Community, Recreation and Sports Facilities; HE5 Designed Landscapes and Gardens; D5 Access to New Developments; D9 Standards of Design; N4 Wider Biodiversity and Geodiversity; N5 Protecting and Improving the Water Environment; N8 Informal Recreation and Access and D1 Flooding and Coastal Erosion. This list highlights how open space should be considered as an integral part in the development of a proposal, not as an afterthought.

POLICY D6 OPEN SPACE

Development which will improve or add to current levels of open space will be supported. The development of all housing/employment/community sites identified within the Proposals Map will be required to make a contribution to meaningful and functional open space, and/or, by a commuted sum towards the provision and maintenance of open space within the site or the affected community.

Development that would result in a loss of existing open space will not generally be permitted. The loss of such open space will only be supported where it fulfils one of the following criteria:

1. An open space audit demonstrates that the development will not result in a deficit of open space provision to serve the affected community, and that no alternative site is available.
2. Compensatory provision is made elsewhere within the community area of at least equal size and quality and which contributes positively to settlement character and sense of community.
3. A commuted sum is secured through a financial bond or Section 75 agreement towards the future provision of an appropriate alternative.

Further guidance is provided in the Supplementary Guidance *Orkney Open Space Strategy*.

- 1.2.2 This is echoed in *Designing Places* policy by the Scottish Government, which outlines the importance of good design and the benefits this can bring. Open space plays a key part in this by providing the setting between the built context within which public activities may take place and therefore influence how the wider built environment is perceived. *Designing Streets* is also relevant with regards to open spaces with a direct relationship to the street. Furthermore, *PAN 65 Planning and Open Space* emphasises how open space should be acknowledged as a valuable asset contributing to wildlife, visual amenity, personal health and well-being; and incidentally the need for guidance in order to prevent the loss of valued spaces that can be difficult and costly to replace.
- 1.2.3 The Council's *Development Quality within Settlements, Core Paths Plan, Developer Contributions and Settlement Statements* should also be taken into consideration for proposals concerning open space. For open spaces within Kirkwall or Stromness, their respective Urban Design Frameworks may also be applicable. In the cases of Dounby, Finstown and St Margaret's Hope, the *Three Villages Masterplan* should be referred to.

1.3 HOW TO USE THIS GUIDANCE

This guidance comprises eleven sections:

Section 2 gives a summary of the *Orkney Open Space Audit*, which provides the basis to inform decisions regarding the provision of new open space and the protection, and potential enhancement, of existing open space. The audit includes a quantitative assessment of all open spaces within settlements and a qualitative assessment of the key publicly accessible open spaces.

Section 3 details how each of the criteria within Policy D6 may be met and the planning and design principles which should be considered in the development of open space.

Section 4 provides further guidance in relation to proposals which involve developing a housing/employment/community site, allotments, playspaces and sports areas, amenity greenspaces and natural/semi-natural greenspaces.

Section 5 outlines the Council's preferred approach for long term maintenance and management of open space as part of new developments.

Section 6 comprises maps of the five main settlements to be used in reference to the criteria outlined in section 3.

Section 7 consists of the open space audit's qualitative assessment score breakdown sheets for the five main settlements.

Section 8 provides the scoring criteria for the open space audit qualitative assessment.

Section 9 conveys the PAN 65 typologies used to help inform the classification of open space in Orkney.

Section 10 includes a table of the secondary codes used to expand upon the PAN 65 typologies and classify open space provision in more detail.

Section 11 details publications which promote good practice in the design and implementation of open space which can be referred to for further information.

Further information regarding the *Orkney Open Space Audit*, which details how the audit was performed and its overall findings for the five settlements, can be found in **Annex I**. This is supported by all the maps, score breakdown sheets and individuals surveys for all open spaces within Orkney including villages, rural and island settlements in the *Audit Survey Data* in **Annex 2**.

