Landscape is fundamental to the future environmental quality and success of a development. This Planning Advice provides developers with a clear process to achieving a quality long term landscape for a development. This is supplementary to 'Planning Advice 6/2012 – Design' and supports implementation of Layout, siting and design and Policy P2 Open space and access in new development.

Quality landscape design is an integral part of all new developments. Aberdeenshire Council aim’s to improve standards of landscape design, planting and maintenance to ensure that networks of green and open space are well located, designed, and managed, as well as being adaptable, appropriate and sustainable.

A quality landscape scheme should: -

- Aid development to fit positively into its landscape setting.
- Promote quality green spaces (networks) in new development in terms of environmental quality and function.
- Promote and enhance biodiversity at an individual development site level.
- Encourage quality landscaping in adjacent developments.
- Enhance the overall appearance of new development of all types.
- Add value to the development.
- Contribute to public open space networks.

The following process outlines a good methodology for landscape design for any development. Further Planning Advice is available with recommendations on more detailed matters that relate to landscape design such as biodiversity enhancement, riparian buffer strips, trees and development and design for related initiatives such as Energetica.

1) The Process

To achieve quality landscape design for any development, the following steps are recommended:

Step 1 – Seek the advice of a qualified/experienced landscape designer at an early stage, ideally at pre-application.

Such consultants can bring out the best in a development and its setting.

Step 2 – Carry out a survey of the development site and its setting.

Information on the following should be recorded on a survey plan:

- Existing trees and vegetation/habitats both in and adjacent to the site.
- Built and natural landscape features both in and adjacent to the site such as buildings, ponds, roads, paths, fences, water courses.
- Topography, soil conditions and drainage conditions.
- Climatic conditions including exposure to prevailing wind and frost, aspect to sunlight.
- Views in and out of the site.
- Archaeological features and site designations.
- Landscape design survey information should also include information on any nearby listed buildings or places of recreational / heritage interest.

For larger sites a levels survey prepared by a qualified surveyor is essential for the successful site design in terms of planned infrastructure and also landscape design.
Step 3 – Identify opportunities and constraints.

Information gathered and developed at survey stage will show what is practical and what is not, in terms of site design, including:

- Where and which plants/trees will grow well.
- What existing natural and built features are worth retaining, enhancing or introducing.
- What existing natural and built features should be removed and why.
- What improvements need to be undertaken e.g. to soil, drainage, topography, planting etc.
- Where shelter is provided and where it is needed.
- How links can be made to the surrounding areas.
- Opportunities for biodiversity enhancement.
- Which views should be retained and enhanced.
- What features planned and existing require to be disguised or screened.

Step 4 – Design the scheme.

Based on the initial survey and the identification of opportunities and constraints, the landscaping/open space structure proposals can now be designed. The design should be submitted in as much detail as possible as part of a planning application.

Low maintenance landscapes (planting etc. requiring minimum maintenance) should be promoted. Plants/trees should be specified to fill a space, to reduce the need for future pruning. Areas of grass requiring regular cutting can also be minimised.

For shrub and woodland planting smaller planting stock (whips), planted relatively densely initially, to be thinned when crown closure occurs, is a good approach to establishing landscape structure.

Appropriate native species should be included in the landscaping scheme. Further information on appropriate native species can be found here.

Prevention of the spread of Invasive non-native species (INNS) is an important consideration, see details at the end of this advice.

The design information should:

- State what the scheme aims and functions are (a design statement) and clearly indicate its spatial layout.
- Provide levels information for both pre development and post development stages. Information needs to be in contour format, but can include cross-sections where level changes/earthworks are proposed.
- Provide drainage details with the levels information, and include landscaping proposals for the SuDS network.
- Respect/relate to the character and amenity of the surrounding area; including valued built and natural features.
- Incorporate measures for the protection, enhancement and creation of habitats.
- Aim to provide links between sites of nature conservation value thus contributing to the development of green networks.
- Be provided at a scale which makes clear all aspects of the scheme including all finished surface specifications, a planting schedule listing all plant and tree species, their size, type, number per planting area, initial planting density, protection from vermin etc.
- Contain enough information so that there is no doubt as to the quantity, quality or dimensions of each element of the scheme.

Step 5 – Management plan.

