

# Blairgowrie & Rattray Infrastructure Report

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## Working Document

November 2017

## **Introduction & Context**

Blairgowrie and Rattray is the largest settlement within Strathmore and the Glens. Tayplan classifies it as a Tier 2 settlement which directs the majority of proposed development to be directed to this area – playing a strategic role in the provision of residential and economic development in Perth and Kinross. Tourism plays a key role in employment provision and economic viability as the area is popular for golf, fishing and walking. The agricultural industry is also significant for the local economy.

There is robust community governance evident in the town. Groups such as One Voice, Blairgowrie and Rattray Community Council and numerous other community based organisations in addition to proactive business community continue to collaborate on projects which benefit the town. The settlement has a wide range of services and community facilities, including the recently built Connect@Rattray facility. Furthermore, there are plans for a replacement Recreation Centre at Blairgowrie High School and there is also space for recreational/community facilities proposed within the mixed used site at Blairgowrie West.

There are approximately 4557 residential properties within Blairgowrie & Rattray (PKC Corporate Address Gazetteer, 2017). With an average household size of 2.13 (based on Census trends) it is estimated that the settlement's current population is 9,706.

The Proposed Plan provides land for approximately 938 new houses to be built within the settlements and there are 96 more houses currently under construction. Therefore in total, 1034 houses within Blairgowrie & Rattray could potentially be built by 2028.\*

Based on Census trends, the average household size for the settlement will fall to 2.09 by 2028. It is estimated that as a result of new development, the population could increase to 11,685 by 2028, assuming that all properties are occupied.

Area	Current population estimate	Population estimate by 2028	Current residential properties estimate	Residential properties estimate by 2028
Blairgowrie/Rattray	9,706	11,685	4,557	5,591

*\*It should be noted that land for a total of 1034 houses is allocated market evidence suggest a slower build rate which is likely to result in the housing land supply lasting well beyond 2028. This will be regularly monitored however for the purposes of this report it is assumed that 1034 houses could be occupied by 2028.*

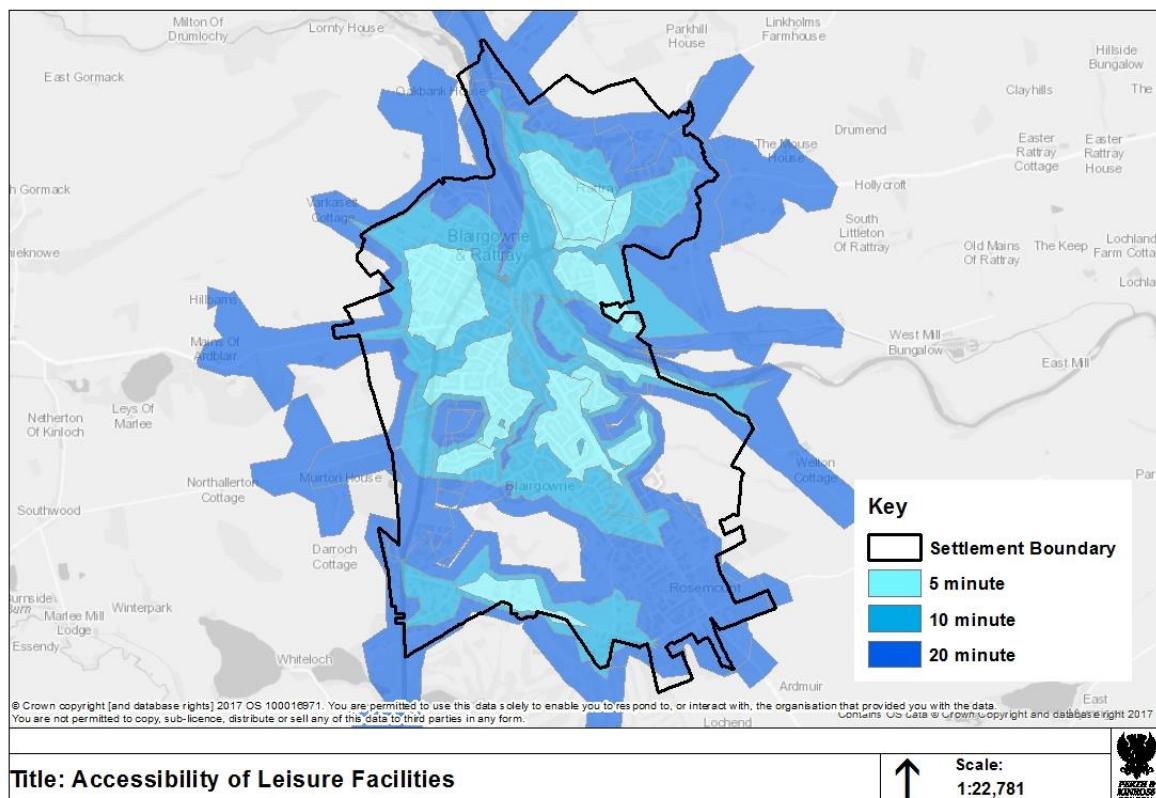
This infrastructure study has been undertaken to ensure that the infrastructure capacity within the area is adequate to support the level of growth envisaged within the LDP. This infrastructure capacity assessment will highlight the current infrastructure provisions within Blairgowrie & Rattray and any shortfall which could be addressed through the LDP or supplementary guidance.

### **1. Community Facilities and Recreation**

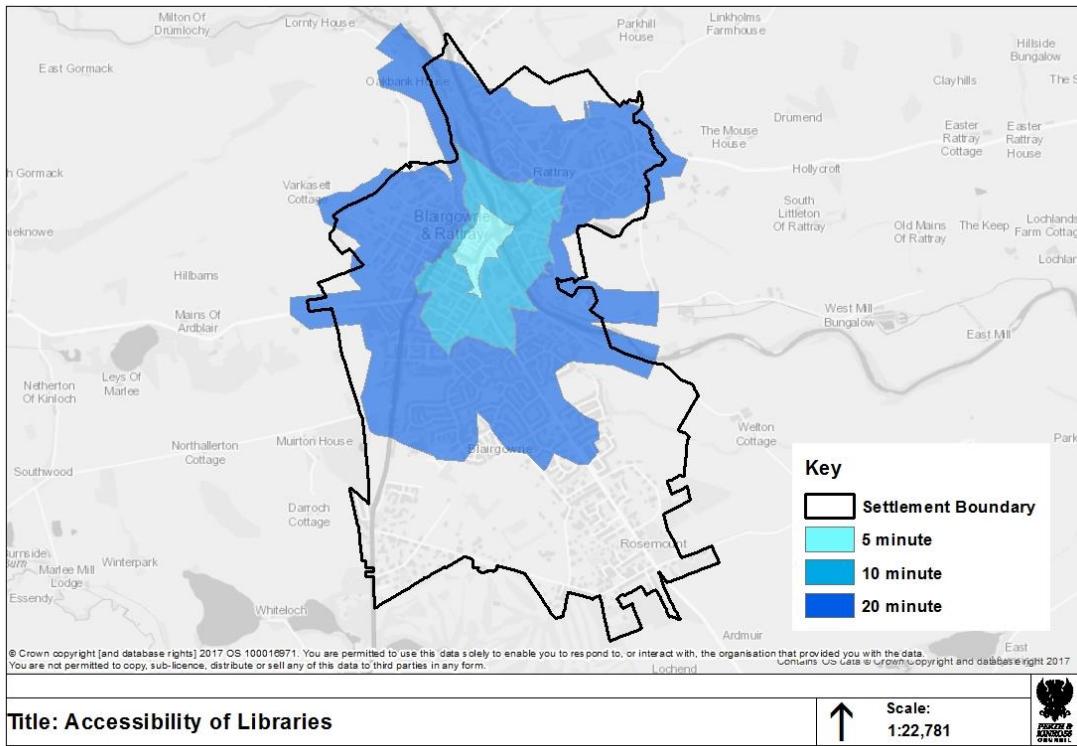
As populations are growing, there is an increased pressure on community facilities and capacity may need to be increased to satisfy the needs of residents. The cultural identity of a town is improved by community facilities being present as they offer opportunities for social interaction and they are important for local identity. This report will show the key local amenities in each town as well as their accessibility from different residential areas within the settlement.