2 Open Space in Orkney

2.1 ORKNEY OPEN SPACE AUDIT BACKGROUND

- 2.1.1 An audit of open space has been conducted of existing open space provision within Orkney's settlements, in line with the requirements of Scottish Planning Policy, comprising both quantitative and qualitative elements. For quantitative assessment, all known open space in each settlement has been identified and classified in accordance with Planning Advice Note (PAN) 65 open space typologies as referenced within section 9. For the qualitative element of the audit, the selection of spaces was achieved through Geographical Information Systems (GIS) mapping, in which sites over 0.2 hectares in size within the settlement boundaries were automatically identified as functional greenspace. This is complimented by identified smaller sites of high value; including play parks and other areas where the open space is proven to have a specific function. Of fundamental importance to the selection criteria is the overarching principle that spaces are publicly accessible and free to use. Allotments are the only exception to this rule due to their acknowledged environmental and community benefits, and owing to the fact that they are mainly in Council ownership. Open spaces included within the qualitative assessment are located within the settlement boundaries, the exception to this rule being schools due to the important role that they play within communities.
- 2.1.2 All identified spaces have been categorised following site visits according to the appropriate secondary code(s), as detailed in section 10, which expand upon the PAN 65 typologies to help distinguish between what is open space and what is not. This also provides a comprehensive overview of the quantity of open space types in Orkney in order to identify and address possible deficiencies. Qualitative surveys of each open space were also carried out and they were scored in relation to criteria under the following categories to establish the quality of existing provision: accessible and well connected; attractive and appealing; bio diverse; promote activity and community benefits. The combination of these methods, along with GIS mapping in the cases of the five largest settlements of Kirkwall, Stromness, Dounby, St Margaret's Hope and Finstown, allows the type of space and its overall quality and accessibility to be examined in more detail. It is envisaged that the key themes generated from this stage of the analysis will help to inform how to approach open spaces audited within the other village, rural and island settlements. A more detailed explanation of how the audit was conducted can be found in section 3 of **Annex I**.

2.2 ORKNEY OPEN SPACE AUDIT SUMMARY

- 2.2.1 This section of the Supplementary Guidance provides an overview of the open space audit findings for the five largest settlements in Orkney. The settlements of Kirkwall, Stromness, Dounby, St Margaret's Hope and Finstown host an area of 94.12 hectares of open space, which provides an indicative 6.61 hectares per 1000 population. This equates to 66.15m² per person across the five settlements. When taken to settlement level, Stromness has the greatest open space provision at 131.73m² per person, and St Margaret's Hope the least at 24.93m² per person.
- 2.2.2 Of the PAN 65 typologies, **6.10 other open space** obtained the highest average score. This was followed by **6.1 public parks and gardens** and **6.9 civic space**, with **6.3 amenity greenspace** having the lowest average score. In terms of total areas, **6.7 natural/semi-natural greenspace** is the highest with over double as much as the next highest in **6.5 sports areas**. This indicates a typology which is more commonly associated with less-developed landscapes found outwith the settlement boundaries. In contrast **6.10 other open space** is the lowest in terms of total area.

PAN 65 typology findings		
	Average Score	Total Area
Highest (descending order)	6.10 other open space 6.1 public parks and gardens 6.9 civic space	6.7 natural/semi-natural greenspace 6.5 sports areas 6.1 public parks and gardens
Lowest (descending order)	6.7 natural/semi-natural greenspace 6.4 playspace for children & teenagers 6.3 amenity greenspace	6.6 green corridors 6.9 civic space 6.10 other open space

2.2.3 In relation to the audit's secondary codes, **6.81 allotments**, **6.10 other open space** and **6.82 churchyards** scored above 75% on average. The poorest represented are **6.21 private gardens**, with only a single example, followed by **6.73 open space** which together are the only open space types to score under 50% on average. This is followed by **6.31 residential**, **6.84 other functional greenspace**, **6.101 other open space private** scoring 55% or less. Referring back to PAN 65, the findings highlight the need to address the poor quality of much of the County's amenity space, especially those spaces within residential developments. With reference to the total area covered, **6.51 playing field** is the greatest, closely followed by **6.72 open semi-natural** and **6.73 open space**, all of which exceed ten hectares in total. In contrast **6.81 allotments**, **6.9 civic space**, **6.101 other open space private**, **6.10 other open space** and **6.53 tennis court** are the only codes to consist of half a hectare or less in total area.

