



To: Executive Councillor for Planning and Sustainable Transport
Report by: Head of Planning Services
Relevant scrutiny committee: Development Plan Scrutiny Sub Committee 12/07/2011
Wards affected: All Wards

Draft Open Space and Recreation Strategy

Non Key Decision

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 An essential part of the character of Cambridge is formed by the open spaces and grounds around buildings and the extent of green spaces within the city. These open spaces may be in public ownership (e.g. City or County Council), but many are part of the University of Cambridge and its colleges. These green spaces are vital for many reasons, including health and well-being, enjoyment and biodiversity. With increasing pressure for development in the city, it is particularly important that green spaces are protected and enhanced and that new open spaces are created and protected.
- 1.2 The purpose of the Draft Open Space and Recreation Strategy is to replace the existing Open Space and Recreation Strategy 2006 in setting out the protection, enhancement and requirements for new provision of open space necessary to meet the needs of the expanding city, and the mechanisms for implementation.
- 1.3 The Draft Open Space and Recreation Strategy has been prepared for stakeholder consultation and is attached as Appendix A of this document. A draft schedule of consultees has also been prepared and is included as Appendix B. The stakeholder consultation will take place between July and September 2011.
- 1.4 Following stakeholder consultation and any consequent amendments, the Draft Open Space and Recreation Strategy will be presented at Environment Scrutiny Committee in October 2011 for adoption as a material consideration and as part of the technical evidence base for the Local Plan Review.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 This report is being submitted to the Development Plan Scrutiny Sub-Committee for prior consideration and comment before decision by the Executive Councillor for Planning and Sustainable Transport.
- 2.2 The Executive Councillor is recommended:
 - a) To approve the Draft Open Space and Recreation Strategy for stakeholder consultation (Appendix A);
 - b) To approve the Draft Schedule of Consultees (Appendix B).

3.0 Background

Purpose of the Draft Open Space and Recreation Strategy

- 3.1 In 2004 and 2006, open spaces within the city were the subject of assessment in the form of the Open Space and Recreation Survey, which then informed the development of the Open Space and Recreation Strategies (2004 and 2006). The last Open Space and Recreation Strategy was adopted in November 2006, incorporating relevant changes made to the Local Plan 2006 during the Inquiry process. The 2006 survey covered approximately 200 sites across the City, including City Council owned and managed sites, schools, University and College grounds. The data held is now almost five years old and it is essential for evidence base purposes that the existing sites are re-surveyed.
- 3.2 The Draft Open Space and Recreation Strategy 2011 (hereafter referred to as the Draft Strategy) seeks to protect open spaces across the City and requires the delivery of new open spaces or the enhancement of existing open spaces through new development. The specification for the draft Open Space and Recreation Strategy was approved at Development Plan Scrutiny Sub-Committee in July 2010.
- 3.3 It seeks to protect a greater range of open spaces than its predecessors as a number of open spaces have been created as a result of residential development and other open spaces have been the subject of development within or adjacent to their sites since 2006. Sites in the growth areas, though consented in some cases, will be surveyed following completion.
- 3.4 The Draft Strategy comprises two main components. The first part of the development of the Draft Strategy is the Open Space and Recreation Assessment, which allows the Council to identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in Cambridge. The

assessment covered over 350 sites, including City Council owned and managed spaces, schools, and University and college land. Of the sites assessed, over 270 sites were considered worthy of designation as Protected Open Space. This assessment of sites in Spring 2011 formed the starting point for producing the Draft Strategy and for effective planning through the on-going use of Policies 3/8 and 4/2 of the Cambridge Local Plan 2006. The assessment of sites and review of relevant literature and national standards has supported the setting of new locally derived standards within the Draft Strategy. The setting of standards forms the second part of the Draft Strategy.

- 3.5 The Draft Strategy forms part of the evidence base for the review of the Local Plan and the development of appropriate future policies. and is required under Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG17): Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (2002).

Policy Context for the Draft Open Space and Recreation Strategy

- 3.6 PPG17 includes a requirement for local authorities to undertake assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sports and recreational facilities. Assessments will normally be undertaken at district level, although assessments of strategic facilities should be undertaken at regional or sub-regional levels.

- 3.7 PPG 17(Paragraph 3) states that:

Local authorities should also undertake audits of existing open space, sports and recreational facilities, the use made of existing facilities, access in terms of location and costs (such as charges) and opportunities for new open space and facilities. Audits should consider both the quantitative and the qualitative elements of open space, sports and recreational facilities . Audits of quality will be particularly important as they will allow local authorities to identify potential for increased use through better design, management and maintenance.

