

REPORT TO: CABINET POLICY DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP

DATE: 7 OCTOBER 2021

TITLE: OPEN SPACE, SPORT AND RECREATION STANDARDS SPD

LEAD OFFICER: ANDREW BRAMIDGE, HEAD OF ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING (01279) 446410

CONTRIBUTING OFFICERS: PAUL MACBRIDE, FORWARD PLANNING MANAGER (01279) 446258

DAVID WATTS, SENIOR FORWARD PLANNING OFFICER (01279) 446577

RECOMMENDED that:

- A** The Working Group notes the contents of the report and comments as necessary.

BACKGROUND

1. Policy L1 of the Harlow Local Development Plan (HLDP) sets out the requirement for major development to provide or upgrade public open space, play space, allotment facilities along with their ongoing management and maintenance. The implementation of this policy is to be set out in further detail in an Open Space, Sport and Recreation Supplementary Planning Document (OSSPD).
2. The existing OSSPD was adopted in June 2007. It sets out the Council's approach to the provision of open space in new development, by providing quantifiable standards for the different categories of open space, whether provision should be on- or off-site (and the appropriate contributions if off-site), and what commuted maintenance sums are payable if the new facilities are subsequently adopted by the Council.
3. The existing OSSPD is now considered out of date as it no longer conforms to up-to-date national policy and guidance, the adopted HLDP or current evidence base in respect of standards. It is important, therefore, that the OSSPD is updated to reflect these changes and to support the determination of planning applications.
4. It is proposed that a draft replacement OSSPD is produced by the end of 2021, with public consultation taking place in early 2022 and subsequent adoption in Spring 2022.

ISSUES/PROPOSALS

Draft Objectives and Chapter Headings

5. A draft set of objectives for the new OSSPD is as follows:
- a) to support the implementation of the Harlow Local Development Plan policies relating to open spaces and recreation.
 - b) to meet the open space, sport and recreation needs generated by new development, based on the most up-to-date and locally-justified provision standards.
 - c) to protect and enhance the district's Green Infrastructure (GI), particularly GI used for recreational purposes.
 - d) to ensure that open space, sport and recreation facilities are of a design which is accessible to everyone
 - e) to ensure that appropriate on-site or off-site planning contributions are sought to create or enhance open space, sport and recreation facilities

Question: Should these objectives be amended or added to?

6. It is proposed that the updated OSSPD will contain the following chapter headings:
- a) Introduction and Objectives.
 - b) National and Local Policy Background.
 - c) Implementation of the SPD (e.g. what development the SPD relates to, application submission requirements).
 - d) Open Space, Sport and Recreation standards.
 - e) Planning contributions including off-site contributions and commuted sums.
 - f) Design standards (e.g. changing room facilities, allotment facilities, disability access).
7. The chapter headings above focus on on-site standards and off-site contributions. It does not include matters around calculating biodiversity Net-Gain or how Green infrastructure should be connected through to new developments or designed within them. These aspects are to be set out in a separate Natural Environment SPD and a full update of the Design Guide SPD (an interim Design Guide addendum is currently out for consultation).

Question: Should Biodiversity Net-Gain be set out in a separate SPD?

Question: Should Green Infrastructure design considerations be set out in the Design Guide SPD?

Updating the open space, sport and recreation standards

8. The provision standards in the updated OSSPD will ensure the correct amounts of open space, sport and recreation facilities are secured in new development, both now and in the future.
9. Officers have been considering what standards to use for development proposals in regards to on-site provision. The following have been considered:
 - a) In 2013, consultants LUC produced an Open Space Study for the HLDP Evidence Base, which audited most open spaces in Harlow based on their quantity and quality. From this work and a review of national/local benchmark standards at the time, LUC produced and justified recommended open space provision standards, covering a wide range of types of open space.
 - b) Fields in Trust, a national charity dedicated to protecting open spaces, have produced recommended benchmark guidelines (provision standards) for various open space types. These standards, last updated in November 2020, have been widely used by local authorities and Sport England for a number of years. Fields in Trust recommend, however, that the guidelines are adjusted to take account of local circumstances.
 - c) Standards set out in the 2007 OSSPD.
 - d) Sports Facilities Study produced in 2017.
10. A table produced by LUC, which describes the different types of open space, can be found at Appendix 2.
11. Appendix 1 provides options for potential new open space provision standards, firstly based on LUC's recommended standards (further details can be found in the full report) and secondly on the Fields in Trust guidance/standards. The existing (equivalent) standards in the 2007 OSSPD are also provided for comparison. Appendix 2 includes a table describing the function of each different type of open space as set out in the LUC study.
12. There are two standards for each open space type – the accessibility standard (defined as the maximum distance residents should be required to travel to use an open space of a specific type) and the quantity standard (defined as the minimum provision of each open space type which should be provided per 1,000 population).

13. Given the LUC study produced bespoke recommended standards for Harlow; it is proposed that the new OSSPD uses similar standards. In the new OSSPD, the setting of each standard will be explained and justified.

Question: Are the standards recommended by LUC (see Appendix 1) suitable and usable?

Question: Should they be adjusted to bring them more in line with the Fields in Trust standards (where applicable)?*

*East Herts Council in their OSSPD have, for example, contained standards derived from the Fields in Trust work and locally-specific Evidence Base documents.

Next Steps

14. Officers will now prepare the draft version of the updated OSSPD and consider which standards are the most suitable for development sites in Harlow. The draft will be shared with colleagues internally for comment including the Development Management Team and community and leisure officers.
15. It is anticipated that a draft of the document will be presented to the Town Plan Panel in late November 2021 and recommended to Cabinet for consultation in December. The public consultation is expected to run between January and March 2022.
16. Depending on the scale of responses received and resulting changes which would need to be made to the draft, it is anticipated the updated OSSPD would be presented to Cabinet for adoption in Spring 2022.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Options for Standards

Appendix 2 – Open Space Typology

Background Papers

Design Guide Addendum SPD -

<https://www.harlow.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Design%20Guide%20Addendum%20Supplementary%20Planning%20Document%20%28draft%29.pdf>

Fields in Trust Recommended Benchmark Guidelines -

<https://www.fieldsintrust.org/Upload/file/guidance/Guidance-for-Outdoor-Sport-and-Play-England.pdf>

Harlow Local Development Plan - <https://www.harlow.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/harlow-local-development-plan/harlow-local>

Open Space Study - <https://www.harlow.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/evidence/evidence->

[base?filename=%22open+space+and+green%22&field_document_category_target_id=All](https://www.harlow.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/evidence/evidence-base?filename=%22open+space+and+green%22&field_document_category_target_id=All)

Open Space, Sport and Recreation Standards Supplementary Planning Document (2007) - <https://www.harlow.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/HEB2A%20->

[%20Open%20Space%2C%20Sport%20and%20Recreation%20Supplementary%20Planning%20Document.pdf](#)

Sports Facilities Study - https://www.harlow.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/evidence/evidence-base?filename=%22sports+facilities+study%22&field_document_category_target_id=All

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

HLDP – Harlow Local Development Plan

NPPF/NPPG – National Planning Policy Framework/Guidance (NPPG)

OSSPD – Open Spaces, Sport & Recreation SPD

SPD – Supplementary Planning Document