

Public Open Space Supplementary Planning Document

September 2005



Exeter City Council

Exeter Local Development Framework

Public Open Space Supplementary Planning Document

PREFACE

- (a) *This document sets out guidance, shown against a grey background, in support of the Exeter Local Plan First Review.*

Sustainability Appraisal

- (b) *No Sustainability Appraisal was provided in support of this document for the reasons given by Appendix A*

Consultation Statement

- (c) *The SPD has been prepared in conjunction with an audit of outdoor recreation facilities involving participation of various groups and individuals as described in the Consultation Statement attached as Appendix B.*

1.0 Background Information

- 1.1 The purpose of the SPD is to provide clarification, shown in support of the Exeter Local Plan First Review policies concerned with the protection of existing open space and the provision of additional open space and associated facilities as part of new housing developments. The Local Plan First Review is to be saved for three years upon adoption and will gradually be replaced by the emerging Local Development Framework.
- 1.2 Relevant policies are summarised below and set out in full by Appendix C:
- L3 Development on open space;
 - L4 Provision of outdoor sports and informal youth facilities through new development;
 - L5 Development causing the loss of playing fields;
 - L7 Development causing the loss of sporting facilities;
 - DG5 Provision of open space and children's play facilities through new development.
- 1.3 An audit of the City's outdoor recreation facilities has been prepared in accordance with Government advice provided by PPG17, and the companion guide 'Assessing Needs and Opportunities' published in 2002.
- 1.4 Guidance is to be provided in a separate document, 'Implementing Open Space Requirements', as to the means by which developers will be expected to provide and/or contribute towards provision of outdoor recreation facilities required as a result of the Local Plan First Review policies and this SPD.
- 1.5 The 'Audit of Outdoor Recreation Facilities' and, when completed, 'Implementing Outdoor Recreation Requirements' can be obtained from the Head of Planning Services or viewed on the Council's web site www.exeter.gov.uk
- 1.6 The SPD and the audit do not refer to allotments, which are covered by a separate strategy, or bowling greens, cemeteries, graveyards or civic spaces.
- 1.7 Some of the terms used in relevant sections of the Local Plan First Review are those used by the National Playing Field Association's guidance. The SPD and the audit use expressions that reflect more recent practice and more accurately describe the existing provision. For example, the Local Plan First Review refers to youth and adult play space (e.g Policy L4) whereas the SPD and the audit describe them as formal sports facilities and informal youth facilities. The glossary provided in Appendix D provides definitions of all the terms used and the relationship between them.

2.0 Structure

- 2.1 The document first gives general guidance about how the policies will be applied in practice and then considers each policy in turn. Sections 4 and 5 relate to policies that seek to protect open space and recreation facilities. Sections 6, 7 and 8 amplify policies aimed at securing provision of open space and facilities as a result of new residential development.

3.0 General Guidance

- 3.1 In practice, whilst the need for facilities such as public open space generated by a development can be quantified, the requirements may sometimes be difficult to meet in the area concerned. The Council will be flexible in the way in which overall open space requirements are satisfied so that if local requirements cannot be met, contributions can be re-directed to meet city-wide needs.

- 3.2 Although the Local Plan policies relate only to public open space it is recognised that the leisure needs of a development might be better met in some circumstances by the provision of or improvement of existing indoor recreation facilities or in other ways. Contributions by developers towards the provision of indoor facilities will be encouraged especially where necessary open space facilities are difficult to provide.

- 3.3 First Review Local Plan paragraphs 7.32 and 13.42 set out standards for provision of open space and recreational facilities based on those provided by the National Playing Field Association. The Government, in PPG17, advises that planning authorities should set their own standards to reflect local conditions. The standards set out in the SPD have been developed as a result of this advice both to clarify relevant Local Plan policies and to provide a basis for auditing open space provision.

- 3.4 The advice provided by this document should be seen in the context of government guidance and Exeter Local Plan First Review policy as a whole. The Council recognizes that the protection and provision of public open space facilities are only some of the things that need to be taken into account when new development is considered. There may be situations in which some open space requirements will have to be waived to ensure that an otherwise satisfactory development can go ahead.

Protection of Open Space and Facilities

4.0 Development on Open Space (Policy L3)

- 4.1 Local Plan First Review Policy L3 lists the very limited circumstances in which the loss of open space will be permitted. This will be tested against the audit which clarifies the recreational role of an open space and indicates the availability and adequacy of open space in the area. The value of its community, ecological and amenity roles will be assessed at the same time.

4.2 The option of replacing the open space with an equivalent facility bearing in mind its recreation and other roles is introduced by paragraph (d) of the policy.

