

PROVISION OF RECREATIONAL OPEN
SPACE IN NEW HOUSING

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING
DOCUMENT

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BACKGROUND

This section sets out the role that a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has in the development plan system and sets out the context for the Provision of Recreational Open Space in New Housing SPD.

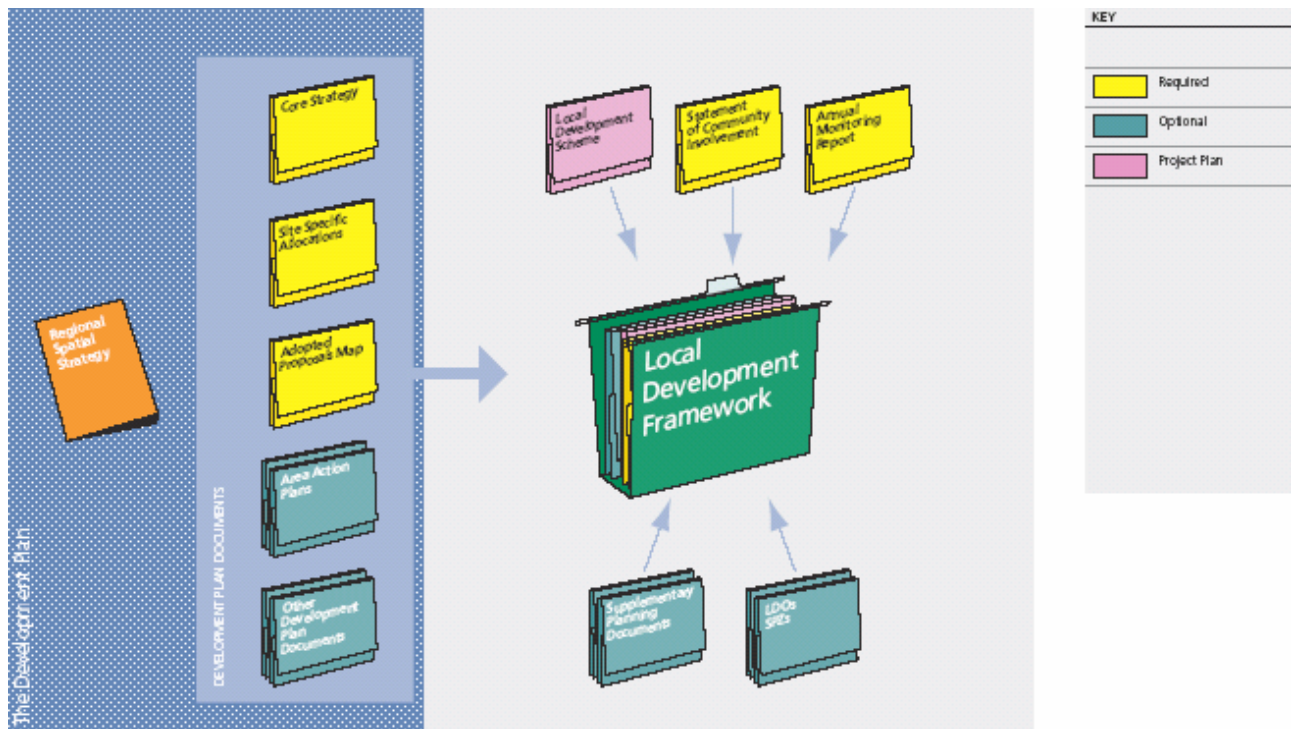
What is an SPD?

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced a change to the statutory development plan system. Local development frameworks must replace existing development plans prepared under the 1999 Development Plan Regulations.

Unitary Development Plans (UDPs) and local development frameworks are intended to streamline the local planning process and promote a proactive, positive approach to managing development.

A local development framework comprises a series of local development documents, which include development plan documents, which are part of the statutory development plan and supplementary planning documents which expand policies set out in a development plan document or provide additional detail.

The key documents which form part of the local development framework are illustrated in the diagram below.



Supplementary planning documents may cover a range of issues, both thematic and site specific, which may expand policy or provide further detail to policies in a development plan document. They must not however, be used to allocate land. Supplementary planning documents may take the form of design guides, area development briefs, master plan or issue-based documents, which supplement policies in a development plan document. The following principles apply to a supplementary planning document:

- i. it must be consistent with national and regional planning policies as well as the policies set out in the development plan documents contained in the local development framework;
- ii. it must be clearly cross-referenced to the relevant development plan document policy which it supplements (or, before a relevant development plan document has been adopted, a saved policy);
- iii. it must be reviewed on a regular basis alongside reviews of the development plan document policies to which it relates; and
- iv. the process by which it has been prepared must be made clear and a statement of conformity with the statement of community involvement must be published with it.