- 3.6 Currently, the Cambridge Local Plan 2006 recognises the importance of open spaces and has two key policies, 3/8 and 4/2. Policy 3/8 *Open Space and Recreation Provision Through New Development* states that:

All residential development will provide public open space and sports facilities in accordance with the Open Space and Recreation Standards. Provision should be on-site as appropriate to the nature and location of development or where the scale of development indicates otherwise through commuted payments to the City Council.

The Open Space and Recreation Standards form Appendix A of the Cambridge Local Plan 2006.

3.7 Policy 4/2 Protection of Open Space in the Cambridge Local Plan 2006 states that:

Development will not be permitted which would be harmful to the character of, or lead to the loss of, open space of environmental and/or recreational importance unless the open space uses can be satisfactorily replaced elsewhere and the site is not important for environmental reasons.

3.8 Open space protected under this policy includes commons, recreation grounds, historic Parks and Gardens, sites with nature conservation designation, outdoor sports facilities, provision for children and teenagers, semi-natural green spaces, allotments, urban spaces and cemeteries. Although the majority are public open spaces, private spaces that contribute to the character, environmental quality or biodiversity of the area are protected. These spaces are often contiguous and have an important linking role as conduits for wildlife and for access by foot and cycle and recreation opportunities. Many have a dual importance, both for the contribution they make to leisure provision and for their environmental importance. Some still retain evidence of significant historic land use patterns.

3.9 Open spaces have been listed in the Draft Strategy as being public or private. In describing whether a site is public or private, one particular area of concern relates to school sites. Whilst private schools in the City have been described as being private, schools in the state sector have been described as being public. This is on the basis of community usage of school playing fields/Multi Use Games Areas etc taking place outside school hours. Access to these kinds of open space, particularly Multi Use Games Areas, provide a genuine resource for the wider communities within the City. In terms of the urban extensions, community access to a number of the school sites is committed to in the relevant Section 106 agreements.

3.10 Open spaces protected under this policy are:

- areas designated as Green Belt on the Proposals Map;
- areas designated Protected Open Space on the Proposals Map; and
- undesignated areas which fulfil at least one of the Criteria to Assess Open Space included in the Plan. This has separate criteria for Environmental and Recreational Importance.

3.11 The criteria for Environmental and Recreational Importance are set out in Appendix B of the Cambridge Local Plan 2006 and are replicated in Appendix B of this report as they form Part 1 of the proposed questionnaire for future assessment.

Content of the Draft Open Space and Recreation Strategy

3.12 The Draft Strategy comprises the following sections:

- Section 1 sets out the introduction, vision and the status of the Draft Strategy;
- Section 2 outlines the policy and strategic context for the document;
- Section 3 discusses the criteria for protecting open spaces, which includes the two established criteria of environmental and recreational importance and a subsidiary quality assessment. Carrying out a quality assessment is advocated by PPG17 and can be used to support decision-making on where monies could be spent in an area;
- Section 4 illustrates the findings of the Open Space and Recreation Assessment work. It breaks the information down by ward and provides data on the deficits in each ward and the ward's strengths and weaknesses in terms of open space provision. It also discusses the level of provision proposed in the urban extensions to the City, which have not been assessed in this Draft Strategy as they have not yet been delivered on site. An indicative map of the existing Protected Open Space in the City and the proposed provision in the urban extensions is set out in Appendix 4.
- Section 5 sets out standards for different types of Protected Open Space.
- Section 6 sets out the approach to implementing the Draft Strategy.

3.13 The main differences between the Open Space and Recreation Strategy 2006 and the Draft Strategy are outlined in the paragraphs below.

1. In addition to the criteria for environmental and recreational importance, the assessment now includes a questionnaire on quality. This is in keeping with the requirements of PPG17 and allows the Council to direct monies towards sites in poorer condition. It also allows officers to record a snapshot of the quality of the site in 2011, which can be compared against future quality assessments of sites. This quality assessment is

discussed in paragraphs 3.13 to 3.15 of the Draft Strategy. The questions are included as Appendix 3 and the quality scores for each site form part of Appendix 2 of the Draft Strategy.