The Local Authority has no duty to take over the maintenance of greenspace in any new development. Therefore it is essential that a management plan is provided to ensure the scheme is properly established and maintained. This should be prepared in two inter-related sections as part of the landscape design package and be produced as part of the information package needed with a planning application. The developer should confirm arrangements/responsibility for future maintenance.

This landscape establishment and maintenance information should be submitted in as much detail
as possible as part of a planning application. It should include details of plant replacement, weed control, grass cutting, pruning, general maintenance activities and watering; and be in two parts:

- **Part 1** – A short term implementation and establishment plan for 3-5 years to be presented primarily as a programme relating to monthly maintenance tasks for establishing all aspects of a new landscape, including grassed areas, shrub planting and woodland planting. A commitment to watering young stock in drought conditions should be included in this section.

- **Part 2** – A long term maintenance plan (5 years +). To address all aspects of the maintenance plan for the long term including the programme for grass cutting, weed control, pruning, long term maintenance inspections and replacement planting.

Maintenance is the key to the long term success of a landscape design and should be developed as part of the overall site design process.

For large scale development requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment, the landscape design should relate directly to the environmental impact assessment process in terms of minimising adverse impacts on site, enhancing environmental value and implementing appropriate mitigating measures.

**Prevention of Spread of Invasive non-Native Species (INNS)**

Invasive non-native species are species that have been introduced either deliberately or accidentally outside of their natural range, where they then become established and cause damage to their new environment.

A Code of Practice has been produced by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) to identify and clarify responsibilities for dealing with INNS. [http://www.snh.gov.uk/protecting-scotlands-nature/protected-species/non-native-species/](http://www.snh.gov.uk/protecting-scotlands-nature/protected-species/non-native-species/)

Landowners have a legal responsibility to prevent INNS spreading into the wild or causing a nuisance. This means we have to be very careful about what is included within planting and landscaping schemes, particularly for sites out-with the urban environment or adjacent to semi-natural land.

It is illegal to sell certain INNS including the major problem invasive plant species (Japanese knotweed, Himalayan Balsam, Giant Hogweed). Further information on these species and other INNS that should not be planted can be found at [http://www.nonnativespecies.org/index.cfm?sectionid=47](http://www.nonnativespecies.org/index.cfm?sectionid=47)

The list below details some non-native species that will spread and should only be planted in areas where there is no potential for them to spread to adjacent land i.e. these species might be appropriate for urban schemes but not for landscaping in areas adjacent to semi-natural habitat. The best policy is one of precaution and therefore if in doubt, do not plant these species.

Plantlife have produced a useful document detailing alternative species suitable for planting at sites adjacent to semi-natural land. If you are proposing to create a pond the current advice is not to plant at all, further information is available from [http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/190372014-plantlife-landscaping-without-harmful-plants.pdf](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/190372014-plantlife-landscaping-without-harmful-plants.pdf)

For large scale development requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment, the landscape design should relate directly to the environmental impact assessment process in terms of minimising adverse impacts on site, enhancing environmental value and implementing appropriate mitigating measures.
Species which should not be planted in schemes close to semi-natural habitat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common name</th>
<th>Scientific name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bluebell, Spanish</td>
<td><em>Hyacinthoides hispanica</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckthorn, Sea</td>
<td><em>Hippophae rhamnoides</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butterfly bush</td>
<td><em>Buddleja davidii</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornflower, Perennial</td>
<td><em>Centaurea montana</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotoneaster – all species</td>
<td><em>Cotoneaster - all species</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currant, Flowering</td>
<td><em>Ribes sanguineum</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daisy, Michaelmas</td>
<td><em>Aster aggregate</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogwood, Red Osier</td>
<td><em>Cornus servicea</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grape, Oregon</td>
<td><em>Mahonia aquifolia</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ladies mantle, Soft</td>
<td><em>Alchemilla mollis</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mallow, Tree</td>
<td><em>Lavatera arborea</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montbretia - all species</td>
<td><em>Crocosmia - all species</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhubarb, Giant - all species</td>
<td><em>Gunnera - all species</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose, Japanese</td>
<td><em>Rosa rugosa</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snowberry</td>
<td><em>Symphoricarpus albus</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>