4.3 The equivalence from a recreational point of view will be decided by the Council, in consultation with the developer, in the light of the findings of the audit. The loss of an open space might, through this provision, allow a more serious local deficiency to be addressed.

5.0 Development causing loss of Playing Fields or local Sporting Facilities (Policies L5 and L7)

5.1 The impact of the loss of recreational/sporting opportunities in the area is the determining factor for Local Plan First Review Policies L5 and L7

5.2 Given the compact nature of the City, the variety of sporting requirements and current patterns of use, playing fields are generally seen as City-wide resources. Because of this and the conclusions of the audit, the loss of a poor quality playing field may be considered, in consultation with Sport England, subject to a payment enabling existing recreational resources elsewhere to be brought up to a better standard or adapted to meet new needs. The payment will be used to provide specified facilities agreed with the developer enabling the Council to meet both recreation needs created by the development and those met by the playing field to be lost. Proposals to build on playing fields will also have to be considered in the context of Policy L3 discussed above.

5.3 Paragraph 7.36 of the Local Plan First Review gives examples of instances where the loss of playing fields would not cause harm to recreation opportunities.

Provision of Open Space and Facilities

6.0 Provision of Outdoor Sport and Informal Youth Facilities (Policy L4)

6.1 Local Plan First Review Policy L4, which applies to developments of 10 or more dwellings, seeks provision directly related to and necessary for the type of development proposed

6.2 All residential development, with the exception of housing for the frail elderly, generates a need for outdoor sport facilities which are seen as a City wide resource

6.3 The Local Plan First Review policy and paragraphs 7.32 and 7.35 rely on national guidance provided by Sport England and the National Playing Field Association to indicate how new housing development should contribute towards provision of playing pitches. In practice improving sports provision will rely on contributions from various sources including contributions from developers.

- 6.4 The Council's objective is that the overall level and quality of provision is at least as high as would be achieved if national standards relating to new development were applied.
- 6.5 Few developments in the City are likely to be large enough to provide a playing field or similar facility in its entirety, let alone on the same site. As a result this need will usually be met through payment of commuted sums, which may need to be spent some distance away from the development for certain facilities.
- 6.6 Developers will be expected to contribute a fixed amount per dwelling towards the provision and maintenance of playing pitches to serve the development, unless appropriate facilities of equivalent value are to be provided on the site which have been previously agreed with the Council's Parks and Open Space Manager. The method of calculating the amount will be provided by the document: 'Implementing Open Space Requirements' described in paragraph 1.4 above. The figure per dwelling will be revised annually in the light in changes in costs over the previous year. An indication as to how contributions will be targeted will be given at the time of the application.

7.0 Provision of Open Space as part of Family Housing Developments (Policy DG 5)

- 7.1 The policy seeks the provision of informal recreation space near to and for the benefit of family housing areas.
- 7.2 For the purposes of Policy DG5 family housing developments are defined as those in which a majority of dwellings have two or more bedrooms.
- 7.3 Local Plan Paragraph 13.41 advises that the required open space should be on the site where the development comprises 50 or more dwellings. Alternatives for smaller developments include provision, or contributions towards provision, on other sites in the vicinity. Guidance as to the character of the open space required is given by Local Plan First Review paragraphs 13.44 to 13.46. To be of value the open space should be easy to reach for adults, sometimes accompanied by small children, on a casual basis.
- 7.4 The aim is that family housing is closely associated with an informal recreation area which is:
- fully accessible to the public;
 - comprise at least 1000 sq m of which no part is less than 20 m wide and/or contain-slopes greater than 1:6;
 - appropriate in character and function to the surrounding area but also offering varied potential activities and surroundings;
 - highly visible so that all residents are fully aware of its existence;
 - easily reached on foot or cycle by a convenient and safe route;
 - no more than 250m away.
- 7.5 'Implementing Open Space Requirements' (see paragraph 1.4) will describe arrangements for the adoption and future maintenance of open space by the Council.

8.0 Provision of Equipped Informal Play Space (Policy DG5)

8.1 Local Plan First Review Policy DG5 refers specifically to equipped children's play space and there is a need for some space of this kind. There is also a need for youth facilities such as multi-use games areas which are mainly of value to young adults. People of this age group, although fairly independent may not be able to afford to travel long distances and are not necessarily interested in formal sport. Policy L3 as well as DG5 provides the framework for seeking facilities of this kind.

