

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM

20 JANUARY 2010

THE WINCHESTER 'OPEN SPACE' FUND

REPORT OF HEAD OF ENVIRONMENT AND HEAD OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

Contact Officer: Stuart Dunbar-Dempsey Tel No: 01962 848425

RECENT REFERENCES:

CAB1816 – Review of the Open Space Strategy and Funding System – 18 March 2009

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report invites the Town Forum to comment on the current Open Space Strategy for the Winchester Town area and make recommendations on any amendments within the document for the forthcoming financial year.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Town Forum provides recommendations on any amendments it wishes to see included within the Open Space Strategy 2009-2010, prior to the Strategy's consideration by Cabinet.

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DETAIL:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Winchester is the largest settlement in the District and comprises the six Wards of St Barnabas, St Bartholomew, St John and All Saints, St Luke, St Michael and St Paul. Together with the Parishes of Badger Farm and Olivers Battery, and the Harestock part of Littleton and Harestock Parish, they form the Winchester built up area, which is contained within the Winchester policy boundary in the Local Plan Review. The town element comprises the historic central core with its extensive conservation area, older housing neighbourhoods in the central part of the town, and more recent residential areas in the outer parts. The M3 Motorway generally defines the eastern edge of the urban area.
- 1.2 The town includes some larger open areas both within and on the edge of the urban area. The valley of the River Itchen and its water meadows form a strong semi natural feature running through the central part of the town. Much of these water meadows will become part of the recently designated South Downs National Park on March 31st 2010. St Catherine's Hill will also be within the new National Park and is prominent in the landscape to the south east of the urban area.
- 1.3 The City Council has approved an Open Space Strategy for use as a background paper to the adopted Winchester District Local Plan Review (WDLPR). The Strategy provides a comprehensive framework for the provision of outdoor, public play and sport facilities in the Plan area. It is prepared and reviewed annually in consultation with all the Parish Councils, the Winchester Town Forum, and the City Council's Sports and Recreation Manager.
- 1.4 This report invites the Town Forum to formally comment on how the stated shortfalls and deficiencies in the Open Space Strategy document could be overcome. Consideration will however need to be given to the constraints imposed on the use of the Open Space Fund by virtue of the terms of the legal agreements made with housing developers under s106 of the Town and Country Planning Act. These constraints mean that funds can only be used to overcome the shortfalls and deficiencies in play and sport as set out in the Open Space Strategy.

- 1.5 The Strategy is used by the City Council's Planning Officers as a basis for determining what play and sport provision is required for new housing development in the Plan area, or, alternatively, the amount of contribution that will be sought in lieu of that provision. Contributions are paid into a special Open Space Fund, where they are retained for use in the area where the developments have taken place, until appropriate schemes are implemented.
- 1.6 Within the area covered by the six wards of Winchester, funds are collected for each ward, but, as the Strategy treats these wards as a single area, funds can be used anywhere in the town, taking account of the nature of deficiencies identified.
- 1.7 Appendix 1 to this report lists all the play and sport areas currently in public use in Winchester, divided into the three main categories of the Local Plan's recreational space standard – children's play, sports grounds and areas for general/informal use. Those areas that include play equipment are marked with an asterisk. The schedules do not include areas which function mainly as local amenity greenspace, since these areas are generally small scale and fragmented and do not primarily have a recreational purpose.

2 Adequacy of Provision of Play and Sports Facilities by Area

- 2.1 The area of play and sport provision for Winchester Town has been evaluated within the Open Space Strategy in terms of the requirements set out within the Local Plan. The current situation is shown in the table below, which identifies deficits in provision of 11.8ha for play and 25.4ha for sports.