Secondary code		
	Average Score	Total Area
Highest (descending order)	6.81 allotments 6.101 other open space private 6.10 other open space	6.51 playing field 6.72 open semi-natural 6.73 open space
Lowest (descending order)	6.73 open space 6.31 residential 6.21 private gardens	6.10 other open space 6.53 tennis court 6.101 other open space private

2.2.4 The audit therefore highlights the following key factors:

- the extent of natural/semi-natural space and its potential to contribute to improving biodiversity;
- a need to improve the quality of amenity greenspace; and
- potential opportunities to address both access to open space in general and playspace provision within the settlements.

2.2.5 This supplementary guidance seeks to encourage better practice in the development of open space through the planning process. *The Orkney Open Space Strategy: Vision and Action Plan* provides a detailed action plan to help achieve higher quality spaces that are accessible to communities and prioritise action for areas of identified deficiency.

3 Open space for new developments

This section outlines the criteria that will be considered for new developments in relation to Policy D6 Open Space including policy considerations and planning and design principles. This section should be referred to in conjunction with the information in the audit which provides a basis as to the existing standard of individual spaces, their function and the immediate community area they serve, to help inform the development of higher quality open space within Orkney. For ease of reference the appropriate maps and score breakdown sheets from the audit for Kirkwall, Stromness, Dounby, St Margaret's Hope and Finstown are available in sections 6 and 7. The complete dataset is available within **Annex 2** for all audited open spaces including those within villages, rural and island settlements.

3.1 OPEN SPACE PLANNING POLICY

3.1.1 Existing open space is covered by a distinct designation on the Proposals Maps relating to the Orkney Local Development Plan and by Policy D6 with a general presumption against the development of designated open space subject to the exemptions detailed at 3.2 below. Spaces which are identified within the audit and are not designated as Open Space within the Proposals Maps will be fully considered during the onward review of the *Orkney Local Development Plan*.

3.1.2 Policy D6 states:

'Development which will improve or add to current levels of open space will be supported. The development of all housing/employment/community sites identified within the Proposals Map will be required to make a contribution to meaningful and functional open space, and/or, by a commuted sum towards the provision and maintenance of open space within the site or the affected community.'

Criteria considerations:

In order to effectively fulfil the policy objectives, the criteria within sections **3.2 Development on existing open space**, **3.3 Planning and design principles** and **4 Open space requirements in new developments** must be fully considered.

3.2 DEVELOPMENT ON EXISTING OPEN SPACE

3.2.1 *'Development that would result in a loss of existing open space will not generally be permitted. The loss of such open space will only be supported where it fulfils one of the following criteria:*

I. *An open space audit demonstrates that the development will not result in a deficit of open space provision to serve the affected community, and that no alternative site is available.'*

Criteria considerations:

The surrounding community that could be affected by a development proposal on an open space is indicated by the 300m catchment area identified in the accessibility maps at Section 6. The 300m threshold is relevant to open spaces that primarily serve the immediate local community e.g. play areas, amenity spaces. The 300m catchment area is indicative and it should be noted that particular open spaces might serve a wider area. For open spaces that serve a wider community area (e.g. a large public park) the affected community will be identified, to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority, on a case by case basis.

Playing fields and sports pitches are an important resource that support the wider health and well-being of local communities. Where development is proposed on a playing field or sports pitch the following requirements of *Scottish Planning Policy* will be adhered by the Planning Authority:

Playing fields and sports pitches should not be redeveloped except where:

- the proposed development is ancillary to the principal use of the site as a playing field,
- the proposed development involves a minor part of the playing field which would not affect its use and potential for sport and training,
- the playing field which would be lost would be replaced by a new playing field of comparable or greater benefit for sport and in a location which is convenient for its users, or by the upgrading of an existing playing field to provide a better quality facility either within the same site or at another location which is convenient for its users and which maintains or improves the overall playing capacity in the area, or
- a playing field strategy prepared in consultation with Sportscotland has demonstrated that there is a clear excess of sports pitches to meet current and anticipated future demand in the area, and that the site could be developed without detriment to the overall quality of provision.