Community sports facility and leisure activities	There are 10 community sport and Leisure facilities in Blairgowrie and Rattray.
ATMs	There are 8 ATMs in Blairgowrie and Rattray.
Petrol stations	There are 2 petrol stations in Blairgowrie and Rattray.
Libraries/mobile libraries	There is one library in Blairgowrie.
Community/town hall	There are 15 community halls in Blairgowrie and Rattray (including church halls and community buildings).
Post Offices	There is one post office in Blairgowrie and Rattray.
Public Houses & Hotels	There are 14 public houses and hotels in Blairgowrie and Rattray.
Recycling Points	There are 3 recycling points in Blairgowrie and Rattray.
Recycling Centres	There is one recycling centre in Blairgowrie and Rattray.
Council Offices	There are 2 Council offices in Blairgowrie and Rattray.

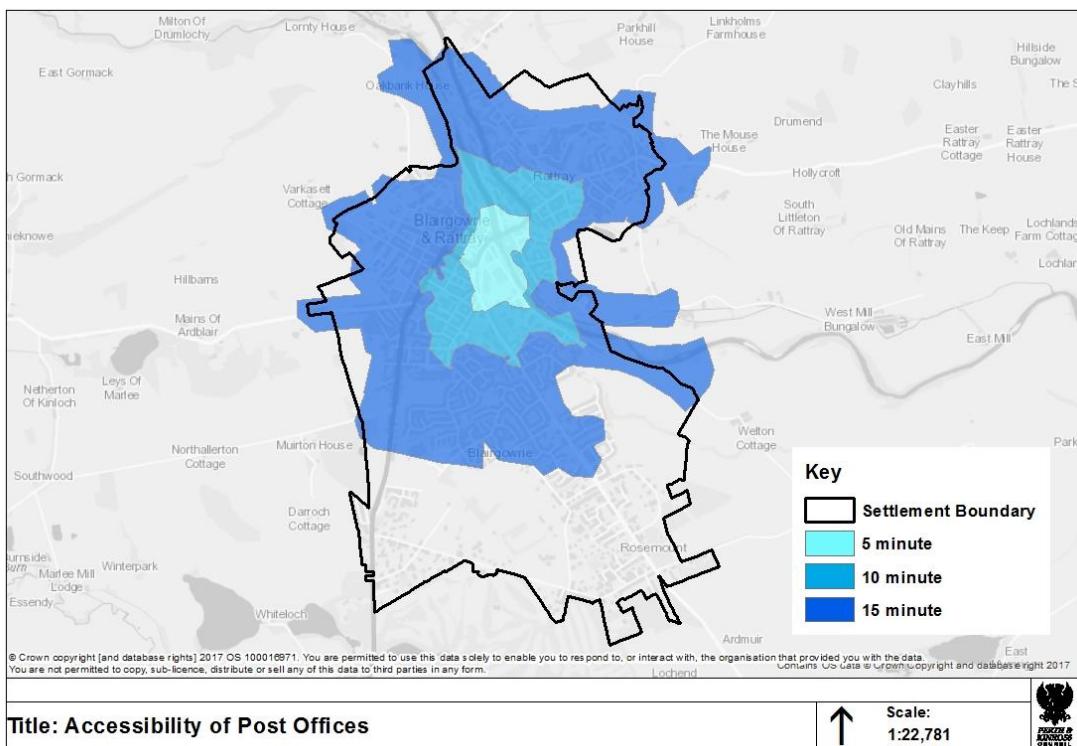
The table above highlights the provision of community facilities within Blairgowrie & Rattray at the time of the survey in 2015. The maps below show the accessibility of some of these services. The analysis highlights the number of properties that are within 5, 10 and 20 minutes walking distance to services.



4517 households are less than 20 minute walk from the nearest leisure facility in Blairgowrie & Rattray. This is **99%** of all households included in the survey.



3828 households are less than 20 minute walk from a library in Blairgowrie & Rattray. This is **84%** of all households included in the survey.



3943 households are less than 20 minute walk from a post office in Blairgowrie & Rattray. This is **86%** of all households included in the survey.

## 1.1 Implications for the Proposed Plan

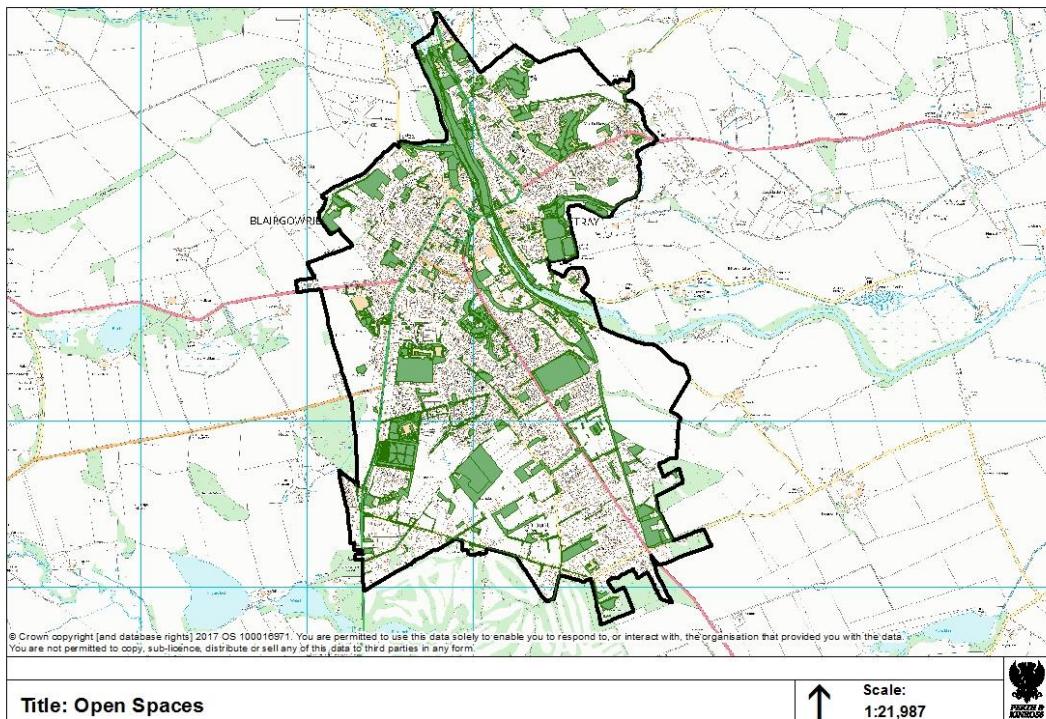
The analysis shows that Blairgowrie & Rattray has a wide range of community facilities and residents have good access to post offices, leisure as well as library facilities. However, there is an awareness that the variety and quality of leisure and recreational facilities need to improve. The Community Visioning Exercise held in 2016 - 'Your Town In Your Hands' - confirmed that leisure and recreation facilities are not fit for purpose and are often operating at full capacity.

