

CREATING  
**A BETTER  
FIFE**  
FIFE URBAN DESIGN GUIDE  
CONSULTATIVE DRAFT

### Have Your Say

This is the consultative draft version of **Creating a Better Fife**: The Fife Urban Design Guide.

Fife Council is very interested in your views. Please take this opportunity to have you say.

**Creating a Better Fife** can be viewed or downloaded from at [www.fifedirect.org.uk/developmentplanning](http://www.fifedirect.org.uk/developmentplanning).

**The public consultation period is from 7 March to 2 May 2005.**

You can post or email your comments to:

Keith Winter  
Head of Development Services  
Fife House  
North Street  
Glenrothes  
Fife  
KY7 5LT  
email: [development.services@fife.gov.uk](mailto:development.services@fife.gov.uk).

For further information, please contact:

Laurie Mentiplay  
Tel: 01383 609430  
email: [laurie.mentiplay@fife.gov.uk](mailto:laurie.mentiplay@fife.gov.uk).

### What Happens Next?

After the public consultation period, Fife Council will consider all feedback before finalising the Guide.

It is intended to produce the final guide during this Summer.

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How to improve the quality of new development and our public spaces. This is a key issue for everyone who cares about our towns and villages in Fife.

Well designed new development and public spaces are essential for improving quality of life. Good design has can have a positive effect on both regeneration and economic well being.

It can also boost confidence and promote greater community pride and ownership in an area. Poorly designed development and public spaces often has precisely the opposite effect.

Through the planning system, we look to raise standards by guiding future development and use of land in the long-term public interest. Good urban design is a key objective of the planning system and is about making places work for people. It's about how buildings, streets, parks and all other areas that make up the public realm, relate to each other.

Fife Council has a key role to play in raising design standards. In *Creating a Better Fife*, the Council sets out strategic design principles that will apply to all development proposals across the Kingdom. It provides design principles that developers, designers and communities can sign up to improve quality of life in Fife.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith Winter". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Keith Winter  
Head of Development Services



**Creating a Better Fife** sets out a consistent Fife-wide approach to urban design guidance. Fife Council's aim is to improve the quality of new development and public spaces and:

- Provide advice and assistance to developers, decision makers and other key players;
- Challenge and provoke consideration for appropriate design solutions through all scales of development;
- Raise awareness and interest in urban design and the contribution it can make to creating better places and improving quality of life; and
- Help meet national and Fife-wide objectives for enhancing our communities.

The guide is in four distinct parts:

- **Policy Framework** sets out how the guide fits with national and local policies;
- **Fife's Historic Character** looks at how Fife' towns and villages have developed and some of the key characteristics that make them special;
- **Design Principles** sets out four principles to guide future development in Fife. This covers character and identity, movement, built form and open space; and
- **Urban Design and the Planning Process** explains how the Council can proactively develop and apply these principles.

**Creating a Better Fife** (Consultative Draft) has been approved by Fife Council's Environment and Development Committee. It is now a material consideration in determining planning applications.



## POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Scottish Executive is raising the importance of urban design at the national level. In April 2005, Architecture and Design Scotland, its new design champion comes into force.

Scottish Planning Policy 1: The Planning System (SPP1), Designing Places and the Policy on Architecture in Scotland set out the Scottish Executive's policy objectives for achieving higher design standards. These documents emphasise that design is a material consideration in determining planning applications and proposals can be approved or refused solely on design grounds.

SPP3: Planning for Housing places considerable emphasis on creating attractive residential developments. It states that development briefs should be drawn up for sensitive or significant sites, guiding developers in matters of density, layout, building heights and materials.

At the Fife level, A Stronger Future for Fife: Fife's Community Plan (2004) sets out the overall vision for Fife. It has two key priorities which can be achieved with higher quality design: safeguarding and improving the environment; and developing stronger communities by improving residents' satisfaction with local areas.

Fife Matters: the Fife Structure Plan Consultative Draft sets out a 20-year strategic framework for development in the Kingdom. A key priority is improving the range and quality of new development and raising design standards through Policy ENV3 and [Creating a Better Fife](#).

### POLICY ENV3: Design Quality

"Development will only be approved if it can demonstrate and ensure that well thought out design has been pursued, which in turn; will achieve desirable, successful, high quality, built and natural environments, respect their individual context and are well-integrated and connected with their surroundings. The application of innovative design solutions will be encouraged.