Although they are not subject to independent examination, SPDs must be subjected to rigorous procedures of community involvement.

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT: PROVISION OF RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACE IN NEW HOUSING

Policy Context

The following are national planning documents which should be taken into account when local authorities are formulating requirements in respect of recreational open space.

Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development (2005)

This document promotes sustainable patterns of urban and rural development, strong vibrant communities and the promotion of health and well-being. It makes it clear that high quality and inclusive design should be the aim of all those involved in the development process.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (2002)

This document takes the view that well designed and implemented planning policies for open space and sport and recreation are fundamental to delivering broader Government objectives, including the promotion of social and community cohesion and health and well being. It indicates that good quality audits and assessments are essential to informed strategies, allowing local authorities to identify quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses in provision.

PPG17 allows open space standards to be set at a local level, to allow for local differences, and thus Rochdale's standard (2.1 hectares per 1000 population) may be different from other authorities. The documents sets out a protective stance towards existing recreational open space, with particular importance placed on open space and sports and recreational facilities which are of high quality, or are of particular importance to the local community.

In terms of deficiencies identified by strategies, this document introduces the concept of planning obligations being used as a means to remedy local deficiencies in quantity or quality. Local authorities, it says, will be justified in seeking planning obligations where the quantity or quality of provision is inadequate or under threat, or where new development increases local needs, although it is essential that they have undertaken detailed assessments of needs and audits of existing facilities and set appropriate local standards, as is the case at Rochdale.

**Assessing Needs and Opportunities: A Companion Guide to PPG17
(2002)**

This documents sets out ways in which authorities can undertake local assessments of need and audits of provision, and guidance on procedures / best practice for recreational open space improvements through new housing developments.

It should be noted that other Planning Policy Statements, such as PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation should also be taken into consideration when assessing recreational open space provision.

The Natural Environment and Communities Act (NERC) 2006 requires every public authority, in exercising its functions, to have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.

**UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY H/6: PROVISION OF
RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACE IN NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT**

New housing developments will be required to make adequate provision for recreational open space by applying a standard of 2.1 hectares per 1000 population. This will be achieved through the following requirements:

- a. Proposals comprising 100 or more bedrooms should include on-site provision.*
- b. Proposals comprising less than 100 bedrooms will be required to make a contribution, through a commuted sum, to off site provision.*

Subject to assessment, the above requirement may be waived/reduced/varied in those circumstances where a housing proposal arises in an area where the existing recreational open space is sufficient to cater for existing need as well as that arising from the development.

Recreational open space that is provided on-site should be capable of providing for the desired range of recreational activity in terms of size, shape location, slope and layout for use by the residents of the proposed development. In some cases this will include facilities for children's play, having regard to the Council's strategy for play facilities across the Borough and the suitability of the site to accommodate such a facility. Use of the land should not be restricted to such residents. Incidental landscaping does not count towards this provision.

The commuted sum for off-site provision would need to be directly related to providing or improving an area of open space that is fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development proposal, and is therefore of direct benefit to the occupiers of the new development.

Unless other ways of securing the maintenance of the open space are agreed with the Council, the developer will be expected to enter into a legal agreement to secure the maintenance of the site for an agreed period. Such

agreements will relate only to those areas of outdoor sports provision and local open space which have been provided or improved for the direct benefit of residents of the new development.

Exceptions to these requirements for open space provision will be made in the case of sheltered housing and other housing developed specifically for elderly persons.

Existing Local Strategies which will inform the required provision of recreational open space in new housing developments

Playing Pitch Assessment (2003).

A Policy for Play and Freetime in the Borough of Rochdale.

Green Infrastructure Strategy (due late 2008).

Play and Freetime Strategy (in preparation).

Local strategies such as Community Strategies and Local Area Agreements also set out targets for the improvement of open space and recreation provision.

Summary of Aims

- To ensure the provision of detailed guidance in respect of planning policy for recreational open space, to assist developers, planners and others.

Summary of Objectives

- To give clarity to developers as to what will be expected of them in terms of on-site recreational open space facilities.
- To help secure the provision of high quality, appropriate amenity open space for new high-density developments.
- To help secure safe and convenient access to children's play facilities to all residents of new housing developments.
- To help improve formal recreational open space provision in the Borough.
- To help ensure that recreational open spaces are designed and laid out to an acceptable standard.
- To help ensure that contributions for off-site recreational open space are calculated fairly in accordance with the Council's standards and spent appropriately.
- To help enhance the environment and biodiversity of new housing developments.