	Local Plan Requirement (ha)	District Provision (ha)	Outstanding Requirement (ha)	Current Provision (ha)	Surplus/ Deficit (ha)
Play	29.4	-	29.4	17.60	-11.8
Sports	58.8	13.8	45.0	19.63	-25.4

3 Assessment of Play Areas

- 3.1 Although there are a substantial number of play areas in the City, there is still a shortfall of land and facilities available when measured against the Local Plan standard for the size of the population (approx 41,000), and some housing areas are poorly served in terms of access to facilities. Additional land will rarely become available for larger play areas.
- 3.2 Elsewhere within the town area, the aim is to achieve a distribution of NEAPs (neighbourhood equipped areas for play) by upgrading some existing play area sites, and to provide at least one NEAP within each main segment of the City. Multi sports areas, for older children and teenagers, are also to be provided in association with suitable NEAPs, with at least one accessible to each major housing area of the City. The first two have been provided at North Walls and Somers Close, with a small ball court installed at the KGV playing fields and a goal and basket-ball net installed at Gordon Avenue.

Other play areas should generally be of LEAP (local equipped areas for play) standard, and should complement NEAPs wherever possible, providing an alternative smaller play facility in other parts of the same housing area. LAPs (local areas for play) should generally only be provided within housing developments, since they are intended to serve the needs of younger children closer to home.

- 3.3 Although most play areas in the City are in good condition, there are still a number that require partial or total refurbishment, and the majority require additional items of equipment or the provision of a multi-sports area to bring them up to acceptable standards, including Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Standards.
- 3.4 To address this, the City Council has initiated, and the Town Forum approved (13th January 2004), a Five Year Refurbishment Plan based on an assessment of the condition of existing areas and the establishment of minimum quality standards.
- 3.5 A further Five Year Plan has been produced and is submitted as a separate item for discussion during this meeting.

4 Assessment of Sports Grounds

- 4.1 There is a substantial shortfall in the area available for publicly accessible sports grounds, when measured against the Local Plan standard. The more detailed Assessment of Playing Field Provision in the Built-Up Area of Winchester, published in 1992, demonstrated that this shortfall was substantially higher, and some of the sports pitches identified as being available at the time of the assessment have since been lost to other uses. An update of this assessment (the 'PPG 17 Study') has recently been completed, and this may result in the adoption of a revised local standard for sports grounds. Until this recommended standard has been considered through the Council's Core Strategy and associated Development Plan or Supplementary Planning Documents, the current Local Plan standard for sports ground provision will be applied.
- 4.2 There is, therefore, a need for a substantial additional area of land to meet this need, and the Local Plan Review reserves three new areas of land primarily for additional sports provision:
 - a) South of Winchester at Bushfield Camp (Area QQ on page 108 of the Open Space Strategy),
 - b) North of Winchester between Stockbridge Road and Littleton Road (shown as Area MM on Map 26, Littleton & Harestock, page 63 of the Open Space Strategy),
 - c) To the north and west of Courtenay Road (Area OO on Winchester Map 1, page 107).

- 4.3 Although the Bushfield Camp area has been the preferred location for additional sports provision, the land is unlikely to be available for formal recreational usage for the foreseeable future. It may, however, be possible to bring one of the other reserved areas forward, and this will need to be investigated further. A feasibility study is therefore to be undertaken on the land between Stockbridge Road and Littleton Road and a planning application is currently being considered for Barton Farm, which may provide opportunities to increase provision at Courtenay Road or nearby.
- 4.4 However, there is also considerable scope to improve provision within the existing main sports ground areas, by increasing the availability of pitches, providing other sports facilities and securing their long-term usage for sports provision. Emphasis should therefore be given to maximising the usage of the Bar End and North Walls areas as major outdoor sports complexes, as they will complement any future provision of new land made within the areas reserved in the Local Plan Review. There is also demand for further teenage facilities within the City.
- 4.5 Proposed Improvements include increasing pitch availability and accessibility, to secure their long term usage as playing fields, and the provision of additional sports facilities in the Bar End and North Walls areas [Area FF (incorporating Areas I, V and W) and Area A on the Location Map]. Further improvements include the replacement of pavilions at North Walls Recreation Ground and King George V Playing Fields, Bar End. Assistance with the provision of additional sports grounds on one or more of the areas reserved in the Local Plan Review – north of Stockbridge Road and west of Littleton Road (Area MM on Littleton & Harestock Map 26), north and west of Courtenay Road (Area OO on Winchester Map 1), or at Bushfield Camp (Area LL).