To maintain and raise design standards throughout Fife, all development proposals must comply with the principles as described in the Council's Design Guide."

At the local level, the council's three Local Plans for Fife will set out specific design policies. These plans will also identify where detailed urban design guidance such as master plans and development briefs are required. These are explained in the Urban Design and the Planning Process section (see pages 22-23).

# FIFE'S HISTORIC CHARACTER

## FIFE'S HISTORIC CHARACTER

Fife's towns and villages were largely shaped by their setting, principal economic purpose and natural topography. Many date back to medieval times, commonly comprising of a single street that widened towards the centre to accommodate a market place. Pends, wynds, lanes and vennels provided links between the main streets in the burghs to form the 'fishbone' pattern common to many Scottish burghs.

With its thriving ports in the 16th Century, Fife was exposed to international influences. Merchants were often influenced by the architecture they saw abroad. You can see the Dutch influences, for example, in coastal burghs such as Culross, Crail and St Monans.

The principles of Classical architecture and planning were first introduced at Falkland Palace in the 1540's, with landowners embracing these principles more widely in the late 17th century. Designed landscapes were laid out and mansion houses, estate buildings and lodges were extended or rebuilt during the 18th and 19th centuries.

As a result of the industrial and agricultural revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries, planned villages were developed to house labourers, craftsmen and workers associated with particular industries. For example, Charlestown's 'e-shaped' village developed to house lime workers. The most prominent of the single-industry villages are the mining settlements, extending from High Valleyfield to Leven. These settlements tended to develop in a linear form along a road or in a clustered form, growing out from a key building.

Historically, Fife had a wealth of natural stone for building. Sandstone was used as rubble, cut for dressings or to form ashlar blocks for use on only the finest buildings. Whinstone rubble was most commonly used to construct walls, and limestone was used to produce lime for mortar and for lime harling. The use of lime harling was common on both classical and vernacular buildings, applied to rubble walls as a protective and decorative finish.



*Dutch influence, Culross*



*'Fishbone' street pattern, East Fife*



*Planned village, Charlestown*

# FIFE'S HISTORIC CHARACTER



*Victorian expansion, Kirkcaldy*



*Pedestrian and vehicle segregation in Kirkcaldy*



*Cul-de-sac developments, Glenrothes*

Straw, heather or turf thatch was common roofing material until the 19th century, when cultivation of reed beds in the Tay took over as a more durable thatching material. In the 18th century, sandstone flags, or 'grey slates', were imported across the Tay from Angus, although 'blue' slates imported from West Highland quarries were used to clad the roofs of more affluent Georgian and Victorian buildings. From the early 18th century, clay was used to make bricks and tiles for agricultural drainage and pantiles for roofing buildings.

By the turn of the 19th century, most of Fife's towns were developing more classical and formal street patterns. Streets were more formal and proportioned with tenements or villas with gardens. The Burgh Reform Act of 1833 established a new system of local government, which stimulated civic pride. Larger burghs acquired new town houses, purpose built halls and community meeting places were established which were often shared by public libraries. Planned town parks laid out from the mid-19th century onwards. Towns such as Kirkcaldy and Dunfermline, expanded beyond their historic core with new housing areas for the expanding textile industry workers.

During the 20th century, locally produced materials and local craftsmanship gave way to mass-produced bricks, pan and concrete tiles and imitation slate. Council housing became the predominant developments in the early decades, often laid out in lower-densities with higher levels of public and private open space. Rosyth and Methil are two examples of the common 'garden city' approach of that time.

The new town of Glenrothes was founded in the late 1940's and was one of Scotland's first. During the '50s, '60s and early '70s, Glenrothes and many other Fife towns expanded rapidly with extensive council housing development.

Housing layouts took on new, abstract forms with vehicle and pedestrian segregation, more open space and a return to flatted developments. New development was zoned by use and most towns and villages expanded in size with increasing suburbanisation.

The suburbanisation continued into the '80s. By now, private housing development dominated. Hierarchical road networks and standard cul-de-sac-style developments becoming the prevailing style of layout across Fife.

In the '90s, private house building continued to dominate, but with new emphasis on renewing and regenerating historic areas and 'brownfield sites'.

The last few years has seen an increased focus on the spaces between buildings. The importance of 'place making' in new developments and public spaces has become firmly established in policy making. Many of the strengths of Fife's historic areas show the way for urban design in the 21st century.