INTRODUCTION

The main national planning guidance document in respect of recreational open space, namely Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Planning For Open Space, Sport and Recreation, emphasises the benefits of recreational open space in terms of sustainable patterns of urban and rural development, strong vibrant communities and the promotion of health and well-being. PPG17 also emphasises the importance of good quality assessments and audits. Local authorities, it says, should aim to ensure networks of accessible, high quality open spaces and sport and recreation facilities which are fit for purpose and economically and environmentally sustainable.

Policy H/6 – Provision of Recreational Open Space in New Housing Development – of Rochdale Council’s adopted Unitary Development Plan sets out the Council’s requirements for recreational open space in respect of new housing developments. It makes it clear that all developments of less than 100 bedrooms will be expected to make financial contributions in respect of the offsite provision / improvement of recreational open space, and all those developments containing 100 bedrooms or more will be expected to make some recreational open space provision on the site. The UDP makes an important distinction between ‘Local Open Space’ and ‘Outdoor Sports Provision’, and notes that recreational open space will be expected to be provided in accordance with the Council’s standard, i.e. 2.1 hectares of recreational open space per 1000 population, being 1 hectare Local Open Space and 1.1 hectares Outdoor Sports Provision.

The purpose of this Supplementary Planning Document is to expand upon and provide further detail in respect of the requirements of policy H/6. In the case of on-site provision of recreational open space, several main areas of detail will be covered by this document, one being outlining the thresholds beyond which particular types of children’s play equipment will be expected to be provided. Additionally, guidance on the types of on-site spaces which would be acceptable and design criteria for these spaces will help developers to make provision in a more imaginative and informed way, ensuring that it is integrated into the design from the start rather than constituting a ‘tick box’ exercise. In the case of contributions being made for off-site provision, the document will outline exactly how these would be expected to be calculated, also outlining expected procedures and mechanisms for the collection, management and spending of these contributions, with the ultimate aim of ensuring that the money is used to mitigate the increased pressure upon existing facilities in the local area as a result of the new population and spent in the most effective and efficient way.

All decisions in respect of recreational open spaces should be informed by the relevant Council strategies, which will indicate the areas in which provision is deficient, and the priorities expressed in the Township Action Plans should

also be taken into account. Assessments and audits of recreational open space in Rochdale which are currently available are the Playing Pitch Assessment and the Play and Freetime Policy, and these are soon to be supplemented by a Green Infrastructure Strategy (late 2008) and a Play and Freetime Strategy. The information contained within these documents can show where there are shortfalls in both quantity and quality of provision. Another reference should be the requirements of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) in respect of green infrastructure.

The provisions of this document will apply to all residential developments, regardless of location, including conversions of existing buildings to residential use and where areas of housing are demolished and replaced by new dwellings. The requirements of policy H/6 of the UDP and this document are based on the Council's standards for recreational open space, which relate to specific areas per 1000 population; the Council will apply the provisions of this document on the basis of an estimated population for each development, which will equate to the number of bedrooms in the development (1 person per bedroom). If it is unclear from plans whether a room constitutes a bedroom or not, it would be at the Council's discretion to decide whether or not the room in question should be counted as a bedroom.

The Definition of Recreational Open Space for the purposes of this document

The National Playing Fields Association (NPFA – now known as Fields in Trust - FIT) definition of recreational open space is: “space which is available for sport, active recreation, or children’s play, which is of suitable size and nature for its intended purpose and safely accessible and available to the general public”.

The Council’s Unitary Development Plan suggests that there are many kinds of outdoor recreational and leisure uses and areas of different size, location and character that can come under the umbrella of open space. Many of these could be regarded as having a recreational function. As well as providing opportunities for organised sport, informal and passive recreation, these open spaces make an essential contribution to the quality and character of the urban fabric, support urban regeneration, and improve the quality of life in the Borough.