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

5 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND CORPORATE BUSINESS PLAN (RELEVANCE TO):

- 5.1 The refurbishment of play areas under the proposed revised Five Year Plan will contribute to the delivery of the following outcome within the Health and Wellbeing theme of the Community Strategy:

‘Children & young people enjoy healthy, fulfilling and active lives’. Under this outcome, the following action is identified

Promote the wellbeing of every child and young person in the Winchester District, whatever their background or circumstances, by delivering the five ‘Every Child Matters’ key outcomes – be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution.

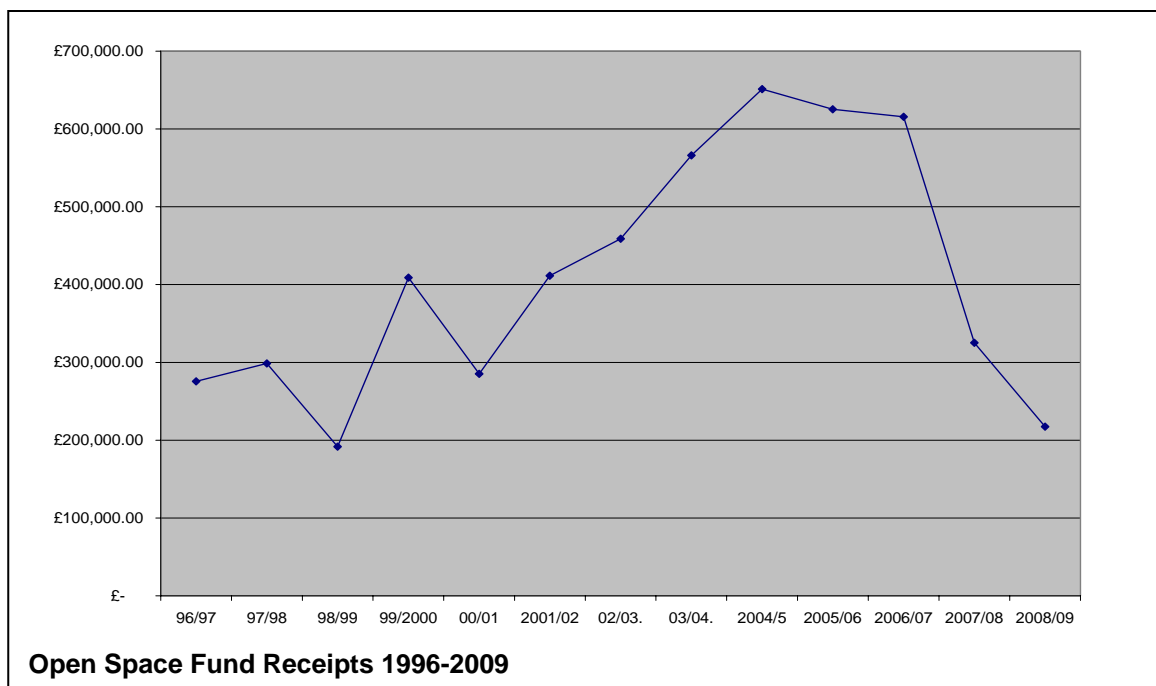
6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

6.1 The Open Spaces Fund is managed by the Open Space Project Officer within the Landscape and Open Space Team.

6.2 The amounts held for Winchester town in the Open Space Fund, at the end of October 2009 were:

PLAY	£218,827
SPORT	£222,057
TOTAL	£440,885

6.3 A total of £217,399.12 was contributed to the Open Space Fund between 1 March 2008 and 28 February 2009. This was another significant drop in income compared to the previous three years and reflected the continuing slowdown in housing starts/completions as reported elsewhere.



6.4 The level of income has a direct bearing on the availability of funds to undertake projects. The proposed Play Area Strategy identifies £111k of funding required from Open Space Fund over the next five years, which is within current budgetary capacity and would leave £107k available for other play projects.