# DESIGN PRINCIPLES

# DESIGN PRINCIPLES



Successful places have a range of common qualities and these apply throughout Fife. These qualities are described in the following set of urban design principles.

- **Creating Places of Character and Identity**
- **Creating High Quality New Development**
- **Creating Safe and Pleasant Open Spaces**
- **Creating Places which are Easy to Move Around in**

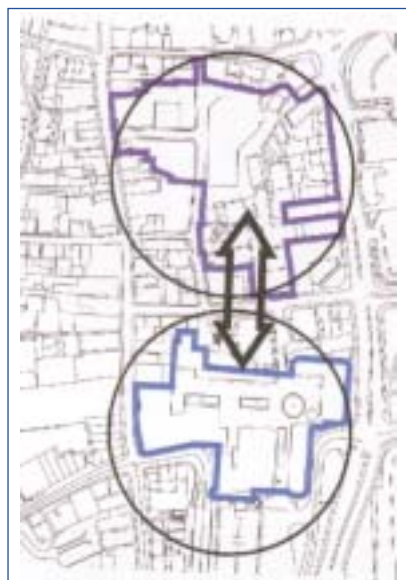
These four principles will guide future development in Fife and set the standard for high quality design and creating successful places.







Standard UK houstyles, Dunfermline



Design Statement showing new development in context (ref: Cooper Cromar, 2004)



Urban expansion, York (ref: PRP 2002),

## Introduction

Good urban design always arises from a thorough understanding of place and context. Questions such as “What makes a place distinctive?” and “What are this place’s special qualities?” should be asked.

Many developments in recent years have failed to respect and appreciate their local context. We are seeing uniformity in housing design and layout with standard solutions applied throughout the UK.

It doesn’t have to be this way. The following principles seek to address this issue of achieving a sense of character and identity:

## Context

Context is the character and setting of the area within which a development will sit. A thorough appreciation and analysis of the overall site context should always be the starting point for designing a distinct place.

This should always be carried out for pre-application discussion with the Council. A Design Statement should be prepared, in accordance with the Scottish Executive’s Planning Advice Note 68 (see [www.scotland.gov.uk/planning](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/planning)). The statement will explain how the proposals work in the site’s context.

New developments should:

## Structure

- assist in the definition of the boundary between town and country, and also clearly delineate between public and private space;
- protect, enhance and create gateways, arterial routes and strategic views;
- be considered in parcels of 1 or 2 hectares as this helps to avoid over generic design outcomes;
- have strong building lines and active frontages along pedestrian and vehicle routes;
- utilise prominent buildings or natural features to terminate vistas and/ or act as focal points;

## Places of Character and Identity

### Scale, Height and Massing

- Scale should be appropriate to the type of development, enclosure and sense of place i.e.; urban, suburban or village.

Different heights of buildings provide an opportunity to create a visually interesting roofscape.

- Consider prevailing building heights in the locality. Taller structures can be used effectively to define central and corner points, meeting places, terminate vistas, act as orientation points for residents and visitors, and can help to instil a sense of identity.

### Building Type

- Key elevations and gables should incorporate architectural elements to express their importance.
- Retail, leisure and public buildings should be sited to provide a context for pedestrian friendly public open areas tied into residential areas by logically integrated footpaths, cycle ways and roadways.
- In urban centres, wrapping other uses such as flats around a large, single use, single facade building can soften larger commercial or retail buildings.

### Details and Materials

- Contemporary design solutions and careful incorporation of local materials are strongly encouraged. This will provide a sound basis for achieving buildings of their time and quality, while creating development relevant to its locality.
- Where practical, development shall incorporate existing elements of Fife's indigenous industry or buildings, such as dockside cranes, former industrial buildings, and traditional buildings of quality into the design. This will help to retain historical connections and sense of place.



*Appropriate scale and massing in relation to existing building. Development of corner feature (Cooper Cromar, 2004)*



*Variety of form and materials, Dalgety Bay*



*New development using modern and historic materials, Byre Theatre, St Andrews*



*Character and Identity: Historic St Andrews*

## Introduction

Hand in hand with creating places with character and identity is 'legibility'. Legible places are places that are easy to understand and have a clear image. Many of Fife's historic places have that because of their distinctive layouts and built form.

Creating high quality new development requires a thorough understanding of a place and key principles are listed below.



