

OPEN SPACE 2021

A quick guide to Edinburgh's draft
Open Space Strategy

Introduction

This guide explains some key messages from Edinburgh's draft Open Space Strategy.

Reading it will help you vote whether you agree or disagree with each key message in the draft Strategy through this [online survey](#).

After the consultation period, the Strategy will be used to inform decisions on the management of existing green spaces and planning proposals.

If you want to find out more, you can read the full version of the [draft Strategy](#).

What is the draft Open Space Strategy?

Edinburgh's draft Open Space Strategy will help the city to provide well managed green space to meet the needs of current and future generations:

- It explains how the Council protects and manages existing green spaces like parks, play areas, residential green spaces, cemeteries, allotments and playing fields;
- It sets out how new open space should be provided, in particular, for new areas of housing as the City grows as set out in the [Local Development Plan](#); and
- It recognises the contribution community groups and other organisations make to improving Edinburgh's green spaces.

Taking into account what has been achieved in recent years, the draft Strategy looks ahead to the city's green space needs towards 2021.

Improving access to good quality green space for everyone across the city benefits health and well-being, supports urban wildlife and encourages investment in Edinburgh's economy.

The following sections cover the suggested way forward for each kind of green space across the city.

Large Green Spaces

Every neighbourhood benefits from a large park to provide the space for the whole community to enjoy their free-time. It's the place to play sports and informal games; walk the dog or go for a run; come together for local events; watch wildlife and scenery through the seasons; and experience natural open space.

The quality of Council managed parks is measured through annual surveys by Council staff and members of the community. **The Parks Quality Assessment (PQA)** is based on the **Green Flag Award**, the national quality benchmark for parks and green spaces.

Since 2009, 15 of the city's largest parks have been improved, thereby creating greater access to good quality green space across the city. In 2015, Edinburgh's parks achieved 29 out of the 65 Green Flag Awards in Scotland.

The contribution of communities in achieving these improvements is significant. **Friends of Parks Groups** and other voluntary organisations contribute many hours each year to planting sessions, clean-ups, fund-raising and welcome others to join in events and activities.

The Council opened the new **Buttercup Farm Park** on the site of the former Drumbrae Primary School playing fields in 2014. Restoration plans for **Saughton Park** are underway, after a funding award from the Heritage Lottery Fund's 'Parks for People' programme.

However, two of the city's most important parks still need attention. **Leith Links** and **Calton Hill** cater for local residents, people from across Edinburgh and visitors to the city. New management plans will be prepared with the community over the coming years and funding bids submitted to help achieve these projects.

As the city expands, large scale developments must include good quality new large green spaces for future residents. These should be of good quality and more than 2 hectares in size (double the size of St Andrew Square).

New neighbourhoods will be required to include access to a large green space within a 10 minute walk of all homes (800m). Broomhills Park, near Burdiehouse, is the first example of a new large green space to be granted planning permission as an integral part of the new housing development.



Harrison Park

Large Green Spaces

The Council will continue to assess its public parks through the Parks Quality Assessment each year and use the findings to guide their management.

The draft Strategy supports access to good quality large green space of at least 2 hectares in size within 10 minutes walk of all homes.

Play Space

Edinburgh's vision is to achieve a 'play friendly city, where all children and young people can enjoy their childhood.'

Public parks and other large green spaces provide the ideal setting for good quality equipped play spaces. Play is vital to help children learn how to get along with each other and keep healthy.

Over the last 5 years, the Council's [Play Area Action Plan](#) has upgraded the quality of 22 play areas and created 5 new play areas, helping to improve access to play for children across the city.

Play Areas are designed and maintained to meet a range of activities and must provide the right amount of challenge and fun. They must be kept in a safe condition and need ongoing repair and renewal.

The draft Strategy is working towards the goal of the majority of residents having access to access to a good local play area within 10 - 15 minutes' walk of home (800 - 1200m).

In addition, the [Meadows Magnet Play Area](#) is a popular attraction that many people will choose to travel further to visit.

The Council has recently developed guidance to help parents arrange temporary 'playing-out' events in residential streets.