Local Open Space generally comes into two categories:

1. Children’s play facilities. There are three broad categories of site, based on the guidance provided by the National Playing Field Associations’ suggested standards. These are:
 - (i) LAP (Local Area for Play) – a small area of open space specifically designed for young children for play activities close to where they live;
 - (ii) LEAP (Locally Equipped Area for Play) - Mainly for unaccompanied children aged 4 to 8 although consideration should also be given to the needs of supervised children up to 4 years and unaccompanied children slightly older than 8. There should be at least 5 types of equipment appropriate to the age group;
 - (iii) NEAP (Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play) – Mainly for unaccompanied and unsupervised children between 8 and 14, with consideration for slightly younger supervised or accompanied children, older children and those with special needs. A minimum of 8 types of play equipment appropriate to the age group, as well as a kickabout area, wheeled play opportunities and seating.
2. Areas of informal open space which provide opportunities for recreation to people of all ages. These provide opportunities for informal games

and other passive recreation (e.g. walking) and have general amenity value.

Both of these can potentially be put forward as part or all of the on-site provision required from a particular development, and can be targeted for the expenditure of financial contributions obtained from developers. However, it is important to note that in most cases developments of more than 100 bedrooms will be expected to provide some sort of children's play facility on site (see below). The provision of informal open space on site might also provide the dual benefit of not just providing recreational value but also preserving a feature of natural interest / biodiversity value on the site, for example an old mill lodge, a pond or an area of woodland.

Contributions towards off-site provision / improvement of Local Open Space can, where appropriate, be used to improve informal green spaces, woodlands and walking / cycling routes. It is acceptable for these monies to be spent on capital improvements to local parks.

Outdoor Sports Provision is usually the provision of formal sports pitches which are clearly laid out for that purpose, available for public use and frequently used for supervised activities. Examples include tennis courts, bowling greens, sports pitches, athletic tracks, school and other institutional playing fields and other outdoor sports areas.

The provision of amenity or incidental landscaping not intended for recreation will not count towards the recreational open space requirement.

It is important to note that open space, for the purposes of this document, must be assumed to be uncovered and that contributions received cannot be used towards indoor facilities.

REQUIREMENTS FOR PROVISION OF RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACE ON SITE

Developments of 1 to 99 bedrooms

Policy H/6 of the Council's Unitary Development Plan expects that normally residential developments of up to and including 99 bedrooms will not need to make provision for recreational open space on site, but will be expected instead to make a financial contribution towards the provision / improvement of an area or areas of recreational open space in the locality.

However, developments of 99 bedrooms or less which do not provide private gardens for all of the dwellings (e.g. apartment developments) will be expected to provide an element of viable and useable amenity open space. Amenity open space is land which would have little in the way of active recreational use but which is valuable for passive recreation. Typically amenity open space consists of natural elements such as grass and trees, providing respite from the urban environment as well as enhancing biodiversity on the site. Although there are no set rules in respect of the size of these areas, they should form an integral part of the design of the scheme and will generally, when taken together with landscaped areas, cover about one-third of the application site.

Developments of 100 or more bedrooms

In the case of developments of 100 or more bedrooms, there should normally be Local Open Space provision on-site (for situations where this requirement might be waived, please see the 'exceptions' section below). The area required on site would be calculated using the Council's provision standards as outlined in policy H/6, specifically 1 hectare per thousand bedrooms. This on-site Local Open Space should normally include children's play facilities relating broadly to the following standards:

Developments of 100 – 399 bedrooms: LAP (Local Area for Play).

400 – 899 bedrooms: LEAP + facilities for older children.

900 bedrooms +: NEAP (Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play) with multi-use games area + facilities for younger children.

These thresholds have been calculated after analysis of both the Council's required provision standards and the National Playing Field's Association's standards for children's play areas. However, this is a general guide and recourse must be had to the Council's relevant strategies and consultation with relevant Council departments in order to establish whether there might be alternatives which would be more appropriate in particular circumstances.

It is important that consideration is given to facilities for older children and teenagers. It is considered that developments of 400 bedrooms or more should incorporate a facility such as a multi-use games area in addition to a

LEAP facility for younger children; strategies can help to identify what types of facilities might be most appropriate.

Once the required facilities as described above have been taken into account, this may still not account for all of the required area of Local Open Space based on the calculation of 1 hectare per thousand population. In this instance, the rest of the required area should be provided in the form of informal open space.

Outdoor Sports Provision on site

There are likely to be some occasions where it would be considered appropriate for developments to provide Outdoor Sports Provision on site, although this would normally only apply to large developments of 900 bedrooms or more. This is a matter which should be addressed on a site-by-site basis, but if developers of large sites are not proposing Outdoor Sports Provision it would be reasonable to ask for justification as to why it would not be considered appropriate.

Maintenance Arrangements – on-site open space

The payment of a commuted maintenance sum will be appropriate when a developer intends to hand over the title and responsibility for the long-term maintenance of the on-site provision to the local authority. Normally this should cover the maintenance cost for a period of 20 years. This should be expressed in terms of a sum per square metre.

