

CABINET (LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK) COMMITTEE

6 November 2007

UPDATE ON THE OPEN SPACE AND BUILT FACILITIES ASSESSMENT

REPORT OF HEAD OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

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RECENT REFERENCES:

None.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Government now expects local authorities to undertake local assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities. The report explains that the City Council's assessment, being prepared jointly with East Hampshire by consultants Inspace, is approaching completion. Additional work on built facilities has, however, been necessary to achieve the necessary robustness for this type of provision. However, the final report for the assessment, covering open space and built facilities, is expected to be available by the end of the year.

This report summarises the conclusions reached on open space provision, and sets out the proposed new standard, covering a wider range of types of open space than is currently the case, and including an accessibility standard as well as a quantity standard. The new standard (together with a built facilities standard when available) will need to be included in the Local Development Framework and the report proposes that it should be included in the Core Strategy. Quality open space and recreation facilities that are readily accessible to everyone form an essential part of sustainable communities, and also this approach would allow a review of the Council's Open Space Funding System (to accord with new standards) at the earliest opportunity.

The report concludes by setting out the main issues that have emerged from the Study in relation to open space provision, and it is recommended that these are used to inform issues identified in the forthcoming Core Strategy Issues and Options Paper.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 That the initial conclusions of the Winchester City Council's Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study be noted.
- 2 That the matters set out in paragraph 8.2 be endorsed as a basis for identifying some of the key open space issues for the Local Development Framework, pending completion of the study.
- 3 That a further report be brought to this Committee on completion of the Study.

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DETAIL:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation) (PPG 17), published in 2002, requires local authorities to undertake “robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sports and recreation facilities”. The assessment would then be used as a basis for setting local standards for these facilities.
- 1.2 In view of the amount of work needed to carry out such a comprehensive assessment, there was insufficient time to undertake this and incorporate new standards in the current adopted Local Plan. The recreational standards in the adopted Local Plan, and the City Council’s Open Space Funding System which operates through them, therefore continue to rely on the former National Playing Fields’ Association’s (now called Fields in Trusts) standards for children’s play and sports grounds. However, the adopted Local Plan indicates that an assessment carried out in accordance with PPG 17 would be undertaken at an early date, so that a local standard could be established through the City Council’s Local Development Framework.
- 1.3 PPG 17 advises that assessments should normally be undertaken at District level. However, the adjoining Districts of Winchester and East Hampshire agreed to engage consultants jointly to undertake the Study. Joint working would offer financial and other benefits, with the Districts having many similarities, both being largely rural in nature. It was also very timely as both Districts’ programmes for the development of their LDF’s were also very similar, and the assessment would form an important part of each District’s evidence base.
- 1.4 In May 2006, consultants Inspace were appointed to undertake the Study. Although the work has been undertaken jointly on behalf of both Districts, it was agreed that a separate report would be prepared for each District, to provide the basis for each District’s local standards. The work has followed the advice in the then ODPM’s Companion Guide to PPG 17 – “Assessing Needs and Opportunities”, published in September 2002. Both authorities are grateful for the technical and funding assistance that has been provided by Sport England throughout this Study – their advice and technical input has been invaluable.

2 Organisation of the Study

- 2.1 The Study has been guided by a core group of officers from the two authorities, involving both Strategic Planning and Communities interests, together with Sport England’s planning managers. Councillor Patricia Stallard has attended these meetings from time to time to provide Member input to the Study.

2.2 A wider Advisory Group has also met at key stages of the Study, and this has proved to be a very useful sounding board. This Group has included a number of key stakeholders, including a number of Members from each authority, Parish Council representatives, education and access officers from Hampshire County Council, and other officers from each District having an interest in open space and recreation.

3 Progress of the Technical Work

3.1 The Study has covered all the types of open space and built facilities listed in the typologies in PPG 17, except where they are not present within, or readily accessible from, either District.

3.2 The types of open space listed in the PPG 17 typology are:

- Parks and gardens
- Natural and semi-natural greenspaces
- Green corridors
- Outdoor sports facilities
- Amenity greenspace
- Provision for children and young people
- Allotments, community gardens and urban farms
- Churchyards and cemeteries
- Civic spaces

3.3 The built facilities listed in the PPG 17 typology are:

- Village halls
- Community centres
- Indoor sports halls, health and leisure centres
- Indoor bowls centres
- Swimming pools (including school facilities for community use)
- Indoor tennis centres
- Ice rinks

3.3 The technical work for the Study has followed the 5 main stages set out in the Companion Guide, which are:

- 1 Identification of Local Needs
- 2 Auditing of Local Provision
- 3 Setting Provision Standards
- 4 Applying the Provision Standards
- 5 Identifying Strategic Options and Recommendations

3.4 During the Study a wide range of interest groups have been consulted, representing both users and providers of facilities. These have included local residents, town and parish councils, local sports' clubs, playgroups, community organisations, schools, sports development officers and league secretaries. In Winchester itself, a special Town Forum was held to engage with important organisations and educational bodies in the City. In addition, a number of theme-based focus groups were set up to discuss particular issues eg youth provision in Winchester.