As the city expands, new developments will be expected to contribute to extending the city's provision of equipped play areas, either by creating new play space on site or by upgrading an existing accessible play area.

New green spaces and residential streets should be designed to encourage more 'free play' without equipment. Exploring woodland, meadows or running up and down slopes can provide ways for children to develop their creativity and imagination.

A new Play Area Action Plan will be prepared from 2017 to look at how existing and new facilities will be managed in order to continue to increase access to play.



Play Space

The draft Strategy supports the principle that children in Edinburgh should have access to good quality equipped play within 10 – 15 minutes' walk of home.

Alongside this approach, new streets and green spaces must provide safe and stimulating environments for 'free-play'.

Local Green Spaces

Local green spaces close to homes play an important role in how people feel about their neighbourhood and offer convenient spaces for everyday enjoyment of the outdoors.

Some of these places are smaller parks, grassed areas or pockets of urban woodland. They can be cared for by the Council, housing associations or residential property managers.

The Scottish Government wishes to see improvements in access to local green space. They are important places to meet your neighbours, havens for wildlife, spaces to play outdoors after school or enjoy on a walk to the shops.

Over the last 5 years, more than 30 new local green spaces have been created as part of new housing and flats built across the city.

Local green spaces should reflect the needs of local people and many communities are adopting spaces to create community gardens, orchards and woodlands suited to their needs.

Community gardens are growing in popularity across the city, making the most of under-used spaces with permission of landowners, including the Council.

In new housing developments, good quality local green spaces should support health and well-being by providing usable outdoor spaces as well as looking attractive.

Spaces should have surfaced paths linked to surrounding area, provide features to attract wildlife, sheltered, meeting spaces with seating, areas for community growing, tree planting and 'free play'.

Good quality local green spaces should complement the provision of private gardens for new houses and in blocks of flats, garden flats and communal back greens.



**Cakemuir Grove
Craigmillar**

Local Green Spaces

The draft Strategy supports improvements to local green spaces which should be of good quality, at least 500 sq. metres in size and within 5 minutes walk of homes (400m)

Ongoing growth in community gardens, orchards and woodlands is supported where agreed by the Council or private landowner.

Allotments

Like community gardens, allotments provide a great way to keep active outdoors, socialise and grow healthy, locally sourced food. Over the last 5 years, 12 new allotment sites have opened, through a mix of independent and Council sites.

There is high demand within the city, which outstrips supply. To help address this need and reflect changes arising from the Community Empowerment Act, the Council is preparing a new **Allotment Strategy**.

This is being produced with advice from the Federation of Edinburgh and District Allotments and Gardens Associations (FEDAGA), Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society (SAGS), allotment holders and people on the allotment waiting list.

Options to increase the supply of allotments may include transfer or lease of land to communities who wish to establish local food growing facilities.