The MIR of the Proposed Plan also highlighted this issue and suggested solutions. This includes the 4ha education/play provision within the MU5 allocated site which could be suitable for community facilities and a new public park. Furthermore, there are plans in place for a new replacement Leisure Centre at Blairgowrie High School.

## **2. Open Space**

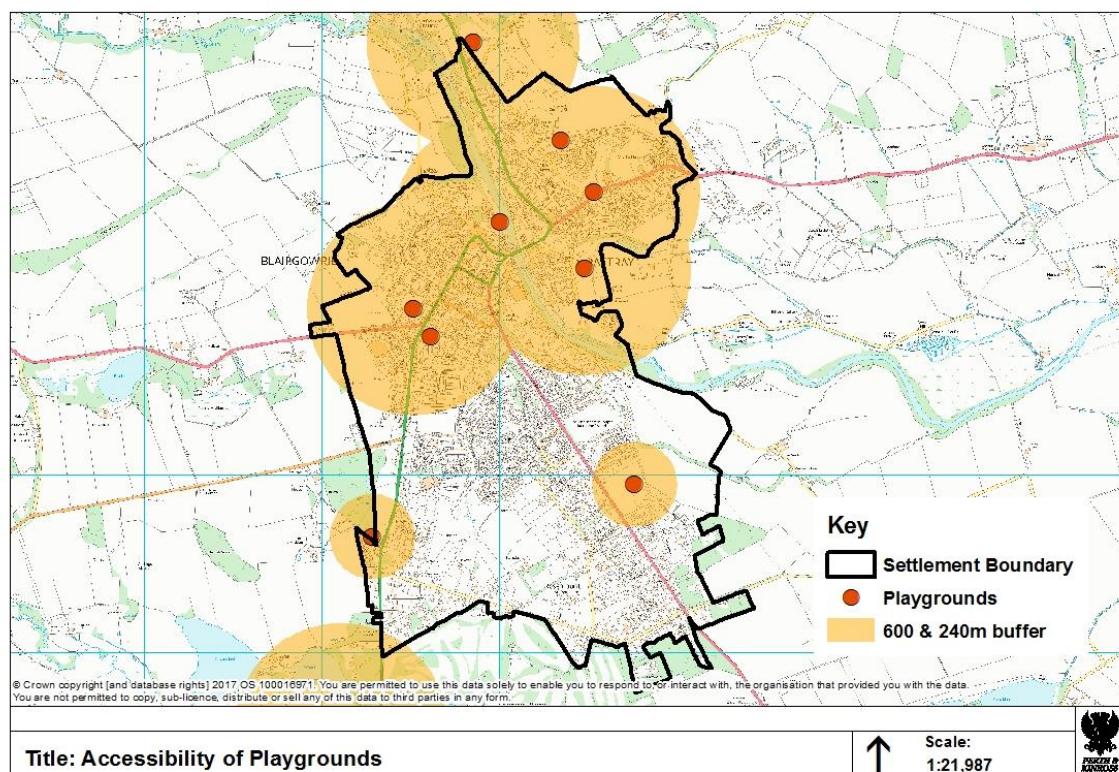
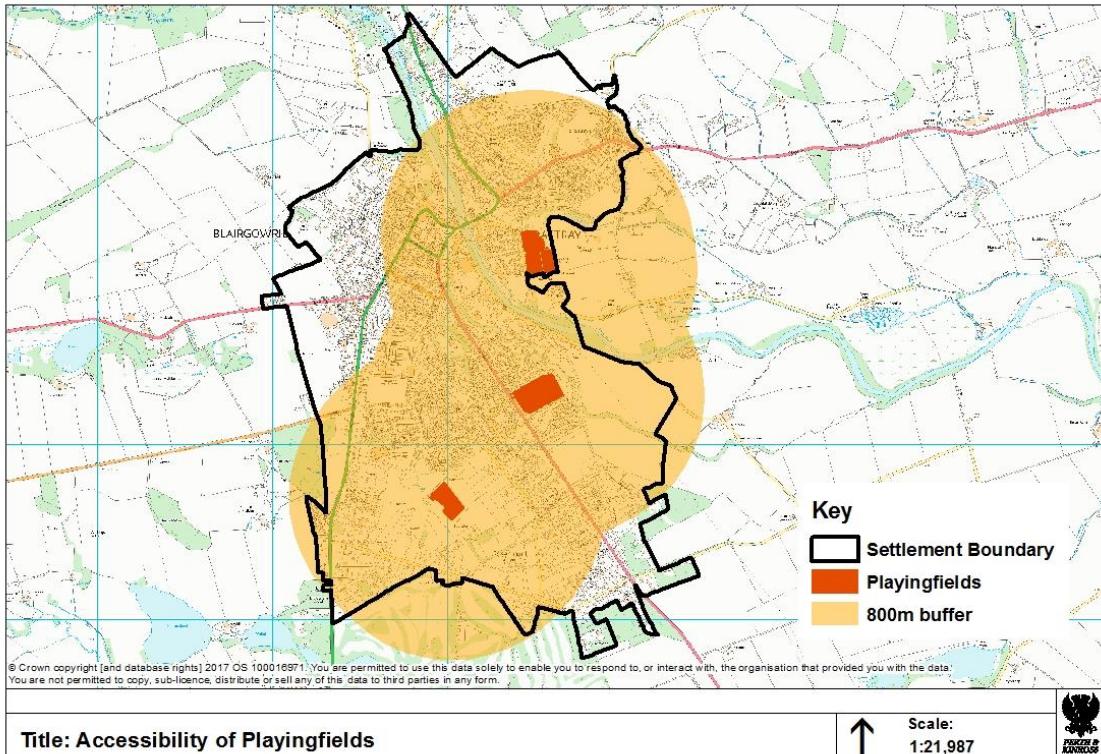
Open space is crucial within a settlement and adds value to the community for both recreational and amenity purposes. The natural environment is a valued national asset offering a wide range of opportunities for enjoyment. Open Space makes a positive contribution to quality of life by breaking up the built up urban areas and creates wildlife habitats which increases biodiversity. Open space should be present in every settlement and should be accessible by all residents. This study will comment on the suitability of the current open space provision in the face of population growth and highlight any shortfall which needs to be addressed.