- 3.5 There was also analysis of the contribution made by key stakeholders in relation to the provision of facilities, including the Ministry of Defence, the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (the Green Infrastructure Strategy), educational establishments, the Forestry Commission, Town and Parish Councils and Sport England.
- 3.6 The Study will be published as a Final Report for each District, setting out proposed local standards for open space and built facilities, and identifying strategic options to be considered through the planning process. A leaflet summarising the results of the Study will also be produced. To provide an input to the proposed standard for sports grounds, a Playing Pitch Strategy will also be published, prepared in accordance with Sport England's methodology. The Town and Parish Councils all assisted with the provision of information for the Study, and Parish Profiles, describing existing facilities and highlighting deficiencies judged against the proposed new standards, will be produced and circulated to the Town and Parish Councils.

4 Need for further work on Built Facilities

- 4.1 All the technical work on open space is now complete, but there has been a need to undertake further work on built facilities, to ensure that the proposed standards for these facilities are robust enough to provide an evidence base for the LDF. This has resulted in a delay in the completion of the Study, but it is anticipated that the additional work should be complete by early December, to allow the Study's main report to be completed by the end of the year.
- 4.2 The adopted Local Plan does not currently include a standard for built facilities and national advice has not been provided for them. It is therefore important to ensure that the quality of information used to justify proposed local standards is comparable to that undertaken for open space.

5 The Development of Local Standards

- 5.1 Given the number of different types of facility listed in each of the PPG 17 typologies, it was always evident that any new local standard would need to relate to a wider range of types than is currently the case, and, in the case of built facilities, it will be a completely new standard. However, the PPG 17 Companion Guide acknowledges that local variations may be needed. The Study therefore used the PPG 17 typologies as a starting point for the assessment, but has refined them to reflect local circumstances.
- 5.2 For open space, this has resulted in fewer categories than in the PPG 17 typology, and standards have been proposed for the following types of open space:
- Parks, Sports and Recreation Grounds
 - Children's Equipped Play Space / Young People's Play Space
 - Informal / Amenity Open Space
 - Accessible Natural Greenspace
 - Allotments

These reflect the types of open space that are found, or are accessible from, each District.

5.3 The standards have been developed in accordance with the advice in PPG 17 and include the following components:

- Quantity standards
- Quality standards
- Accessibility standards

Each component of the standard is derived from an analysis of the audit information and community views of users.

5.4 The proposed new Winchester standard for open space facilities, including quantity and access components, is set out below:

Typology	Quantity standard	Access standard
Parks, Sports and Recreation Grounds	1.5 ha. / 1000 population, of which 0.75 ha. / 1000 is for outdoor sports provision	650m
Natural Greenspace	1.0 ha. / 1000 population	400m
Informal Open Space	0.8 ha. / 1000 population	700m
Children's and Young People's Space	0.50 ha. / 1000 population	480m (Toddler and Junior provision) 650m (Youth provision)
Allotments	0.2 ha. / 1000 population	480m
Total	4.0 ha. / 1000 population	

5.5 It should be pointed out that whilst this was a joint study each District's standard, although using the same local categories, has been derived separately and there are differences in each District's proposed open space standard. For the first time accessibility is also an important component of the standard, and the results of the quality audit have also been used to identify deficiencies in the District. The report recommends that deficiencies are examined on a wider than Parish / Winchester basis, and therefore, for the purposes of the Study, the District was divided into a number of sub-areas, each focusing on a larger main settlement.

5.6 The Winchester sub-areas (with the main settlements in each highlighted) are:

Winchester, Badger Farm, Chilcomb, Littleton and Harestock, and Olivers Battery

Kings Worthy, Crawley, Headbourne Worthy, Micheldever, South Wonston, Sparsholt and Wonston

New Alresford, Beauworth, Bighton, Bishops Sutton, Bramdean and Hinton Ampner, Cheriton, Exton, Itchen Stoke and Ovington, Itchen Valley, Kilmeston, Northington, Old Alresford, Tichborne, Warnford and West Meon

Bishop's Waltham, Corhampton and Meonstoke, Droxford, Durley, Swanmore, Upham

Colden Common, Compton and Shawford, Hursley, Otterbourne, Owslebury, Twyford

Wickham, Curdrige, Shedfield

Whiteley

Denmead, Boarhunt, Hambledon, Soberton, Southwick and Widley

5.7 The Study draws conclusions about the quantity, quality and accessibility of open space in each sub-area and makes recommendations on priorities for achieving a range of quality and accessible open space.