Sportscotland will be consulted on development proposals that have potential to affect outdoor sports facilities as required by the *Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013*.

OIC Sport and Leisure will be consulted on development proposals that have potential to affect outdoor sports facilities.

Where it can be demonstrated that there is existing provision (as identified within the Orkney Open Space Audit) of a given open space type to serve the affected community, and there is no alternative site for the proposed development, development could be acceptable on an open space in principle. It may be possible to mitigate any potential loss of open space provision by providing an alternative open space, by improving an existing space which serves the same community by a level commensurate with the space to be developed or by making a commuted payment as detailed in Criteria 2 and 3 below, and addresses any applicable vision objectives outlined in the *OOSS: Vision and Action Plan*. Where this is not possible, and the Planning Authority considers that there will be a significant impact on open space provision for the affected community, the proposal will be non-compliant with Policy D6.

2. *Compensatory provision is made elsewhere within the community area of at least equal size and quality and which contributes positively to settlement character and sense of community.'*

Criteria considerations:

The provision is at least equal to the size of the affected site and improves upon what the existing space provides to the affected community without significantly compromising the accessibility of open space for that same community, and addresses any applicable vision objectives outlined in the *OOSS: Vision and Action Plan*. The space should achieve a minimum of a 'good' standard of 75% overall as per the score criteria and by adhering to section **3.3 Planning and design principles**. As part of achieving the 75% overall score, the proposal is required to attain a minimum score of 3 in each applicable individual score criteria stated in section 8.

3. A commuted sum is secured through a financial bond or Section 75 agreement towards the future provision of an appropriate alternative.'

Criteria considerations:

Commutated sum will be based upon the cost of replacing the space lost due to the development and/or improvements to an existing provision. This contribution will be calculated on a site by site basis and will contribute towards achieving the following where appropriate:




1. Open space provision, ideally within 300m of the proposed site, that addresses an identified requirement for open space provision in the open space audit and the OOSS:Visions and Action Plan.
2. Open space provision of at least a 'good' standard of 75% overall minimum as per the score criteria by adhering to section 3.3 Planning and design principles.
3. Linkages to other open spaces through pedestrian/cycle pathways and green network integration where possible.
4. Enhanced open space networks through sense of place initiatives via artwork incorporating signage, incorporating key views, interpretation, landmarks and information about the local area.

More detailed information regarding possible improvements to an individual space can be found by referring to the score breakdown sheet within the Audit Survey Data which highlights areas of deficiency and the scoring criteria related Planning and design principles in section 3.3 as to how these may be addressed. The individual survey for the space provides more detail as to how the space performed and possible improvement considerations available in **Annex 2**. The quality standard is set for spaces to achieve a minimum of a 'good' standard of 75% overall as per the score criteria and with reference to the planning and design principles. As part of achieving the 75% overall score, the proposal is required to attain a minimum score of 3 in each applicable individual score criteria stated in section 8.

3.2.2 Open spaces that are designated but are not included in the qualitative audit due to not meeting the public accessibility criteria (e.g. golf courses), should be considered in the same manner as outlined in section 3.1. This should be on a case by case basis with consideration of how the space benefits the affected community and is proportionate to the context concerned especially in the cases of villages, rural and island settlements. In relation to applications concerning development on outdoor sports facilities, SportScotland must be consulted as required by the *Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013*. This can include outdoor facilities such as playing fields of at least 0.2ha, athletics tracks, golf courses, tennis courts and bowling greens that would result in either the loss of, have a detrimental effect on existing facilities, or would prevent the land previously used as an outdoor sports facility from being put back into use as a result of the proposal.