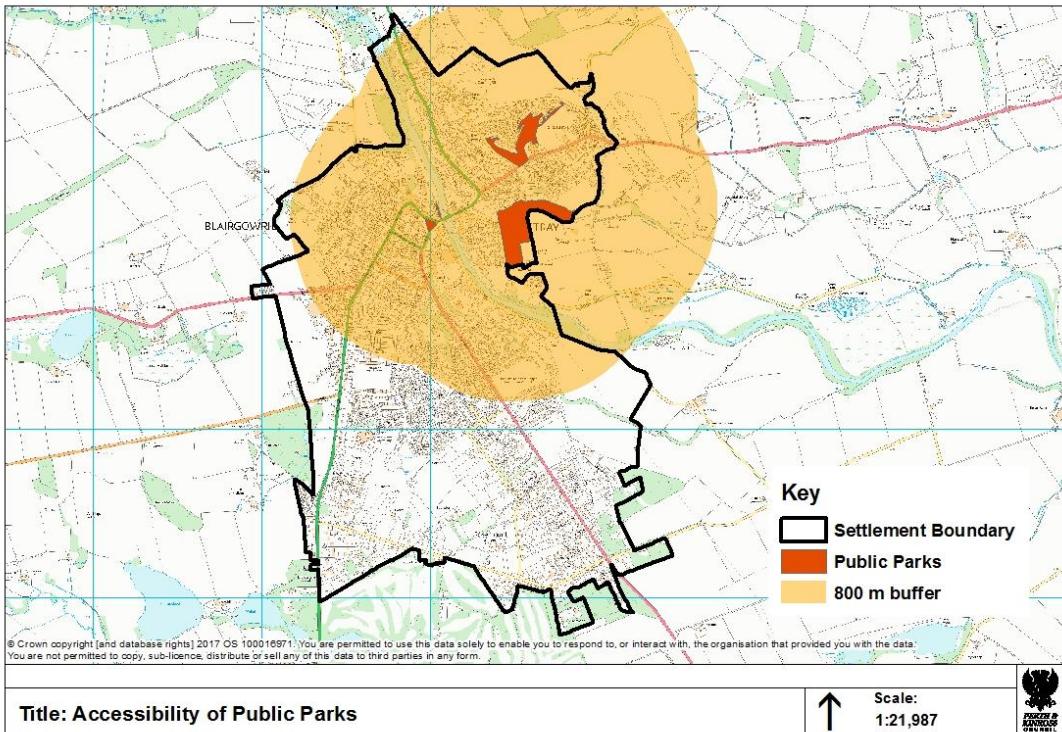
The map below highlights all the open space within Blairgowrie & Rattray which is used for outdoor activities and provide visual amenity for residents. The open space provision of the settlement is approximately 94.4 ha which is 9.7 ha / 1000 people.



In order to further develop our understanding of the provision of functional open spaces within the council area, an Open Space Audit has been developed examining the supply of playgrounds, playing fields and public parks.

## 2.1 Accessibility of Open Spaces





**85%** of people are within 10-15 minute walk of a playing field in Blairgowrie/Rattray. Besides the highlighted pitches, small kickabouts and school pitches also provides access to this function.

**73%** of people are within 10-15 minute walk from a public park or garden in Blairgowrie/Rattray. Besides these, there are number of residential amenity spaces across the settlement.

**72 %** of people are within a distance from playgrounds which is considered to be appropriate for children at target ages.

## 2.2 Cemetery Provision

There is less than 20 years capacity in Blairgowrie cemetery with no room for an extension at the existing cemetery. The Main Issue Report published in December 2015 highlighted this issue and identifies three possible sites for a new cemetery within Blairgowrie. Following the MIR consultation, the Council's preferred option for a new cemetery site is within the Eastern Expansion area. Should the Blairgowrie Eastern Expansion be promoted in the Proposed Plan, provision for a cemetery could be incorporated within the masterplan for this site, with the Council looking to work in collaboration with the landowner/developer to assess in detail the suitability for a cemetery site.

## 2.3 Implications for the Proposed Plan

The Proposed Plan safeguards existing open spaces such as playgrounds, playing fields, parks and cemeteries. The study also highlighted where there is a need for improvement in order to meet existing as well as future demand:

Playgrounds	The provision of playgrounds is slightly below the standard and their distribution results in uneven accessibility patterns throughout the settlement. An approximately additional 0.4ha would be required to offset the impact of growth which should be provided within new development sites where current accessibility is poor. The H64 site has the potential to provide a larger play space at a central, accessible location and the two mixed use site on the east and the west are also expected to increase the provision.
Playing Fields	While accessibility to sport facilities is good, the audit concluded that the additional space required to support population growth could accommodate one or two extra full sized sport pitches. The Proposed Plan requires the developer of the Blairgowrie East site to contribute to the expansion of the strategic playing fields and facilities at Rosemount. The Blairgowrie West site also has potential for the addition of a playing field or for further financial contribution towards the expansion of Rosemount.
Public Parks	The quantity of parkland meets the standard and Blairgowrie/Rattray has a high number of residential amenity spaces. At the same time, the addition of another formal public park would improve accessibility to this function. There is opportunity within the Blairgowrie West site to develop a larger area of open space which provides space for outdoor activities.
Cemeteries	There is a need for more cemetery space. The Proposed Plan indicates that part of the Blairgowrie East site should be retained for possible cemetery expansion.

Table 1. The table summarises the conclusion of the quantity and accessibility audit and the Future Cemetery Strategy.

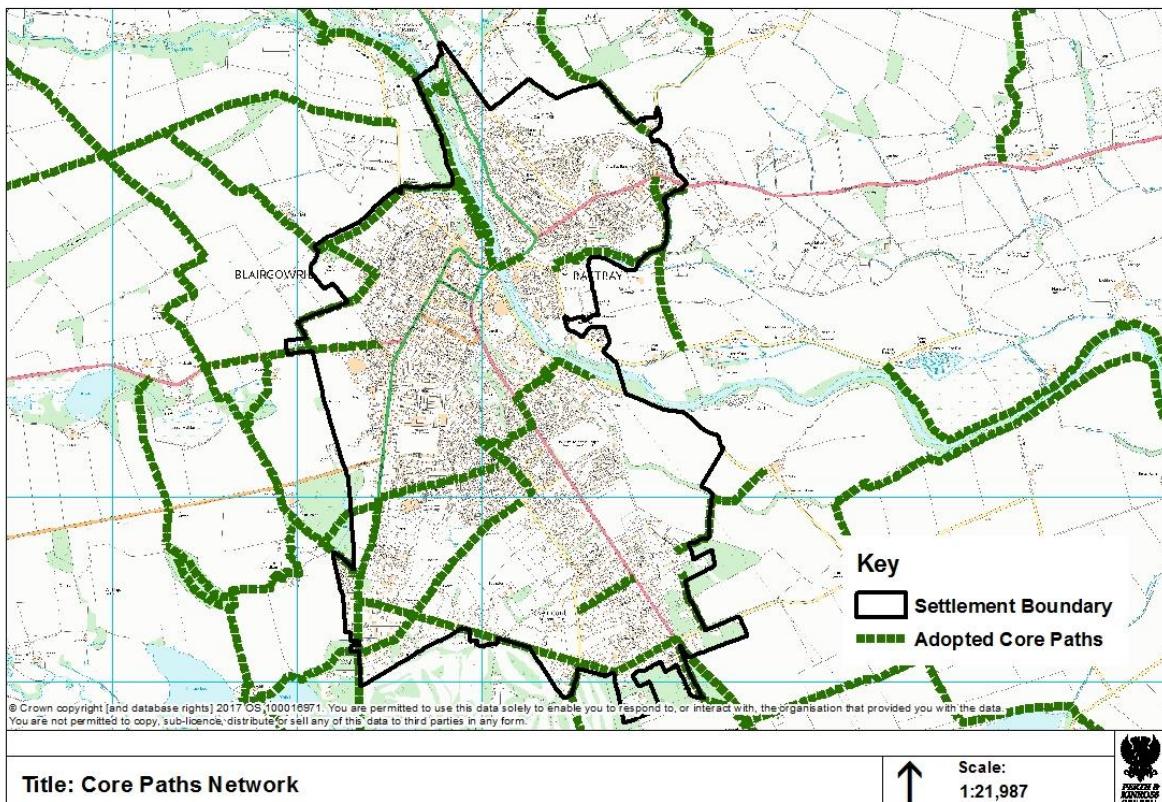
The Charrette exercise highlighted another priority for the settlement: to enhance the use of the riverside as a key recreational area. While the interest from the community is noted, currently there is no consensus on how or through what mechanisms this should be achieved.