*Gateway development, South Tyneside*

## Understanding a Place

- Development should be sited to enhance existing views, focal points and vistas, and create new ones.
- Recognisable landmark features or images which give a sense of location and orientation.
- Gateways features which can provide a visual sense of entrance/exit to particular areas should be considered.
- Routes should be clear and easy to navigate.
- Signage should be clear and provide a strong navigational tool. Signs should be well designed and co-ordinated and avoid visual clutter. Colour and materials are also key considerations.
- Consider the siting, design, style, colour and formation of lighting.
- Integrate public art in new developments. This can include innovative street furniture, architectural inscription, paving through freestanding structures to radical use of light or projection.



*Landmark feature: 'Iris', Glenrothes*

## High Quality New Development

### Diverse and Adaptable Places

New development should aim to be legible, diverse and adaptable and be designed to enable change over time. Again, Fife's towns and villages have historically had these qualities. Many recent developments have been characterised by standard layouts and designs which could be anywhere in the UK. Key requirements in new developments are listed below.

- Developments should aim to create a mix of uses and tenures, which should be flexible and adaptable,
- Simple, robust building forms, not tightly designed to a particular use should be considered.
- Allow for the greatest variety of flexibility and possible future uses to be accommodated.
- Wherever possible, reuse important and significant historic buildings.
- Integrate affordable/social/rented housing with private in new developments rather than segregating the two.



*Mix of use and tenures, Cupar*



*Award winning restoration, West Wemyss*



*Kirkcaldy High Street: a popular public space*



*New development at Gateshead: development facing onto communal public space*



*Multi-use public space, Dunfermline*

## Introduction

Public spaces are a vital part of everyday life in our towns and villages. They include the streets where we live, the places where our children play and the spaces where we relax and spend our lunch breaks or free time. How these spaces are designed and relate to the surrounding buildings can make a real difference to our quality of life. Well-designed public spaces can create tangible social, economic and environmental value.

Fife already has a legacy of attractive and memorable public parks and historic streets. New developments should aim to create new high quality spaces.

## General Principles

Open Space should:

- be considered from the outset and as an integral part of new development. There should be no areas of leftover space around buildings or on the edge of development sites;
- be designed with surrounding topography and natural setting and enhance views in and out;
- enhance and amplify existing site assets such as trees, rock outcrops, water bodies, walls, and areas of paving;
- be designed for ease of access and gradients, particularly for less able-bodied and pushchairs;
- be designed for safety and security in accordance with Fife Constabulary's 'Secured by Design' guidelines;
- be versatile allowing different activities and groups to make use of same space;
- where possible, orientate buildings so they face onto public spaces with doors, windows and active frontages rather than blank walls. This provides natural surveillance;
- be orientated to the sunpath direction and take account of the prevailing wind, sources of noise and views;
- Accommodate desire lines across the site and link with the local transport system and path networks;
- Maximise permeability of pedestrian and cyclist routes to introduce a greater concentration of natural surveillance; and
- Be designed for use during the day and night, and each season.





*Uncluttered streetscape, high quality materials, Dunfermline*



*Community designed public space, Culross*



*High quality landscape setting, Dunfermline Eastern Expansion*

## Paving and Street Furniture should be:

- uncluttered and use materials from sustainable sources;
- designed for people of all mobilities; and
- appropriate to context with pastiche or unauthentic historic styles avoided.

## Landscaping schemes should consider:

- appropriate choices of plant material considering ultimate size and form and future management;
- possible use of native species for habitat enhancement;
- continuing with adjacent planting styles and species. This can help to absorb new development into the wider landscape framework;
- the need to provide sufficient space to plant larger landscape trees indigenous to Fife;
- types of planting to enhance personal safety e.g.; tall areas of shrubbery are inappropriate beside pedestrian routes;
- preservation of privately controlled, key landscape elements; and
- integration of play areas designed with natural surveillance.

The aim should be to involve local communities from the outset in decisions on the use and design of open spaces. This will allow a sense of local ownership to develop. Management and maintenance plans will be required to accompany proposals for public space designs.





*Pedestrian, cycle and bus routes designed at the start, New Osbaldwick, York (ref: PRP 2002)*



*Shared pedestrian and vehicle access at 'homezone'; Dundee (ref: City of Dundee Council)*



*Safe, pedestrian and cycleway; Leven*

## Introduction

Fife's towns and villages depend on a network of streets, paths, spaces and public transport routes to make them work.