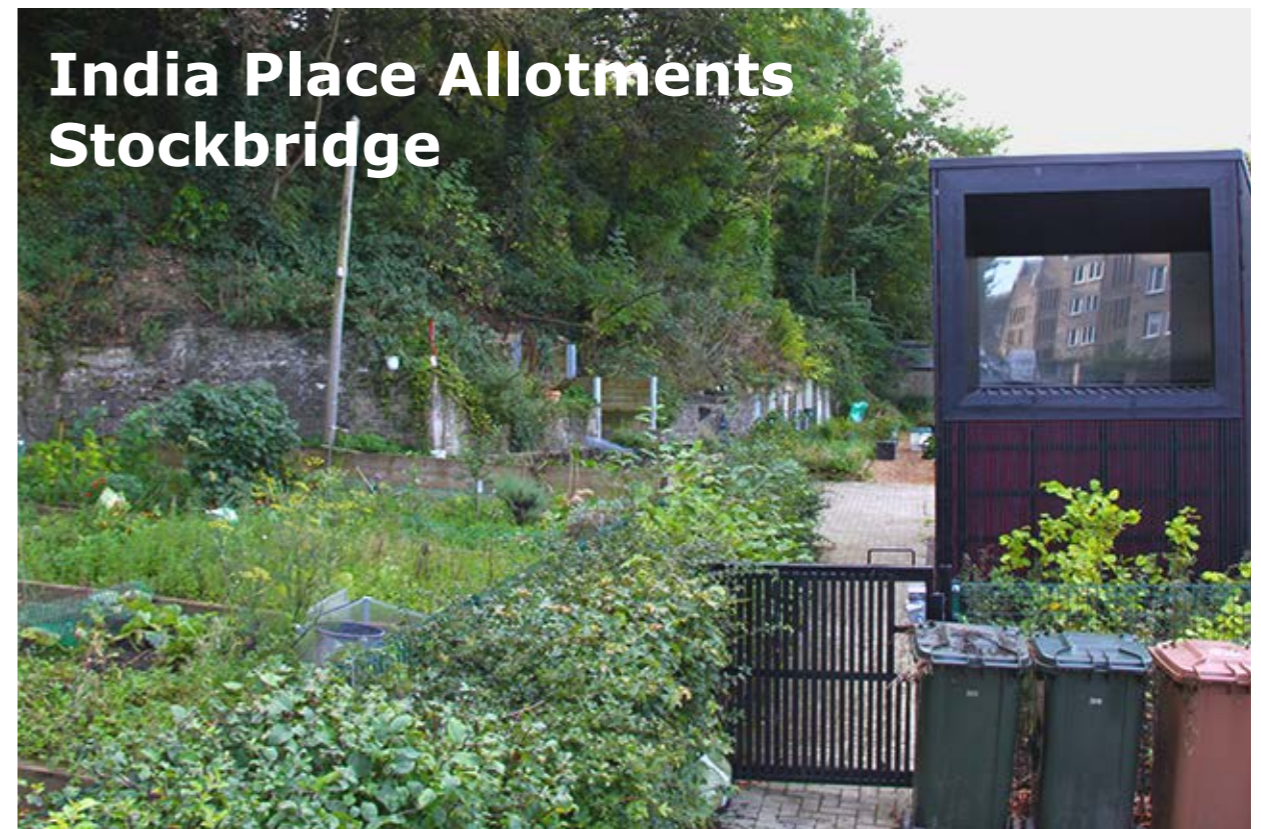
New housing developments can also contribute to allotment supply and space for food growing by providing allotments in larger developments or beds for community gardening in new local green spaces.

New homes and local residents at Newcraighall will have access to 20 new allotment plots created by the developer.

Allotments

The draft Strategy supports an increase in allotment provision through an updated Allotment Strategy.

Provision for allotments and/or community growing space should be considered in new housing developments.



Cemeteries and Burial Grounds

Cemeteries and burial grounds provide an important function in commemorating loved ones. They add to city's character and historic interest and often provide a home for urban wildlife.

Older burial grounds can be challenging to maintain. Headstones and other stonework need to be preserved, historic boundary walls can hide the spaces from view and encourage anti-social behaviour.

As a record of the city's past, they have much to offer for visitors, school groups as well as providing space to sit out and recharge from the bustle of the city.

They are the final resting place of some of Edinburgh's historic figures including: economist, Adam Smith; poet, Robert Fergusson; inventor, Robert Stevenson; and philosopher, David Hume.

In future, where the Council manages a cemetery or burial ground, it will carry out an annual quality survey, based on the Green Flag Award, to identify areas for improved management.

The Council will encourage and support the contribution of 'Friends Groups' to improve and promote cemeteries and burial grounds.

The Council will work with [Edinburgh World Heritage](#) to improve five green spaces within the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh including: Greyfriars, Canongate and St Cuthbert's Kirkyards and the Old and New Calton Burial Grounds.

Cemeteries and Burial Grounds

The draft Strategy puts forward a change in the way historic cemeteries and burial grounds are managed to benefit local residents, visitors and wildlife and to conserve the city's heritage for the future.



**South Leith Parish
Churchyard**

Playing Fields

Multi-pitch venues with synthetic pitches allow for greater participation in sport because they can withstand repeated use without wear and tear to turf, wet weather damage and can be used with flood-lighting in winter.