### 3. Transport

This section aims to comment on the active and public transport networks in settlements. Furthermore, it will examine the capacity of the road network as well as the parking provision of towns.

#### 3.1 Walking

The map below suggests that Blairgowrie and Rattray, and the surrounding area, is well served by existing core paths. Proposed sites on the edge of the settlement provide opportunity for improving links towards the centre of the town where they can connect to walkways and pedestrianised streets. The settlement is part of the Cateran Trail route which is a 65 miles circuit touching on Glenisla and Glenshee.



In terms of the Town Centre, the Blairgowrie Charrette highlighted that a number of streets and junctions in the centre are biased towards car movement and have the potential to be rebalanced towards pedestrian activities. Recent changes to the junctions around the Wellmeadow area have improved traffic flow, reduced congestion and introduced dedicated signalised pedestrian crossing points.

### 3.2 Cycling

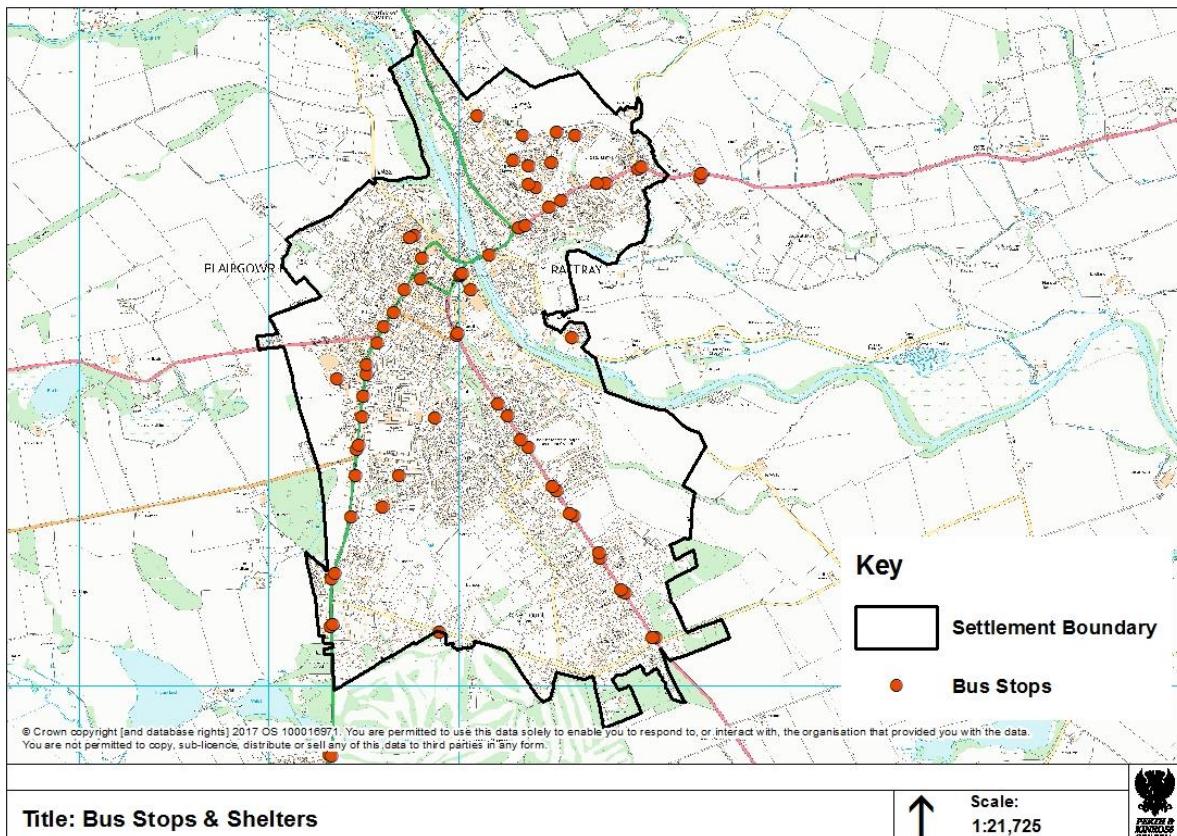
Blairgowrie and Rattray is not connected to the national cycle route and there are no dedicated cycle infrastructure. However, a significant number of the streets are relatively lightly trafficked and suitable for regular cycle users. On the other hand, new developments will be expected to provide adequate cycling facilities that improve the cycling provision (access including suitable routes and parking).

### 3.3 Public Transport

Blairgowrie & Rattray is well connected to other settlements by bus services. The 34A/B, the 57 and the 58 all provide bused into Perth with services every half hour. The journey takes approximately 45-55 minutes and there are services in the morning that may be used by commuters. In addition service 57 provide an hourly bus between Dundee and Blairgowrie with peak time journeys suitable for commuters. This journey takes approximately 65 minutes and also serves Alyth.

Blairgowrie has a Town Centre bus route (Service 63) which runs hourly and covers Rattray and Carsie as well. This service does not run on a Sunday and the latest bus is at 5pm

The map below marks bus stops and shelters within Blairgowrie & Rattray. For a visual representation of bus routes, see Appendix A.