3.3 PLANNING AND DESIGN PRINCIPLES

3.3.1 The types of open space encouraged in Orkney through the planning process should be of a high quality, serve the needs of the local community and enhance the surrounding environment. Opportunities to promote biodiversity, multi-functional use and to design spaces that are complementary to the local context will be encouraged by the Planning Authority. The following principles will be promoted through planning decisions in order to maximise the potential benefits of open space for Orkney and its communities:

Score criteria aspects	Examples
<p><u>ACCESSIBILITY</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - within suitable walking distance of housing (ideally centrally located within a housing development to provide a focal point of activity aided by proximity to key access routes) - suitable pathways (material choice; avoids awkward route deviations and steep gradient changes; complement and/or enhance existing street layout) - disabled access (parking provision; dropped kerbs; level access; does topography affect access and space function) - transport links and core paths (incorporates existing and possible future links into design considerations; for development of cycle routes Sustrans offers good practice resources) <p>clearly defined routes to and through the space (through surface colour/material; utilising key views along access routes; signage to highlight key local landmarks and routes; clearly defined public and private areas in housing developments)</p>	 <p>path provides attractive link</p>  <p>natural pathways can also be utilised</p>  <p>Illustrative signage informs users about the space</p>

ATTRACTIVENESS

- utilises natural surveillance of overlooking properties to deter graffiti and vandalism

(try to avoid blank walls fronting the space and along access routes)

use quality materials appropriate to space type

(durable enough to sustain likely user demands and weather conditions)

- suitable furniture to meet user needs

(provide provision of seating to offer a place to watch and potentially socialise with others)

- cycle racks to encourage cycling to the space

(offers alternative means to travel to spaces not within suitable walking distance)

- offer a good range of play equipment with suitable surfacing

(suitable for a range of age groups and user preferences which offers a variety of sensory experiences and physical challenges)

- clean and safe built facilities

varied and appealing planting that contribute to quality of the space

(to enable the space to have sustained flowering throughout the year; uses various colours and textures)

- natural features well maintained

(a balance should be considered between the likely maintenance required and the quality/benefits of the planting employed i.e. Prairie planting can reduce maintenance, enhance biodiversity and attractiveness).



houses at edge of the space provide natural surveillance



furniture can also provide a source of interest



challenging play equipment which is in good condition



well cut grass can provide an attractive formal setting (consider maintenance implications)

BIO DIVERSE

- vegetation promotes development of native habitats and species

(can be complimented with other features including bird boxes, water features, ornamental planting, use of native plant species and wildflower mixes grown from locally sourced seed; aids natural flood mitigation i.e. Sustainable Drainage Systems)

- space functions well in terms of natural, amenity and recreational elements

(all elements are considered in creating an attractive and valuable open space; provides visible biodiversity elements that enhance overall quality of the space)

- green network integration

(can natural links be developed to other spaces through use of trees, desire paths, hedges, grass verges, planting etc.)



utilising natural features can promote habitats and flood mitigation



planting adds colour and interest to the setting

PROMOTE ACTIVITY

- activities for all age groups available

(by offering a range of physical activities from play equipment, seating opportunities, sport facilities, planting and recreational)

- space promotes social interaction

(by encouraging people presence within the space through activities offered and aided by proximity to pedestrian routes)

- high quality built facilities to meet user needs

(accessible to all where possible; suitably equipped to compliment space activities and likely user requirements)



picnic benches provide ideal place for families to spend time



take advantage of well used routes and buildings to encourage further activity

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

- no areas of poor visibility or entrapment points

(natural surveillance achieved; design does not create safety concerns through unnecessary pinch points and confined access routes)

- appropriate lighting

(to prolong use of space when dark; sense of security; low-level lighting can provide more subtle effect to highlight paths and features)

- linkages to community facilities

(to help promote usage and awareness of the space as part of everyday routines)

- sense of local identity and place

(utilises views, artwork/materials specific to the location)

- potential for community involvement in management of the space

(enables opportunity to establish resident's or community group as per maintenance agreement terms)



vistas can provide visual waypoints and a sense of place



artwork adds interest to the space

④ Open Space requirements in new developments

Where applicable, the following requirements should be considered in conjunction with section 3.