If the developer intends to hand over the responsibility for long-term maintenance to the local authority, this is something which should be clearly agreed prior to the approval of the development, and transfer should only take place when the Council is satisfied that all relevant planning conditions have been discharged and the works completed to their satisfaction. If another body other than the Council is going to maintain the space, such as a community or private sector body, this should be determined by a written agreement with the Council prior to the issuing of planning permission; it may be appropriate to condition the planning approval so that the space remains open for public access and adequately maintained in perpetuity.

On-site recreational open space requirements - exceptions

As explained above, the amount of local open space to be provided on site is calculated in accordance with the Council's standard of 1 hectare per 1000 population. However, the integration of open space into new developments must work not just in terms of area but in terms of the overall context and character of the site and the benefit of the open space to the community. Thus, there may be instances, on tight urban sites where high density development is appropriate in design terms, where the normally required area would be inappropriate in terms of the overall design, and in these instances a

smaller area may be more appropriate, with the shortfall being addressed by means of financial contribution to off-site provision in accordance with the calculations described later in this document.

Whilst the majority of new housing developments in Rochdale are not likely to be age-specific, and generally it should be assumed that the future residents of developments could come from all age groups, there may be exceptions to this which could affect the type of provision required. For example, the residents of sheltered housing are not likely to require access to children's play facilities, and it would not be necessary to provide these on site, although it still might be appropriate to require a financial contribution towards off-site Local Open Space and possibly Outdoor Sports Provision, and it would still be appropriate and possibly even more important than usual to ensure the provision of on-site amenity open space.

There may be circumstances where recreational open space provision conveniently located in relation to the development is of sufficient quantity and quality to cater for both the new residents and existing residents. In these circumstances, the requirement for on-site provision or contributions to off-site improvement / provision may be waived. However, the Council will have to be satisfied that the existing space is safely and conveniently accessible to the new residents, in line with the criteria for open space to be provided / improved through contributions outlined below. In reality, the circumstances under which there would be no requirement for any on-site provision or off-site contribution are likely to be rare. In any of these circumstances, it is for the developer to make a full assessment of local provision and its capacity in order to support the case for reduced requirements.

DESIGN AND LAYOUT OF ON-SITE RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACE PROVISION

All new developments should comply with the provisions of the Council's Design Guides Supplementary Planning Documents. The following points are extracted from these documents:

High quality open space is an important element of urban design and brings many benefits to residential environments. Good spaces can be an important contributor to local distinctiveness and:

- Function well for their intended use, which may include play, exercise and/or relaxation;
- Fit into a wider greenspace strategy;
- Provide an area with a sense of identity and community;
- Are usually located at the heart of the development, rather than being a left over space on the edge;
- Make the most of existing landscape features and assets; and
- Take into consideration long-term funding and maintenance.

The principles that help to create successful open spaces are:

- Design the open space into the development at the earliest stage. Space Left Over After Planning (SLOAP) must be avoided;
- Ensure that the fronts of buildings overlook the space;
- Provide safe, accessible pedestrian and cycle links to and across them. (These should be appropriately surfaced, usually 2.5 metres minimum width for shared use and to the relevant standards); and
- Design the space to reflect the character of the development – formal spaces for more urban environments; and softer spaces for more informal environments.

Biodiversity

In designing green spaces into development, the opportunity should be taken to maintain and enhance the ecological value and biodiversity of the area by employing the following principles:

- Retaining existing vegetation and water features where possible;
- Using native plants and trees;
- Designing new open space to link with existing open spaces, so providing continuous green corridors;
- Protecting existing and creating new habitats for wildlife;
- Integrating features such as sustainable urban drainage ponds and swales into open spaces; and
- Designing to reduce maintenance requirements, and ensuring that a robust management plan has been developed.

Developers will be expected to demonstrate that:

- They have carried out an assessment of the site's existing landscape and ecological value to an appropriate level of detail;
- The proposed development accommodates existing natural features where possible; and
- The landscape and open space strategy for the site aims to enhance the biodiversity of the site.

The Council will expect recreational open space in new developments to reflect all of the above points.

Children's Fixed Play Areas

Appendix B outlines general design criteria for children's play areas as specified by the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA).