### 3.4 Road Capacity

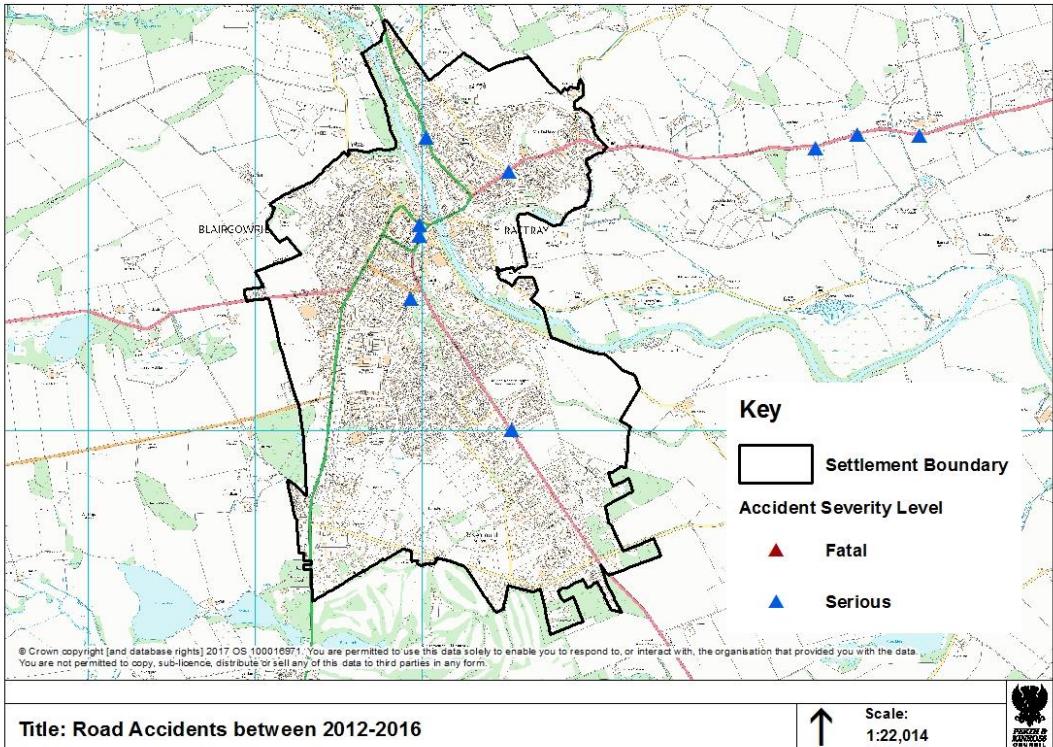
A micro-simulation traffic model was created in 2014 to assess the current and future operation of the local road network in Blairgowrie and Rattray which demonstrated that with suitable mitigation measures there was sufficient capacity to accommodate the anticipated development.

This model was used to revise the junction arrangements around Wellmeadow with signalised junctions replaced with priority junctions and dedicated signalised pedestrian crossings installed. This resulted in improved traffic flow and reduced congestion.

The traffic impacts of all significant development proposals will be tested using the model.

### 3.5 Accident Records

The map below shows accidents in Blairgowrie & Rattray over a four year period. There have been 6 accidents between 2012 and 2016 none of which were fatal. Trend within the council area show a decreasing in the number of traffic accidents.



### 3.6 Parking

There are four council run car parks in Blairgowrie as well as on street parking and there have been no significant issues raised in Blairgowrie and Rattray with regards to parking. The car park on Leslie Street (adjacent to the library) is equipped with Electric Vehicle charging facilities.

### 3.7 Implications for the Proposed Plan

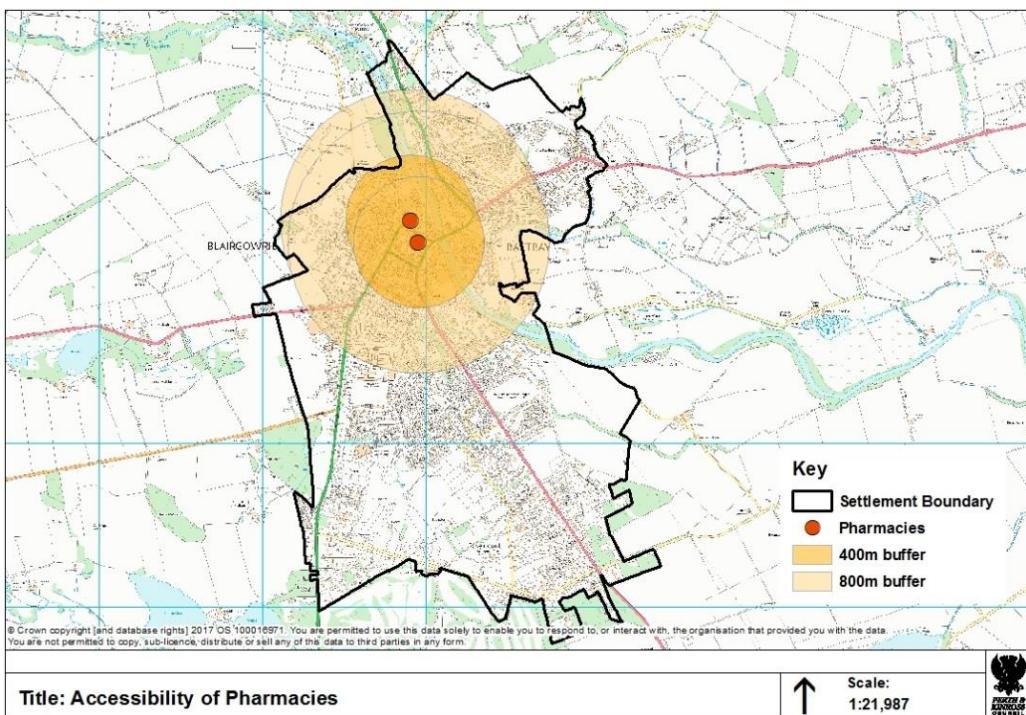
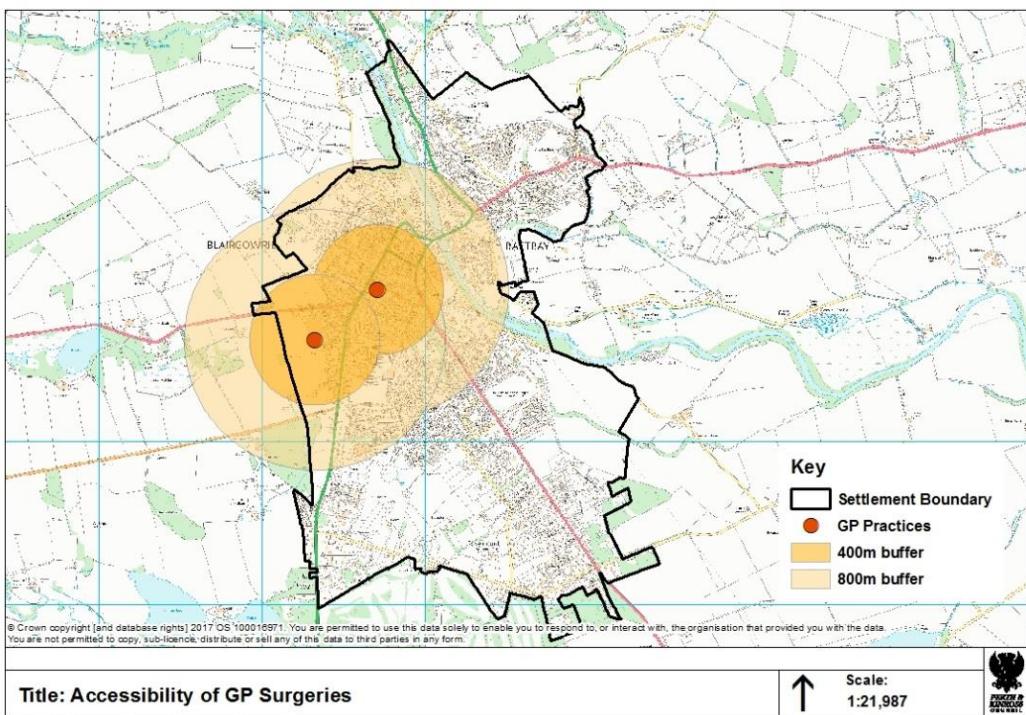
As the study shows, Blairgowrie is well served by the Core Path Network and the Proposed Plan ensures that opportunities will be taken to create further linkages by new development. The Blairgowrie Charrette highlighted that a number of streets and junctions in the town centre are biased towards car movement and have the potential to be rebalanced towards pedestrian activities.