6.5 A new system for administering the S106 contributions from developers, which includes those for open space, will be introduced in 2010. This will

ensure that contributions are collected from developers and available to fund facility provision of the required facilities in the district.

7 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 7.1 The Council is required to administer the allocation of developer contributions through the Open Spaces Fund detailed in the Local Plan.
- 7.2 The new Local Development Framework will introduce a new structure for the sourcing and allocation of developer contributions in line with PPG 17 guidance.
- 7.3 With the economic down-turn, the level of developer contributions has declined significantly. The current level of funds is sufficient to deal with the proposed five year programme and accommodate additional projects outside this programme. However, if contributions remain at a low level, this will affect the future programmes. Some degree of strategic planning is required in order to ensure that the available funds are utilised most effectively and community requirements met.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

THE WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL OPEN SPACE STRATEGY 2009-2010

APPENDICES:

APPENDIX 1 - Existing Recreational Facilities for Winchester Town

APPENDIX 2 – Map of Play and Sport Facilities for Winchester Town

APPENDIX 1 - Existing Recreational Facilities for Winchester Town

PLAY PROVISION

Map Ref	Name	Area (ha)	Map Ref	Name	Area (ha)
A	North Walls*	1.13	P	St Matthews Field, Weeke	1.32
B	St Martin's Close, Winnall*	0.08	Q	Oram's Arbour*	1.25
C	Imber Road, Winnall*	0.42	R	Stuart Crescent, Stanmore*	2.10
D	Marston Gate*	0.10	S	Thurmond Crescent, Stanmore*	0.57
E	Winnal Manor Road*	0.42	T	Walpole Road, Stanmore*	0.16
F	Fairdown Close, Winnall*	0.02	U	Somers Close, Stanmore*	1.78
G	St Giles Hill	1.50	V	Erskine Road	1.00
H	Gordon Avenue, Highcliffe*	0.29	GG	Gordon Road*	0.01
I	King George V Playing Fields*	0.27	HH	Grange Road	0.10
J	Abbey Gardens*	0.29	KK	Dean Park*	1.05
K	Chaudler Road, Abbott's Barton*	2.45	LL	Dyson Drive, Abbott's Barton	0.36
L	Friary Gardens, Culver Road*	0.02	MM	Silchester Place	0.01
M	Teg Down Meads, Teg Down*	0.12	NN	Sarum Close	0.03
N	Taplings Road, Weeke*	0.33	OO	Arlington Place	0.01
O	Westman Road, Weeke*	0.25	PP	Nursery Gardens	0.20
				TOTAL PLAY	17.60

SPORTS PROVISION

Local Sports:		
Map Ref	Name	Area (ha)
A	North Walls Playing Fields	7.08
I	King George V Playing Fields	5.53
V	Bar End Playing Fields (P)	2.00
X	Royal Green Jackets Ground, St Cross (P)	3.00
Y	Winchester Squash & Tennis Club (P)	2.00
Z	Friary Bowls Club (P)	0.02
	TOTAL LOCAL SPORTS	19.63

District Sports:		
Map Ref	Name	Area (ha)
W	University Pitches (E)	3.77
A	Winchester Football Club (P)	3.15
II	Westgate School (E)	1.86
JJ	Peter Symonds College (E)	2.71
	TOTAL DISTRICT SPORTS	11.49

	TOTAL SPORTS	31.12
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Proportion of District Sports Provision attributed to the Town = 13.8 ha.