Children's play areas should be located in open, welcoming locations, overlooked by the fronts of houses and accessible directly from pedestrian routes on hard-surfaced footpaths. They should be safely accessible from all the dwellings on the new development. It is also important that no undue nuisance is caused to occupants of dwellings, and as such all LEAP play areas should be located at least 10 metres away from the boundaries of any residential property and at least 20 metres away from the original walls of any dwelling*, and NEAPs should be located at least 30 metres away from any property boundaries. Particular regard should be had to the location of seating so that it does not cause a nuisance.

Detailed design and layouts of children's play areas should be discussed with the relevant Council sections at an early stage in the planning application process, if possible prior to the submitting of the planning application.

Management options

Management options should be considered at the outset to ensure that the design is viable in the long term. Design decisions should be made in full knowledge of how and by whom they will be maintained.

Drainage

All areas of recreational open space should be designed and located to allow for appropriate drainage in accordance with recognised standards, and opportunities to implement sustainable drainage and water management should be explored, especially to ensure good drainage for outdoor sports facilities.

Designing out misuse

The misuse of spaces is an issue that should be properly considered at the design stage, and appropriate measures detailed in planning applications. It would be advantageous to developers to discuss designs with Greater Manchester Police prior to submitting planning applications.

Normally all planning applications should include detailed plans for the proposed on-site recreational open space provision, showing location, area, layout and specifications if appropriate, planting and landscaping (hard and soft) details, details of maintenance arrangements and a timetable for the implementation of these matters.

Further references

Rochdale / Oldham Supplementary Planning Document: Urban Design Guide
Rochdale/Oldham Supplementary Planning Document: Residential Design Guide

Rochdale / Oldham Supplementary Planning Document: Public Realm Design Guide

Creating Inspirational Places: A Guide for Quality Public Realm in the North West. (Places Matter!) (NWRDA/RENEW)

Active Design: Promoting opportunities for sport and physical activity through good design (Sport England)

* This is an additional specification to the NPFA standards outlined in Appendix A.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO OFF-SITE RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACE PROVISION

As described previously, normally all new residential developments will be required to make a financial contribution towards the provision / improvement of recreational open space which is not on the site in question but which is of direct benefit to the future residents of the development. The contribution required will be calculated in accordance with the Council's standard for recreational open space of 2.1 hectares per 1000 population, this being 1 hectare Local Open Space: 1.1 hectares Outdoor Sports Provision.

To re-iterate, developments of 99 bedrooms or less will normally be expected to provide contributions for both Local Open Space and Outdoor Sports Provision, calculated in accordance with the Council's standards for recreational open space, and developments of 100 bedrooms or more would normally be expected to provide the required Local Open Space on site and make a payment in respect of the Outdoor Sports Provision. Sometimes it may be considered that a development of 100 bedrooms or more may not have to provide all of the required Local Open Space on site (see the 'Requirements for Provision of Recreational Open Space on Site' section earlier in this document), and in these circumstances a payment must be made in respect of the resulting shortfall (calculated in accordance with the aforementioned standard).

The money will be used to make provision or improvements to open space which will be fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development proposal, and therefore be of direct benefit to the occupiers of the new development. It would be reasonable to expect, therefore, that any Local Open Space that is provided or improved should be easily and safely accessible from the development by foot. If a children's play area is being provided or improved, it should be within the following distances of the development in question: no more than 100 metres for a LAP, 400 metres for a LEAP and 1000 metres for a NEAP. In the case of informal open space, this should be within a walking distance of approximately 15 to 20 minutes.

In the case of Outdoor Sports Provision, this would ideally be within walking distance from the site but this sort of facility is frequently accessed by car or public transport and therefore it would be acceptable for the area to be provided / improved to be in the same Township as the development, and possibly elsewhere in the Borough in some cases. All Outdoor Sports Provision provided / improved should, however, be easily accessible by public transport.

Making the Calculations

The open space standard outlined in policy H/6 of the UDP is 2.1 hectares per 1000 population; this is split between 1.1 hectares of Outdoor Sports Provision and 1.0 hectares of Local Open Space. The occupancy rate used in the calculation is 1 person per bedroom.

For developments of under 100 bedrooms, the contribution to off-site provision / improvement of recreational open space will be calculated as follows:

Once the number of bedrooms has been calculated, the amount of open space required for the equivalent number of people in accordance with the Council's standard of 2.1 hectares per thousand population can be calculated. The cost of laying out and 20-year maintenance of this amount of open space can then be calculated using the most up-to-date figures and these figures added together will constitute the amount required from the developer.

For example, a development of 80 bedrooms will generate $0.08 \times 2.1 = 0.168$ ha = 1680 square metres of off-site provision. Thus the contribution required from this development would be (current cost per square metre of laying out open space) x 1680 + (current cost per square metre of 20 year maintenance of open space) x 1680.