The **Meggetland Sports Complex** is an example of a multi-pitch venue, combining full size pitches suitable for sporting fixtures, artificial surfacing, flood lighting and high quality changing facilities.

The Council plans to refurbish the **Jack Kane Centre** and install new 3G synthetic surfaces in Hunters Hall Park to create an upgraded multi-pitch venue in South East Edinburgh.

However, creating further multi-pitch venues will be a longer-term prospect and will depend on resources for investment. In future, greater public use will also be made of school sports grounds.

Working together with Heriot-Watt University and Sportscotland, the Council contributed £2.5 million towards the development of a new national performance centre for sport, called **Oriam** at Riccarton.

This £30 million facility will support Scotland's best athletes whilst also offering gym membership and bookable pitches to the public.

Playing Fields

The draft Strategy continues to support the long-term goal to focus investment in sport in key locations across the city



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The Green Network

A key objective of the Open Space Strategy is to link green spaces together to benefit walking, cycling and wildlife and to continue to manage the quality of this network.

The green network ties together the different green spaces across the city as part of Edinburgh's contribution to the [Central Scotland Green Network \(CSGN\)](#).

The aim of CSGN is to transform Central Scotland by 2050 through environmental projects which add value to the economy and enrich people's lives.

Edinburgh is fortunate to have a web of existing greenspaces around the city, from its hills, river valleys, the Union Canal, disused railways and parks and greenspaces.

Cycling in the city has increased by 50% over the last five years almost 1/3 of journeys in Edinburgh are on foot. Many of these routes pass through the city's green spaces.

Recent improvements to the green network have resulted from the Council's [Active Travel Action Plan](#), including upgrading of the Restalrig Path and routes around the Meadows and through the development of the [John Muir Way](#) alongside the Brunstane Burn.

The [Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan](#) has long sought to connect green spaces within the city. To support these aims the Council is working with [Scottish Wildlife Trust](#), [Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust](#), [Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh](#), [University of Edinburgh](#) and [GreenSurge](#) to deliver the Edinburgh Living Landscapes project.

[Edinburgh Living Landscapes](#) is helping to improve habitats and connections for wildlife around the city, making nature more accessible to the urban population.

More than half of all public green space is close-mown grass. Adapting areas to provide floral meadows, tree and woodland planting and further use of perennial planting can increase the value of green spaces for wildlife and their visual interest.

This is a more environmentally friendly approach to grass cutting, which reduces fuel costs and pollution. Grounds maintenance staff can also spend more time on formal aspects in parks e.g. flower beds, shrubs, roses and grassed areas in parks that need cutting more often, including playing fields.

So far, this project has adapted 78 areas of close mown grass for wildlife and created 73 floral meadows. Suitable sites are being agreed and put forward by local communities. Research on the movement of wild animals and insects will also guide the project.

As the city expands, new green networks will also be required to link different parts of the city and to surrounding towns in West Lothian, Midlothian and East Lothian.

Proposals to create the Little France Parkland to the east of Edinburgh Royal Infirmary and link up Craigmillar with Shawfair in Midlothian have recently been prepared by Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust on behalf of the Council.

The Green Network

The draft Strategy supports the improvement and extension of the green network to benefit walking, cycling and nature.



The draft Strategy is based on map records of open space in the Council Area. Sites shown on the map receive protection from planning policies in the [Local Development Plan](#). You can view these maps via following the links;

[Edinburgh's Open Space Map](#)

[Edinburgh's Play Space Map](#)

[Edinburgh's Large Green Space Map](#)

[Edinburgh's Local Green Space Map](#)

Let us know your views on the draft Open Space Strategy

A workshop involving local groups and national organisations with an interest in green space and recreation helped shape the draft strategy.

**Do you think
Open Space 2021
will help Edinburgh's
green spaces improve over
the next 5 years?**

To put forward your views, you are encouraged to take part in this [online survey](#).

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EDINBURGH WORLD HERITAGE

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