Data suggests that the road capacity will be able to support future development and there are also good public transport connections to Perth. Other towns however (e.g. Dundee) are not as well connected to Blairgowrie & Rattray. During the Charrette process, residents have also mentioned the lack of shelters, bicycle racks and seating at bus stops as some of the issues which could be addressed.

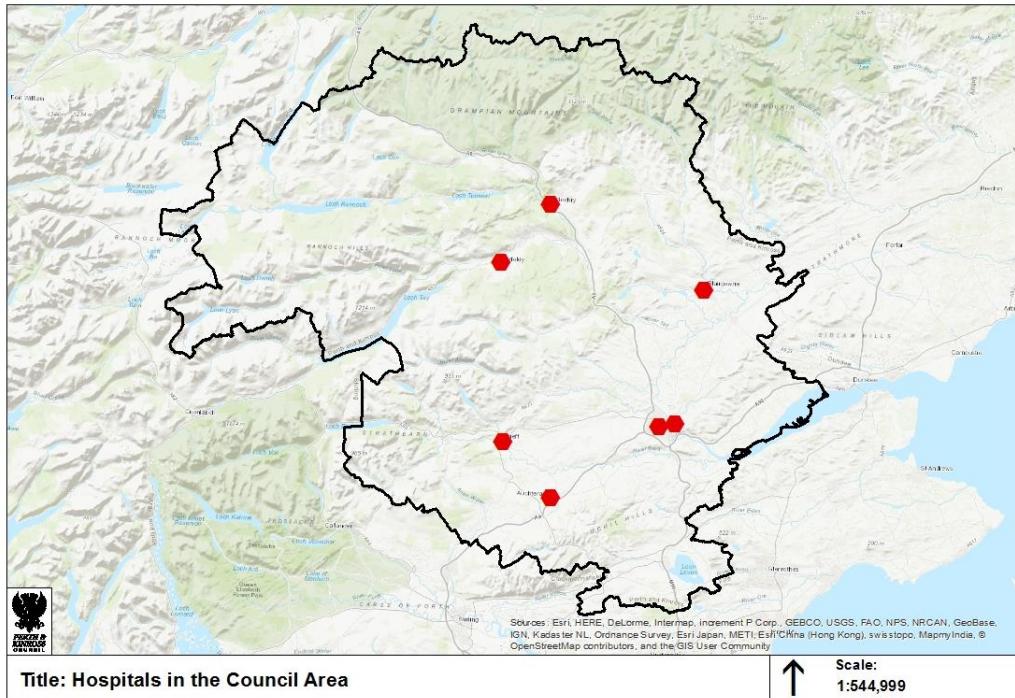
## **3. Health**

For a community to thrive is it essential to have good access to healthcare. The Council works closely with partners in the NHS to ensure that this can delivered and that consideration is given to the impact of future development on exiting services.

Within Blairgowrie and Rattray there are **two pharmacies and two GP surgeries**. Both GP surgeries have capacity and there are no plans for development, re-location or closure of either of these facilities. There is also currently one dentist within Blairgowrie providing NHS services. However it is important to note that dentists operate a private business and are out with the control of the NHS.



The maps show the walking distance to pharmacies & GP surgeries. The survey shows that **58%** of households are within a 10-15 minute and 23% are within a 5-7 minute radius from pharmacies. In case of GPs, **52%** of households are within 10-15 minute radius and 25% are within a 5-7 minute radius from surgeries. Those living further away from these facilities may access it by public transport as there is a frequent bus service running through the settlement.



The map shows the location of hospitals within Perth and Kinross. Blairgowrie has a Cottage Hospital with a 17 bedded GP unit, visitor accommodation and a mental health team. From Blairgowrie and Rattray there are also good connections to Perth and Dundee where patients with more serious issues may be referred.

#### 4.1 Implications for the proposed plan

NHS Tayside considered to the current GP capacity appropriate although one GP surgery did expressed some concern about dealing with the number of additional people if the MU5 site gets developed.

### **5. Education**

In order to support future growth in a settlement it is essential to have sufficient education provision. Through the School Estates Plan the Council seeks to accommodate this future growth taking account of population projections and future housing levels through the Local Development Plan. The Council has adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance on Developer Contributions which secures contributions from new residential development within the catchments of primary schools with a projected capacity constraint. The guidance provides an annual update relating to the likely impact of future identified housing on the school estate.

Blairgowrie High School and Rattray Primary School have capacity to support future projected levels of growth. The available capacity Newhill Primary School may be impacted on through the level of projected growth but this will depend on the speed at which it is completed. The Council will continue to review the build rate of development within the catchment and where appropriate will secure financial contributions towards additional school capacity. Additionally Council run nursery classes are available at Newhill Primary School and Cornerstone Montessori is a Council partner nursery provider within Perth and Kinross.

### **6. Retail and Employment**

Both retail and employment are significant aspects of the development of any town or village. Perth and Kinross Council complete an annual Employment Land Audit provides information on how much land there is available, where it is and whether it is available for development which allows us to assess the employment land uptake in the

areas and establish whether or not there is a need to provide more employment land to facilitate economic growth in the area.

This report shows that there is a total of 17 hectares of employment land within Blairgowrie and Rattray and both sites allocated in the Proposed Plan are marketable. The take up of allocated sites will be closely monitored to establish whether or not there is a need for further employment land within the area.

To measure retail capacity within Perth and Kinross a Town Centre and Retail Study was undertaken in 2016. This investigated whether or not there was a need for more land to be allocated for retail uses and contained the town centre health checks. This study concluded that Blairgowrie & Rattray has a good balance of shops and services with low vacancy rates at 6.3%.

The main challenge for the town will be to retain the exiting retail and service offer within the town and to maintain the quality of the town centre environment. It suggests that some improvements could be made to the choice and quality of the shops but that there is no requirement for significantly more retail floorspace. At the same time, there is local aspiration for a discount operator within the town. The Charrette process also revealed some demand for flexible workspaces in the town centre for artists and creative businesses.

#### 4.1 Implications for the Proposed Plan

The study did not highlight any issues with the amount of land for employment uses and retail. The Retail Study suggests that the choice and quality of shops could improve further. The Blairgowrie visioning exercise flagshipped some buildings which could accommodate creative businesses function as event spaces and host tourism related facilities, increasing the vibrancy of the town centre.