For developments of 100 bedrooms or more, but less than 900 bedrooms, it will generally be expected that the required amount of Local Open Space, including children's play facilities, will be provided on site, with a contribution made to off-site Outdoor Sports Provision. The contribution required for the Outdoor Sports Provision should be calculated in the same way as the contributions from developments of under 100 bedrooms as described above, using the 1.1 hectare per 1000 population standard.

For example, a development of 130 dwellings will normally be expected to provide 1300 square metres of on-site Local Open Space including children's play facilities, and will pay the cost of laying out and 20-year maintenance of 1430 square metres of off-site Outdoor Sports Provision. Thus the contribution would be $1430 \times$ (current cost per square metre of laying out open space + current cost per square metre of 20 year maintenance of open space). If the Council agree to maintain the on-site Local Open Space, a commuted sum towards maintenance will be required, to be calculated as $1300 \times$ (cost per square metre of maintenance for 20 years).

The contributions should be calculated on the basis of the most up-to-date costs of laying out / maintenance of open space. These figures will be reviewed annually. If a pre-application quote in respect of a contribution required is given and the costs of laying out and/or maintenance of open space increase between the time of the quote and the planning application, the quoted figure may no longer be valid; decisions on this matter will be

based on what is considered reasonable dependent on the period of time which has elapsed.

Administration fee

In each instance of a payment being required there will be a small additional administration fee.

Collection of contributions

It would usually be expected that applicants will pay the required contribution or sign a section 106 legal agreement prior to planning permission for the development being issued (in the case of the latter, the developer also paying the Council's legal costs). When a section 106 agreement is entered into, this will usually require that the money should be paid prior to the commencement of the development. In situations where there are delayed payments, the amount required may be higher than if it had been paid without delay.

Outline approvals - where outline planning applications are made which do not specify the number of bedrooms, a planning obligation should be entered into which specifies that the developer must make contributions in accordance with the above details which will be calculated once the number of bedrooms is known. Any payments required should be received by the Council before the commencement of the development.

Management of open space contributions

The management arrangements for open space contributions will be outlined in a separate report. These arrangements will ensure that contributions will be administered and spent where they will be of direct benefit to the occupants of the new development and where there is an identified need. A database will ensure that applicants will be able to trace their contribution and enquire as to where it has been spent.

Spending of open space contributions

Contributions towards Local Open Space should be spent in the following manner:

Either on (i) children's fixed play facilities or (ii) informal open space, directly related to the development as described earlier in this document.

Contributions towards Outdoor Sports Provision should usually be spent within the same Township as the development. However, if a need has been identified in another Township this may be an acceptable spend of the money.

Final decisions on the expenditure of this money should have regard to the Green Infrastructure Strategy and any other relevant Council strategies.

In the case of both Local Open Space and Outdoor Sports Provision, it may be the case that the funds received from an individual development are not sufficient in themselves to pay for meaningful improvements. If this is the case, it is possible that the Council can keep the money in a holding account and wait for further funds until there is sufficient to pay for an identified improvement, although if the money received from a development is not spent within 5 years of the payment being made it should be returned to the developer.

SUMMARY

Residential Developments of 1 dwelling to 99 dwellings inclusive

- If all or some of the dwellings do not have garden areas, there should be provision of appropriate amenity outdoor space for the benefit of the residents and the general environment of the area.
- A contribution to off-site provision, calculated at least in accordance with the Council's standard of 2.1 hectares per 1000 population, is expected. This will be spent on improvements to recreational open spaces, or new provision, where it will be of direct benefit to the residents of the new development. Alternatively, on-site provision in accordance with the standards may be acceptable.

Residential developments of 100 bedrooms to 399 bedrooms

- It is expected that there would be Local Open Space provision on site at least in accordance with the Council's standard of 1 hectare per 1000 population, including a children's play area to LAP standards.
- A contribution towards off-site Outdoor Sports Provision, calculated in accordance with the Council's standard of 1.1 hectares per 1000 population, is expected. This will be spent on improvements to Outdoor Sports Provision of direct benefit to the residents of the new development. Alternatively, on-site provision in accordance with the standards may be acceptable.