2. A number of sites have been assessed during the preparation of this Draft Strategy that were not previously considered, including new sites delivered since 2006.
3. As the development of the urban extensions has moved forward considerably since the last Open Space and Recreation Strategy, information on the proposed open spaces in the urban extensions is included. This information is provided in paragraphs 4.4 – 4.12.
4. Sections 4.19 to 4.32 provide profiles for each ward. The profiles provide information on Protected Open Spaces at a ward level as this approach allows data to be viewed at a comprehensible level for use by planning officers and other stakeholders to identify deficiencies. It also allows strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to be identified on a ward basis in relation to open space. Each profile includes a map of the Protected Open Spaces in the ward and a list of the sites which indicates whether the sites are publicly accessible or are private, requiring either an entry payment or membership of a College or allotment society for example. A number of the ward maps show Protected Open Spaces that span two or more wards. Any cross-boundary Protected Open Space is shown on the maps of each ward, but is only shown on one ward list in order to avoid double-counting of the site's area. Draft ward profiles were sent to all Councillors for their feedback. This resulted in a number of changes being made to the ward profiles and further assessment of a number of open spaces taking place, which has been incorporated into the Draft Strategy.
5. Chapter 5 sets out the proposed Open Space and Recreation Standards. The adopted standards for the quantity of open space required through new development are set out in the Cambridge Local Plan 2006. Policy 3/8 requires all residential development to include open space in accordance with the open space standards as included in Appendix A of the Local Plan. As this Draft Strategy suggests new standards, the Cambridge Local Plan 2006 standards will stand as the adopted standards for the time-being. However, the Draft Strategy's new standards will form part of the evidence base for the review of the Local Plan and support the Planning Obligations Strategy. Following the adoption of the next Local Plan, the Strategy will be formally

updated and readopted in order to ensure that the standards of the new Local Plan and Strategy are aligned.

6. The main changes proposed to the existing Cambridge Local Plan standards are an increase in the Informal Open Space standard from 1.8 hectares per 1,000 people to 2.2 hectares per 1,000 people, and a change in the 0.4 hectares per 1,000 people standard for allotments.
7. The change to Informal Open Space is based on the level of provision of this form of open space in the City and is discussed in paragraphs 5.30 to 5.34.
8. Currently, the allotment standard is 0.4 hectares per 1,000 people for the urban extensions only. It is suggested that the standard remains the same number of hectares per 1,000 population, but the standard is now also to be required in the existing built-up area of the City in addition to being required for the urban extensions. This is to allow the provision of further land for allotments to meet demand and to allow enhancements to existing allotment sites, which might allow increased levels of usage.

3.14 The Council is currently reviewing its position in relation to adoption and access of open spaces delivered through new development and the final Strategy will need to reflect this.

4.0 Next Steps

- 4.1 After approval for consultation at Development Plan Scrutiny Sub-Committee, the Draft Strategy will be released for stakeholder consultation between July and September 2011.
- 4.2 Following amendments to the Draft Strategy as a result of consultation, the document will be presented at Environment Scrutiny Committee in October 2011 for adoption as a material consideration in the planning process and as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan Review.
- 4.3 In terms of its role as a material consideration, a playing field site may have been assessed in 2011 as part of the Draft Strategy. If a proposal for development came forward which might give rise to the loss of the playing field, the work included in the Draft Strategy allows the Council the opportunity to show its importance for environmental and/or recreational reasons. The case officer for the planning application would use the findings of the Open Space and Recreation

Assessment and Strategy to inform decision-making on the principle of the loss of the playing field and the quantity and qualities of publicly accessible open space to be provided on site based on deficits in the locality.

- 4.4 In relation to forming part of the evidence base for the Local Plan Review, as this Draft Strategy suggests new standards, the Cambridge Local Plan 2006 (and the Planning Obligations Strategy Supplementary Planning Document) standards will stand as the adopted standards for the time-being. The suggested new standards will be used to inform the Local Plan Review and support the Planning Obligations Strategy. Following the adoption of the next Local Plan, the Strategy will be formally updated and readopted in order to ensure that the standards of the new Local Plan and Strategy are aligned.

5.0 Implications

Financial/Procurement

- 5.1 The Council will continue to seek Section 106 contributions in accordance with the Planning Obligations Strategy Supplementary Planning Document 2010.

Staffing

- 5.2 There are no direct staffing implications arising from this report.

Equal Opportunities

- 5.3 There are no direct equal opportunities impacts arising from this report. The Draft Strategy seeks to ensure that the provision of open space meets the needs of residents regardless of their age, ethnic profile or any disability.

Environmental

- 5.4 There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report. The Draft Strategy is concerned with the protection, enhancement and provision of open space. It reflects the need to balance meeting the needs of those who live, work, visit or study in the City, with the protection and enhancement of the environment. The new Development Plan for Cambridge will assist in the delivery of high quality and sustainable new developments along with protecting and enhancing the built and natural environment of the City.

Community Safety

5.5 There are no direct community safety implications arising from this report. Community safety is an important issue which affects the use of open space. The Draft Strategy reflects the need to take this into account in proposals for new or improved open space.

6.0 Background papers

6.1 These background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- Cambridge Local Plan 2006
- Open Space and Recreation Strategy November 2006

7.0 Appendices

- Appendix A: Draft Open Space and Recreation Strategy
- Appendix B: Draft Schedule of Consultees

8.0 Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

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