### **7. Energy and Water**

It is important that all new and existing development can be served by key infrastructure including electricity, gas and water treatment works. The analysis below suggests that the exiting community is well served but that there may be a need for improvements to facilitate future growth.

#### 7.1 Water Network Capacity

There is sufficient capacity at the water works in Blairgowrie and Rattray.

#### 7.2 Waste Water Network Capacity

There is capacity at the waste water work within Blairgowrie and Rattray as of September 2015. However if all the development within the LDP were to come forward a growth project would be required to accommodate all development.

#### 7.3 Is the opportunity to connect to the national grid?

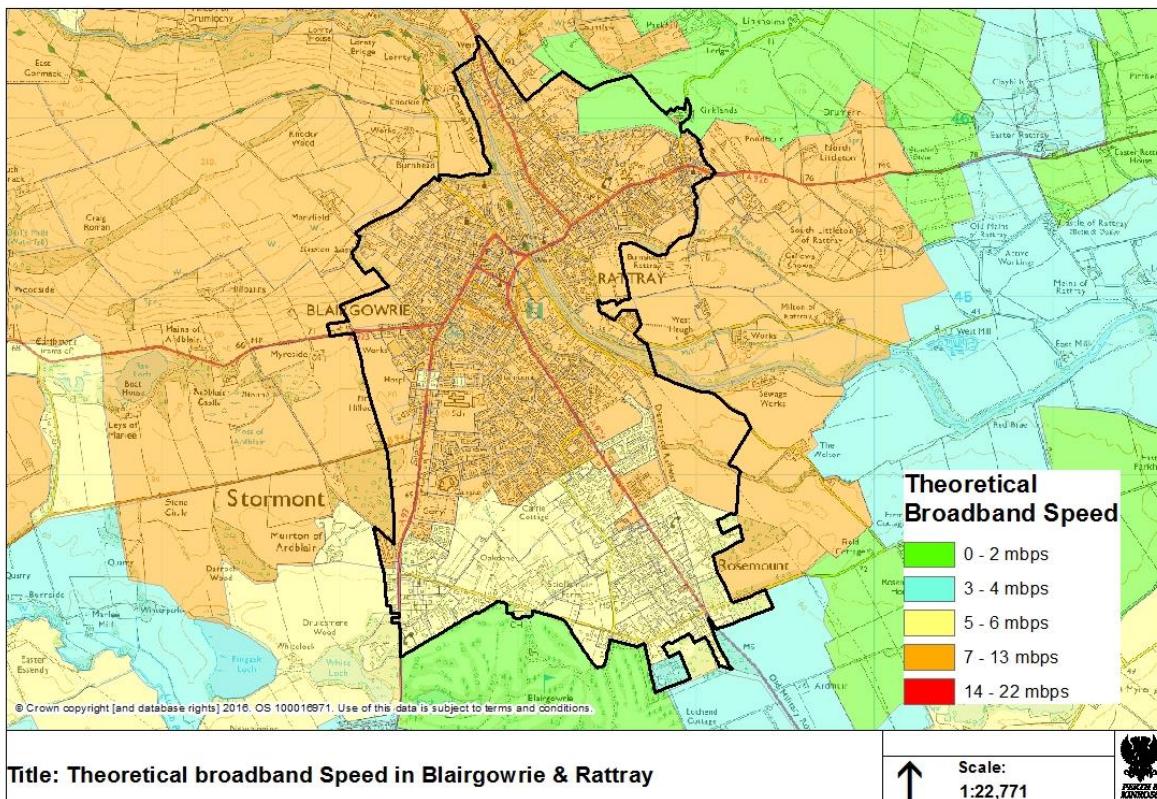
Properties within Blairgowrie and Rattray are connected to the national grid.

#### 7.4 Is the opportunity to connect to gas supply?

Most properties within Blairgowrie and Rattray are served by gas mains.

## 7.5 Access to High Speed Broadband

Fibre broadband has been deployed within Blairgowrie and Rattray. The vast majority of premises will be covered, although not necessarily all (Digital Scotland, Scottish Government). The map shows that the settlement has 7-13mbps speed on most locations with some areas in the south having 5-6mbps speed.



## Conclusions

Blairgowrie and Rattray together form the largest town in the Council area and have the potential to make a significant contribution to the regional economy. They provide a range of community services, facilities, employment opportunities and shopping provision. The town's leisure and recreation provision which was highlighted as an issue in the study is going to be improved by the replacement Recreation Centre and the Blairgowrie West site also provides opportunity for improved outdoor recreation facilities.

Blairgowrie & Rattray has significant open space assets and the Proposed Plan safeguards a number of functional and amenity spaces. There is however scope to develop new public parks within the MU5 site and provide additional play spaces and a playingfield. There is also aspiration in the community to make the most out of the potential of the river and provide new tourist attractions along its banks.

The town centre remains fairly vibrant with various independent shops and key services available. Numerous convenience food stores are available within the town centre, as well as a recent larger Tesco supermarket which has allowed the convenience retail spend to stay within the area. Besides this the community expressed demand for flexible creative workplaces and a discount food store operator.

The conclusion can be drawn that Blairgowrie and Rattray has a potential to accommodate future growth and improve the current infrastructure. The shortfalls and opportunities highlighted in a number of studies and through the Charrette process have been summarised here. While the Proposed Plan have addressed some of these points it

is expected that a number of improvement will require a project based approach that stakeholder can work on collaboratively.

SWOT Analysis	
<b>Strengths</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proactive community and business-based organisations</li> <li>• Offers a good quality of life to residents with accessible community services and facilities, including the community hospital and community campus</li> <li>• Fairly vibrant town centre with a range of independent shops, convenience food stores, and key services</li> <li>• Strong agricultural industry in the surrounding area</li> <li>• Capacity within schools to support additional development</li> <li>• Good bus services to Perth</li> <li>• Quality landscape and townscape setting</li> </ul>	<b>Weaknesses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leisure and recreation facilities are not fit for purpose and are often operating at full capacity</li> <li>• Limited bus services beyond Perth and locally between Blairgowrie &amp; Rattray in the evenings/ Sundays</li> <li>• Lack of facilities at bus stops (shelters, seating, bicycle rack)</li> <li>• Emphasis on cars over pedestrians in town centre</li> <li>• Some underutilised buildings in the town centre</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demand for a discount food operator in the town</li> <li>• Potential to improve, upgrade and expand leisure and recreation facilities, and to enhance the use of the riverside as a key recreational area</li> <li>• Potential to provide additional cemetery provision through new development</li> <li>• Potential to create a new a public park, playgrounds and an additional football pitch</li> <li>• Potential to make town centre more pedestrian friendly</li> <li>• Expansion of the Welton Road industrial area</li> <li>• Potential to repurpose underutilised buildings</li> <li>• Growing population support town centre viability</li> </ul>	<b>Threats</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased reliance on cars</li> <li>• Town Centre becomes more difficult to navigate for pedestrians &amp; cyclists</li> <li>• Buildings not meeting their full potential</li> </ul>

## **Appendix A: Bus routes serving Blairgowrie & Rattray**