Residential developments of 400 bedrooms to 899 bedrooms

- It is expected that there would be Local Open Space provision on site at least in accordance with the Council's standard of 1 hectare per 1000 population, including a children's play area to LEAP standards and provision for older children.
- A contribution towards off-site Outdoor Sports Provision, calculated in accordance with the Council's standard of 1.1 hectares per 1000 population, is expected. This will be spent on improvements to Outdoor Sports Provision of direct benefit to the residents of the new development. Alternatively, on-site provision in accordance with the standards may be acceptable.

Residential developments of 900 bedrooms plus

- It is expected that there would be Local Open Space provision on site at least in accordance with the Council's standard of 1 hectare per 1000 population, including a children's play area to NEAP standards with multi-use games area and provision for younger children.
- Outdoor Sports Provision should be located on site at least in accordance with the Council's standard of 1.1 hectares per 1000 population, unless the Council considers it to be more appropriate to accept a contribution towards off-site improvement / provision calculated in accordance with the Council's standards instead.

**APPENDIX A: MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR OUTDOOR CHILDREN'S
PLAYING SPACE**

(From the Six Acre Standard – NPFA)

FACILITY	TIME	WALKING DISTANCE	STRAIGHT LINE DISTANCE	MINIMUM SIZE	NEAREST HOUSE	CHARACTERISTICS
LAP (Local Area for Play)	1 min	100 m	60 m	Activity Zone: 100 m ²	5 m from Activity Zone (forward-most part of dwelling that faces the LAP)	Small, low-key games area (may include 'demonstrative' play features)
LEAP (Local Equipped Area for Play)	5 min	400 m	240 m	Activity Zone: 400 m ²	10 m from Activity Zone (to property boundary)	5 types of play equipment, small games area
NEAP (Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play)	15 min	1000 m	600 m	Activity Zone: 1,000 m ²	30 m from Activity Zone (to property boundary)	8 types of play equipment, opportunities for ball games or wheeled activities

**APPENDIX B: SUMMARY OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN'S
PLAY AREAS**
(As above)

As a matter of general practice, children's play areas should be:

1. Accessible within the specified walking times.
2. Accessible without having to cross main roads, railways or waterways.
3. Sited in open, welcoming locations and not be tucked away on backland sites with access via narrow alleys or paths enclosed by high fences.
4. Separated from areas of major vehicle movements and accessible directly from pedestrian routes.
5. Sited on land suitable for the type of play opportunity intended. For example, slopes that are too steep for building can provide one kind of experience, but are not suitable for most play equipment. Conversely, a flat area can provide too bland a setting for some types of equipment.
6. Designed so that high climbing apparatus or equipment on mounds is sited as far as possible from nearby dwellings.
7. Sufficiently far from dwellings to reduce the likelihood of noise and disturbance, particularly to households without children .
8. Integrated, as far as possible, with other open spaces and areas of amenity planting to provide appropriate separation from nearby dwellings.
9. Overlooked from dwellings or pedestrian routes that are well used.
10. Accessible by footpaths with a firm surface. However, footpaths should not pass through the play area.
11. Surfaced in a manner that is able to withstand the intensity of use.
12. Provided with seating for parents and carers. Where footpaths with a firm surface link adult seating areas to the entrance, their colour or texture should be different to other hard surfaced parts of the play area. The space occupied by these footpaths and planted areas should not normally exceed 10% of the area of the activity zone (see paragraph 4.40) in order to provide adequate room for children's play.
13. Fitted with play equipment that has been designed, manufactured, installed and maintained in full accordance with EN1176, EN1177 and BS7188. Fencing, including gates, seating and all other fixtures should similarly be in accordance.
14. Provided with impact-absorbing surfaces beneath and around all play equipment.
15. Designed with appropriate physical features on the perimeter of the activity zone to exclude dogs.

4.40

An Activity Zone is an area of land specifically dedicated for children to use for play. It may or may not include play equipment.

4.41

A **Buffer Zone** is the space surrounding an activity zone the purpose of which is to provide a reasonable degree of separation between play activity and nearby residential properties. It may not be needed on all sides of the activity zone, for example, where adjoining land is not in residential use. It may be wholly or partly made up of highways, cycleways, footways, footpaths or planting.

REFERENCES

- *Accessible Natural Green Space Standards in Towns and Cities* (2003)
Natural England (English Nature)
- *Creating Inspirational Places: A Guide for Quality Public Realm in the North West. (Places Matter!)* (NWRDA/RENEW)
- *Active Design: Promoting opportunities for sport and physical activity through good design* (Sport England)
- *The Six Acre Standard: Minimum Standards for outdoor playing space*
National Playing Fields Association (NPFA)
- *Physical Activity and the Environment: Quick Reference Guide* National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (January 2008)