6 Strategic Options and Recommendations

6.1 In accordance with the advice in the PPG 17 Companion Guide, the Study concludes by promoting a strategy, which involves the consideration of 5 basic components:

- Existing provision to be protected
- Existing provision to be enhanced
- Existing provision to be re-located in order to meet local needs more effectively
- Proposals for new provision
- Facilities surplus to requirements

6.2 The Study concludes that generally no open space facilities in the District should be lost and therefore should be protected. There are unlikely to be opportunities to re-locate existing provision, nor are there likely to be facilities surplus to requirements. The recommendation is therefore that any future strategy for the District should be based on making quality enhancements to the existing facilities, and supplementing this with new provision where accessibility to facilities needs to be improved, or in association with new development.

6.3 The Playing Pitch Strategy concludes that there would be no need for new allocations for sports pitches, if additional community use of school facilities can be secured.

7 Links between the Study and the Local Development Framework

7.1 The City Council's Open Space Funding System will need to be modified to take account of the proposed new standard, but, before this can be achieved, the new standard would need to be included in an adopted Local Development Document. In addition, further work (Greenspace and Built Facilities' Strategies) is necessary to set out how the standard would be applied to prioritise improvements needed in the District. The Study's conclusions are therefore intended to provide a framework for this work, and the early preparation of these Strategies is a condition of Sport England's funding assistance.

7.2 Therefore the new open space standard should be incorporated into the LDF at the earliest opportunity, through the Core Strategy, but taking account of the fact that this is a strategic document. It will still be some time before the Core Strategy is statutorily adopted – the earliest date is December 2009. Prior to this, work could proceed on a district-wide Greenspace Strategy and Built Facilities Strategy, which would need to be prepared as Supplementary Planning Documents.

7.3 Therefore, the adopted Local Plan Review's open space standard, and the Open Space Funding System on which it is based will need to continue to operate for the time being in its current form. Inclusion of the new standard in the Core Strategy—would ensure that access to a range of quality open spaces, which are an essential component of sustainable mixed communities, is identified as an essential part of the District's infrastructure.

8 Summary of issues raised in the Study

8.1 PPG 17 requires new local standards to address a wider range of types of open space than is currently the case and to be included in the development plan. The assessment of open space and built facilities forms an important part of the evidence base for the Local Development Framework.

8.2 The main open space issues raised through the Study may be summarised as:

- Should the new standard be incorporated in the Core Strategy?
- Should any future Greenspace Strategy be based on District sub-areas rather than individual parishes?
- Can/should a Greenspace Strategy be prepared at an early date, to help inform any need for open space allocations in a Development Allocations document?
- Should existing open spaces be vigorously protected from development, which may mean more greenfield sites need to be released for housing?
- Is there potential for increasing the supply of playing fields in the District through increased community use of educational facilities?
- Should the District continue to rely on small development sites which often require off-site provision of open space facilities, or allocate a range of larger sites which can accommodate on-site open space?

8.3 It is likely that further issues will arise out of the built facilities work, and the completion of the Study. A further report will be presented to Members on the completion of the Study and there will also be a further presentation to Members by the consultants.

9 Conclusion

9.1 Members are requested to endorse the matters set out in paragraph 8.2 as a basis for identifying some of the key open space issues in the Core Strategy's Issues and Options Paper.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

10. CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

Key aims are to ensure that open spaces are attractive and accessible, and that citizens are able to enjoy a healthy, active life by increasing opportunities to participate in sporting and cultural activities. The Open Space and Built Facilities

Assessment forms an essential part of the evidence base for the LDF, which must be sound and robust. The Assessment will also provide valuable base information for a future review of the Council's Open Space Funding System and will also inform future strategies for the Council's Recreation and Sports Division.

11. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

The appointment of consultants to undertake the Open Space, Sports and Recreation Study is being jointly funded by Winchester City Council and East Hampshire District Council, together with a contribution from Sport England. Budget provision exists for this work and significant savings have been made by joint commissioning. No budget provision currently exists for the preparation of Greenspace and Built Facilities Strategies.

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None.

13. APPENDICES:

None