8.2 The Council will consider the need for new developments to provide new play areas or improvements to existing ones against the following standards:

- where practicable all children up to and including 12 years of age to live within 1000m of a play area equipped to meet the needs/interests of their age group and be able to reach it safely and conveniently on foot;
- where practicable all children under 8 to live within 500m of a play area equipped to meet the needs/interests of their age group and be able to reach it safely and conveniently on foot;
- all play areas to be of good quality using the criteria set out in the audit;
- play areas meeting the needs of different age groups up to and including 12 year olds to be provided as far as possible on the same site in accordance with the pattern of provision set out in the audit;
- where practicable all residential areas to be within 1500 m of a major informal youth facility such as a multi-use games areas and 1000 m of other facilities for this age group. Access should be free.

8.3 The application of the walking distance standards described above will also take into account a number of factors including:

- the number of children of relevant age groups living within the catchment area;
- the extent to which the play facility might attract people from further afield;
- the feasibility of providing for children of the relevant age groups in a satisfactory way;
- the quality of the pedestrian routes which children will have to use to reach the facility.

8.4 Given the existing generally satisfactory distribution of equipped play areas developers will usually be expected to contribute towards the improvement of existing play areas rather than to provide new ones. Developers may be requested to contribute towards overcoming any local imbalance of provision, for example, where the needs of older children are not currently being met satisfactorily.

- 8.5 Arrangements for the provision and future maintenance of play equipment are to be set out in 'Implementing Open Space Requirements' introduced in paragraph 1.4.

APPENDIX A

Sustainability Appraisal

The Open Space SPD is concerned with providing further detail of Exeter Local Plan First Review policies on:-

Development on Open Space;
Development on Playing Fields;
Provision of outdoor sports and Informal Youth Facilities;

Provision of Open Space as part of a Family Housing Development;
Provision of Equipped Children's Play Spaces.

It is supported by an audit of the City's public open space and guidance to developers on the implementation of public open space requirements.

As the aim of the SPD is to clarify how the policies are to be implemented and is unlikely in itself to have any significant environmental effects it will not be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Local Plan First Review open space policies were subject to a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) as part of the Local Plan process. When the relevant policies on open space are brought forward as part of the LDF they will be subject to an SA in accordance with the appropriate regulations. The SPD is unlikely to have any wider social or economic effects

In these circumstances it is concluded that no Sustainability Appraisal is required for the Open Space Supplementary Planning Document.

APPENDIX B Consultation Statement

A Sources

- 1 Internal records.
- 2 Site surveys.
- 3 The Bennett Report (1999 – Revised 2000) – an audit of all formal outdoor sports facilities following consultation with users.
- 4 Wavelength 6 (2003) – Council survey on the use of Council’s parks and related issues.
- 5 Wavelength 7 (2004) – Council survey on open space in terms of quality and accessibility.
- 6 Focus group – discussion group with sport users hosted by Exeter City Council.
- 7 Living Options meeting – short presentation and feedback session with the City’s main disabilities umbrella group.
- 8 Internet survey – open space and sport use survey placed on line and sent to local businesses.

B Conclusions

The main views expressed included:

- 1 open spaces, sports and recreation facilities are highly valued for a variety of reasons;
- 2 most people surveyed are satisfied with the quantity and quality of the open space, sport and recreation facilities;
- 3 for these facilities to be better used a more effective marketing programme should be put in place;
- 4 there appears to be widespread support for the valley parks amongst respondents to the questionnaire surveys;
- 5 concern is expressed about difficulties of access to the valley parks for people using wheelchairs and mobility scooters because of steps, stiles and gates etc; Unfortunately many of these are necessary to prevent access by motorcycles.
- 6 although there seems to be general satisfaction with the quality of city parks, the following concerns are raised:
 - lack of security;
 - inadequate lighting;
 - litter;
 - lack of dog bins;
 - too little seating;

- lack of facilities for teenagers;
- lack of sports facilities;
- poor condition of sports facilities.
- limitations of access for people with disabilities.

No comments have been received about the quality of the smaller informal recreation areas.

- 7 strong views are expressed in support of the expansion of the quantity and range of formal sporting facilities; It is suggested that there is a need for a local Premier Division public soccer pitch; rugby academy; netball centre; and pitches for rounders and archery as well as a need for more football pitches; artificial turf pitches; and golf courses.
- 8 some concern is expressed about the accessibility of formal sports facilities including the quality of parking provision although most people normally expect to travel some distance within the City to participate;
- 9 there are mixed views about the quality of formal sports facilities serving the city as a whole; It is suggested that there is a need for to improve some ancillary facilities especially the supply of changing rooms, floodlighting, practice nets etc.
- 10 a number of respondents suggest that at least some of the facilities available are too expensive to allow them to be accessible to many people;
- 11 some young people suggest that there is a lack of informal youth facilities in open spaces and express concern about the availability of public transport to several facilities;
- 12 there is a high level of satisfaction with the amount and quality of play provision but there are suggestions that some play areas are underused.