The design of this transport network is influenced by a number of factors. This includes physical factors such as location, development size as well as the type and amount of traffic in an area.

The aim should be to create places that are easy to get to and move around in. This requires careful consideration. Fife Council's 'Transportation Development Guidelines' provides functional advice for new developments. This should be used alongside the following principles.

## Developments should:

- have layouts designed for all uses giving priority to pedestrians, cyclists, public transport over car users e.g.; homezones;
- design walkable neighbourhood districts, which naturally promote a range of activity to take place and be sustained (based on 400 - 800 metre walking spheres i.e.; 5-10 minutes);
- take into consideration Safer Routes to School;
- provide as many direct foot and cycle path routes as possible to integrate new developments with existing and maximise choice;
- provide direct pedestrian routes to new and/or existing bus stops on the existing road network. (Aim to minimise the distance it takes to reach public transport: 400m is approx. 5-min. walk);
- provide improvements to the existing public transport network in the form of bus shelters, bus boarders etc;
- provide well-lit, safe foot and cycle path routes, overlooked by occupied residential or mixed use buildings;
- have a maximum design speed of 20mph (10mph on shared surface roads) if residential. The layout of the roads and location of all street furniture shall ensure that these speeds are not exceeded. Developers should not over-rely on the use of traffic calming measures;
- have higher densities when located next to public transport nodes and corridors;

## Places which are Easy to Move around in

**Parking**

Cycle and off-street car parking should be integrated into development design from the outset. Good examples are shown on the right and include:

- terraced housing with a pend access to a communal private parking area at the rear;
- shared private driveways serving garages and parking spaces to the rear of dwellings;
- communal car parks placed within the centre or to the rear of flatted developments. This allows the public face of the flats to be either landscaped or set within an environment that reflects its location; and
- car parking will be provided underneath larger office or retail developments where Fife Council considers that the retention or formation of public space is required.



Parking Layouts. (Ref: cited in City of Dundee Council 2001 from Birmingham City Council 2001)

## Introduction

The principles in this guide will also be applied to a variety of more detailed urban design guidance.

Different sites and situations will require different solutions. Fife Council has a range of urban design tools that it uses to promote higher standards of urban design. These are outlined below.

The benefits of these tools are that they:

- Give clear advice on the standards the council expects;
- Provide certainty to those involved in the planning process;
- Bridge the gap between development plan policies and submitting planning applications; and
- Lead to more successful developments.

## Fife's Urban Design Toolkit

**Concept/Vision Plans** generally indicate broad land uses in graphic, largely indicative format. They may represent an image of what a place would look like at conclusion of the development process, including best practice examples. These plans will often be the result of Development Assessments and Options Appraisals and may contain different scenarios. Key planning principles and requirements will be mapped out at this stage.

**Master Plans** set out a detailed three dimensional framework on the back of full-scale development and cost appraisals. Where appropriate, they will be incorporated into local plans. These plans include funding, phasing and implementation timescales. They will contain some element of flexibility, dependent on circumstances, but will create a definitive and firm framework for development. They should contain clear examples of the development quality sought.

**Urban Design Frameworks** set out a two-dimensional vision of how planning and design policies and principles should be implemented in a clearly defined area. Frameworks will often coordinate more detailed development briefs and master plans.

**Development Briefs** identify the key infrastructure, environmental and design requirements of the Council as well as any community benefits. Briefs will be in accordance with local planning policies and issues. They should contain clear graphic representation of the development quality being sought by the Council.

A **Development Prospectus** incorporates much of the same information as a development brief. The prospectus is also a

promotional tool containing other information relevant to inviting development partnerships for a site or area.

A **Design Code** sets out (with detailed drawings or diagrams) how urban design guidance and planning principles should be applied. It provides developers with a template for designing individual buildings within a specified area.

**Design Statements** are prepared by developers or designers to explain how their proposal might work. These can be requested by the Council for any planning application.

**Conservation Plans** define the character of a specific area, usually a conservation area. The plan also provides policy and design guidance and may also include an Action Plan of environmental improvements.

**Development Control** is the mechanism for guiding positive change and higher quality design. Discussion between the council and developer before an application is submitted is recommended. This will help to iron out any potential conflicts at an early stage in the development process, which in turn has the potential to save resources for both the developer and fast-track the application.