4.1 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

- 4.1.1 Housing developments should include clearly defined high quality private garden provision for dwellings. In the case of flatted developments or where the existing built context is restricted, consideration may be given to offsite provision or improvements to nearby existing spaces through a commuted sum, or direct provision by the developer to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority, to accommodate the demands of the new development. The level of open space required in relation to a particular development proposal should be proportionate to the scale of the development, specific to the context of the proposal, and be realistic in relation to the expected level of use. This is especially the case for proposals within villages, rural and island settlements. Proposals for open space provision in new developments should demonstrate how the type, quantity and quality of open space provision has been informed by the findings of the open space audit.
- 4.1.2 As a guide only, indicative contribution expectations for new residential developments as stated in *Minimum Standards for Open Space*, which can be found on the Scottish Government's website as detailed in section 11, is 60m² total open space per household to be composed of:
- 40m² per household divided between parks, sports areas, green corridors, semi-natural and civic space; and
 - 20m² per household of informal play/recreation space and equipped play areas.
- 4.1.3 In cases where the Planning Authority deems the contribution to be significantly lower than these indicative contribution expectations, the developer may be required to contribute towards raising the quality of nearby open space provision. Improvements will be sufficient for the space to achieve a 'good' standard overall as per the score criteria and which benefits the wider community such as public parks and gardens, sports areas and playspace for children and teenagers. For large phased developments it is expected that a development brief will be prepared in order to reach an appropriate solution to meet these requirements.

4.2 COMMUNITY AND EMPLOYMENT SITE DEVELOPMENTS

- 4.2.1 Where proposals involve the development of a community site i.e. community halls, hospitals, residential care facility, children's play areas and parks, or an employment site, open space should be provided that compliments the needs of the users of that facility by adhering to the planning and design principles. It is encouraged that these facilities are linked to contrasting uses where possible, including residential, to help establish an integrated network of open spaces incorporating various land uses and an effective green space network.

4.3 ALLOTMENTS

- 4.3.1 *Scotland's Allotment Design Guide 2013* provides detailed guidance in developing good solutions for allotments provision with information on issues to be considered. The following are some of the key attributes to consider in the delivery of a successful allotment:
- land survey to be carried out to check feasibility of site to be used for allotments;
 - minimum soil depth of 2m;
 - suitable access for vehicles to load/unload;

- land has slight slope to the south;
- suitable drainage infrastructure;
- consideration for a communal plot area to encourage other people to use allotments;
- consideration of providing communal facilities for allotment users such as toilets and a community hut;
- a dedicated biodiversity area which could include an overgrown partial plot or pond;
- plots positioned to maximise exposure to the sun whilst minimising shadowing;
- boundary treatment which does not detract from the surrounding context visually such as a drystone walls or timber fencing;
- utilises natural surveillance from surrounding properties to promote a safe environment for users; and
- at least one disabled access friendly plot with raised beds and suitable wheelchair access, or more dependent on demand.

4.4 PLAYSPACES AND SPORTS AREAS

4.4.1 *Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play* by Fields in Trust offers advice on achieving high quality playspace and sports areas. Any playspaces or playing fields should help the Council achieve the objectives set out in the *Pitch and Facilities Strategy*, and the *Physical Activity and Sports Strategy*, with a representative from the Council's Sport and Leisure Department consulted as part of developing any related proposals. In relation to OOSS: *Planning for Open Space*, playspaces should offer challenging play elements to engage with children and therefore provide the platform to establish a well-used and attractive playspace. These can take the form of promoting activities which require balancing, climbing, swinging, jumping etc. These may also comprise natural features such as sand and water rather than requiring physical equipment. Playspaces should always comply with European Standards EN1176 and EN1177 and equipment should be complimented by adequate impact absorbing surfaces. Aspirations arising from the audit include:

- The use of mixed surfaces to cater for dry and wet conditions to encourage play in various weather conditions. This should be complimented by suitable pathways for access purposes and shelter opportunities where practical.
- Playspaces should not be designed to cater to a limited age group and should incorporate suitable ancillary elements including, for example, seating opportunities for parents.
- The use of natural elements to encourage diverse and creative physical activities is favoured.
- Playspaces should also promote biodiversity value through the creation of buffer areas between adjacent land uses which could include planted boundaries of various colours and textures.