Many of the views expressed concern the way in which facilities are managed including their maintenance and charges. These matters are not considered as part of the audit because they are outside its terms of reference. Responses have, however, been passed on to the Council's Leisure and Parks and Open Spaces Managers.

APPENDIX C
Local Plan Policies

L3 Development on open space will only be permitted if:

- a) the loss of the open space would not harm the character of the area; and
- b) the open space does not fulfil a valuable, recreational, community, ecological or amenity role; and
- c) there is adequate open space in the area; or
- d) the loss of open space is outweighed by its replacement in the area by open space of at least equivalent recreational, community, ecological or amenity value (including in particular, the provision and enhancement of equipped play space).

L4 Residential development of 10 or more dwellings should contribute to the provision of youth and adult play space (directly related to, and necessary for the development) having regard to the type of residential development proposed and considered against a standard level of provision of playing pitches of 1.2 hectares for every 450 dwellings. (Policy L6 relating to the location of synthetic turf pitches and multi-use games areas [MUGAs] near housing should be noted).

L5 Development that would result in the loss of a playing field will not be permitted if it would harm recreation opportunities in the area.

L7 Development that would result in the loss of sporting facilities which serve a local area will not be permitted if it would harm sports opportunities in the area.

DG5 Family housing proposals should provide 10% of the gross development area as level open space, including equipped children's play space unless there is open space and play provision in the area which is well located and of sufficient size and quality to serve the development.

APPENDIX D
Glossary

CITY PARKS	Large areas, mainly in the City centre and neighbourhood centres primarily designed to meet informal recreation needs but often incorporating gardens, natural green space, formal sports facilities, informal youth facilities and equipped children's play areas.
CITY WIDE FACILITIES	Includes city parks, formal sports facilities, valley parks and the types of informal youth facility which have a wide appeal such as skate board parks.
CIVIC SPACES	Intensively used public spaces which are mainly hard surfaced and located in town centres. E.g Bedford Square and lower section of Gandy Street
EQUIPPED CHILDREN'S PLAY AREAS	Areas designed and equipped for play and interaction by children 12 years old and under.
FORMAL SPORTS FACILITIES	Areas reserved and maintained as outdoor playing space for organised competitive sports comprising mainly playing pitches (football, cricket, and rugby) but including facilities such as bowling greens and tennis courts.
INFORMAL RECREATION AREAS	Land laid out and planted for informal activities such as walking, cycling, kite flying, Frisbee, ball games etc. Comprising a main feature of city parks and including local amenity space.
INFORMAL YOUTH FACILITIES	Areas equipped for informal recreation by youths and children aged 13 and over. Main examples are Multi-Use Games Areas, skate parks and cycle parks.
MULTI-USE GAMES AREA	An unlit or floodlit, usually fenced, hard-surfaced ball games area which can accommodate 5 a side football and other activities. Minimum recommended size is 14 x 25 sq metres but may be significantly bigger.
NATURAL GREEN SPACE	Land, water and geological features which have been naturally colonized by plants and animals This includes woodlands and other area managed as amenity areas or as wildlife habitats where public access may be limited or even prohibited.
PLAYING FIELD	Comprises the whole of the site which encompasses

	at least one playing pitch required for the participation in outdoor sports including tennis, bowls and athletics, along with ancillary structures such as changing rooms, pavilions, stores etc.
PLAYING PITCH	Area reserved and maintained as outdoor playing space principally for formal organised adult or junior pitch sports (e.g football, cricket and rugby). Excludes land suitable only for kick about or too small for formal (league) games.
PUBLIC OPEN SPACE	Open, grassed and hard landscaped areas fully accessible to the public and maintained in a condition suitable for the purpose it is being provided for.
VALLEY PARKS	Extensive areas varying considerably in character usually containing natural green space and informal recreation areas. Many of the City’s formal sports facilities and one of its city parks are located in valley parks. They are sufficiently large to accommodate long walks and cycle rides. The Exeter Green Circle walking guide encompasses all six valley parks. Public access is not necessarily open to all parts of a valley park.
YOUTH AND ADULT PLAY SPACE	See Formal Sports Facilities and Informal Youth Facilities. Also Playing Field and Playing Pitch.
<p>NB GENERAL GUIDANCE ON AGE GROUPS For the purposes of this document, “children” are usually taken to be people aged 12 years and under and “youths” people aged 13 to 17 inclusive.</p>	