## Participation

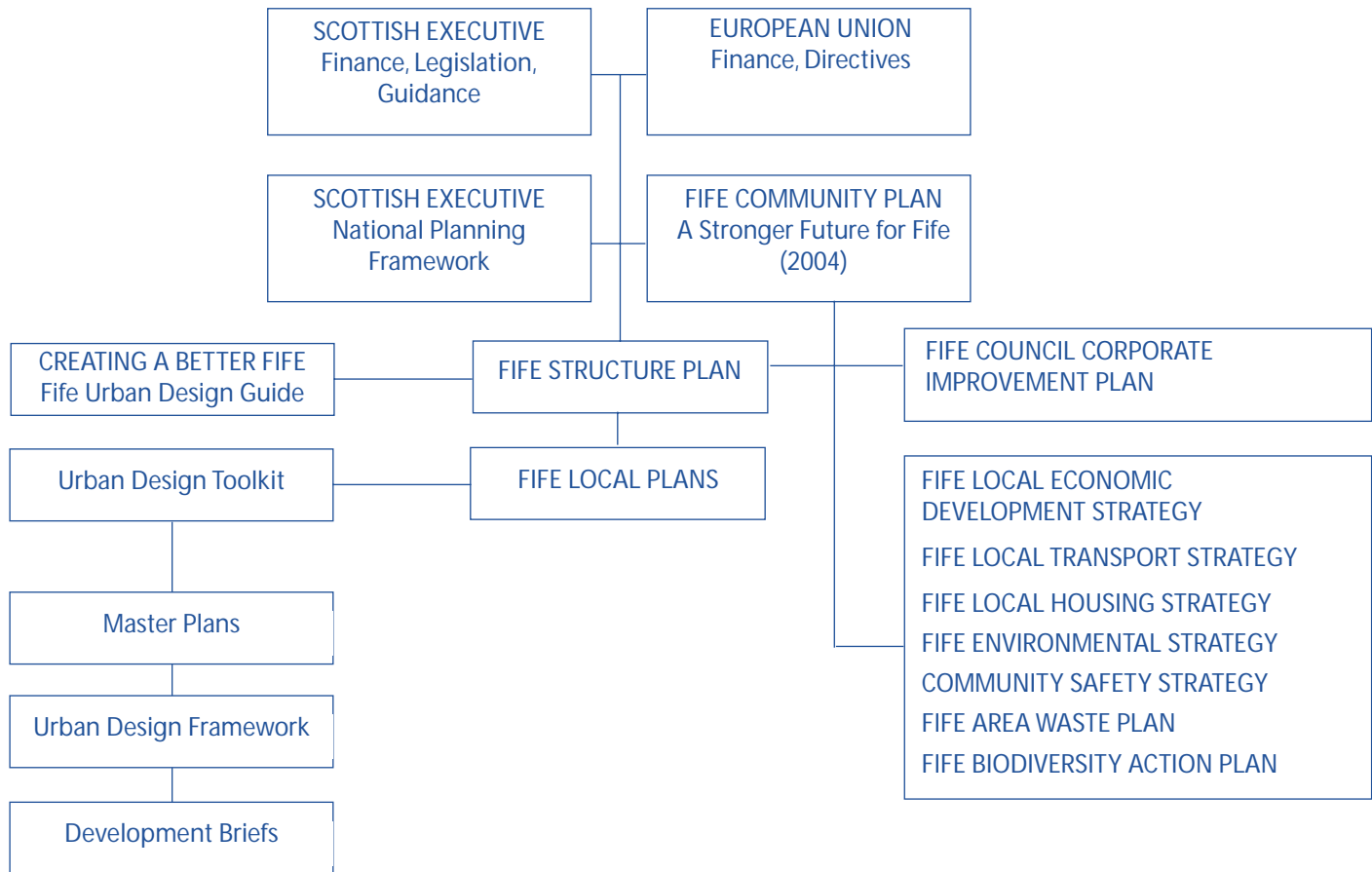
Public participation in the planning process is crucial. Local people should be involved where possible when using urban design guidance. This can include a wide range of people from developers and designers to community councils.

Refs: Scottish Executive (2001c), Urban Design Group (2002) and CABE (2003)

# THE PLANNING PROCESS

## Wider Planning Framework

The following diagram shows Creating a Better Fife and the urban design toolkit in the wider policy framework (described in Page 7 above):



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