4.4.2 Whilst playspaces may be seen as offering space for mainly children to use, provision of facilities to cater for older age groups, including teenagers and adults, is key in promoting physical activity and increased quality of life. Formal sports pitches and areas contribute to this but should be complimented with other opportunities suitable for various user preferences including BMX tracks, skateparks and multi-use games areas especially where demand for such provision is viable and can be suitably located to minimise disruption to residential properties. Dependent on the size of the site, such uses could be incorporated to compliment other space types and provide a multi-functional space encouraging usage and interaction between various age groups.

4.5 AMENITY GREENSPACES

4.5.1 Amenity greenspace was seen to be the poorest performer on average in the open space audit. The use of these spaces can often be limited due to size and site constraints limiting potential activities. Also, the ability of amenity space to provide visual enhancements through providing a setting for the surrounding built context is often limited to areas of grass requiring regular maintenance that can become neglected. As a result amenity spaces should ideally:

- Incorporate a variety of planting treatments that add visual quality to the space and create a more

attractive setting.

- Consider the maintenance implications of proposals and whether alternative native and non-invasive planting or wildflower species would be more suitable.
- Not be an area leftover as a result of the development of the site and is instead fully integrated into key pedestrian routes and likely congregation points to promote social activity, natural surveillance and frequent use of the space.
- Consider if the size and gradient of the space is suitable for informal play and if not, what it contributes in terms of attractiveness and bio diversity to the overall setting in line with the criteria in Section 3.3.

4.6 NATURAL/SEMI-NATURAL GREENSPACES

4.6.1 Similar to amenity greenspace, natural/semi-natural greenspace was one of the poorest performers in terms of 'quality' within the audit with the scale of its overall contribution emphasised however by being the largest space typology in terms of total area. Due to the tendency of these spaces to be unmanaged and potentially leftover or outlying areas from previously developed land, small scale interventions could greatly enhance these areas and serve to enhance the overall quality of open space in Orkney. Means of enhancing such spaces could include:

- Maximising the biodiversity offered by the space as per section 3.3 by, for example, utilising different colours, textures, planting lengths, etc. to add interest to elements of the space.
- Introducing informal desire paths to provide linkages to the surrounding context and encourage interaction with the space.
- Potential to be utilised as Sustainable Drainage Systems where appropriate in correspondence with Policy D4 in the Plan..

5 Maintaining and improving open space

5.1 MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS

- 5.1.1 Whilst the principles in the previous chapters form the basis for improving the standard of open spaces, how these spaces are managed and maintained is important in order to sustain the value they have to communities and users. The preferred approach is for the surrounding property owners to share responsibility for the management and maintenance of communal open spaces. Owners are stipulated rather than tenants so that costs may be recoverable from the owners even when a property is unoccupied. This could be achieved by relevant persons contributing to the costs of these services which are managed by a third party factor originally appointed by the developer. This would require:
- Maintenance details and obligations for common land to be incorporated into the title deeds of each property.
 - Suitable clauses which enable a resident's/community group to be formed and if desired, to takeover the management responsibilities.
 - Criteria which sets out the terms of the contract between the third party factor and the property owners and requirements for renewal of the contract.
- 5.1.2 To conform to the above, the Council would require the developer's/landowner's solicitor or other legal agent acting on their behalf to provide a draft copy of the title deeds which takes account of the above. In the case of the approved version of the title deeds, a written warranty is to be provided to the Council.
- 5.1.3 Submission of the maintenance details are important as part of the planning application to help establish high quality open space on a long term basis. Consequently no development can commence without a scheme regarding the layout, design, construction, protection measures, boundary treatments, maintenance provisions and timescales for implementation having been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority. The preferred approach is for these details to be submitted as part of the planning application, though in exceptional circumstances, planning conditions may be used to ensure appropriate open space provision and management. This is to ensure open spaces do not fall into disrepair or poor condition and therefore compromise one or more of the planning and design principles the proposal originally conformed to.