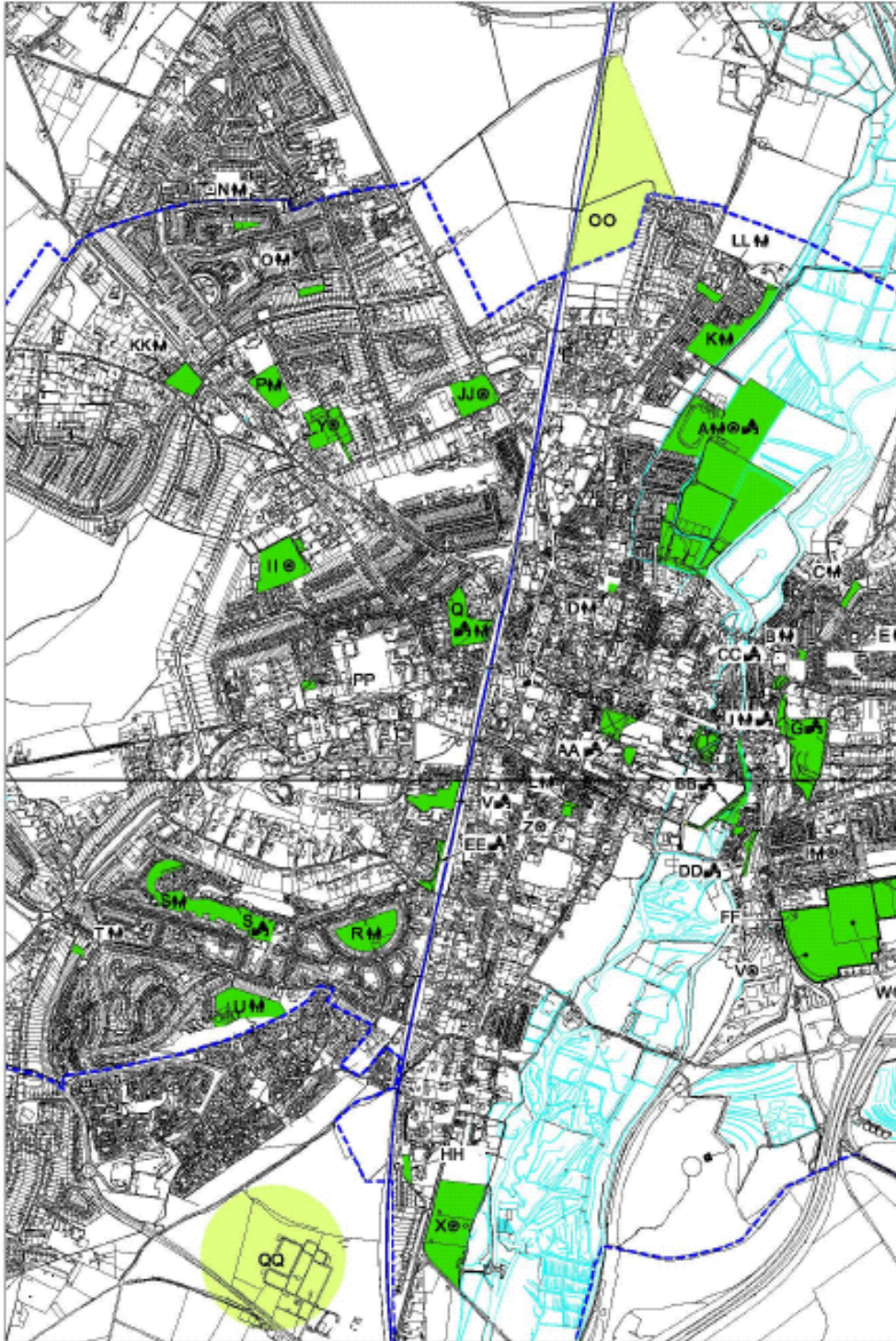
Facilities available for General Recreational Use for Winchester Town

In the developed areas:			In the adjacent countryside:	
Map Ref	Name	Area (ha)		
A	North Walls	2.94		The Water Meadows
G	St Giles Hill	1.50		St Catherine's Hill
J	Abbey Gardens	0.64		Whiteshute Ridge
Q	Orams Arbour	0.83		
S	The Valley, Stanmore	2.98		
AA	Cathedral Grounds	1.25		
BB	The Weirs	0.80		
CC	Joyce Gardens	0.24		
DD	Wrack Hill	0.38		
EE	Wentworth Grange	0.50		
	TOTAL GENERAL	12.06		

APPENDIX 2 – Map of Play and Sport Facilities for Winchester Town

47. WINCHESTER

2009 KEY MAP



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