

This document is one of the supporting topic papers of West Berkshire Council's supplementary guidance series 'Delivering Investment from Growth – West Berkshire Council's approach to securing developer contributions towards local infrastructure, services and amenities'. It is intended as a guide for landowners, developers and residents and sets out how the Council will deal with planning applications where a contribution towards open space will be sought.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The West Berkshire District Local Plan 2002, defines public open space as land available to satisfy the recreation and leisure needs of the community. The Plan notes that such open space can fulfil a number of functions including:

- Areas for formal sporting activity;
- Areas for informal recreation and leisure purposes;
- Play areas; and
- Amenity land.

1.2 This Supplementary Planning Guidance, uses the same definition of open space as that set out within the Local Plan. Accordingly, the following guidance should be considered as valid for sports provision, informal recreational provision, children's play areas, and other amenity space.

1.3 Notwithstanding the above, Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 17 (July 2002) advises that open space should be taken to mean all open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can also act as a visual amenity.

1.4 Policy RL1 of the West Berkshire Local Plan 2002 sets a public open space standard for developments of between 3 and 4.3 hectares per thousand population in such form, scale and distribution as may be considered appropriate depending on local circumstances. The standard is based on the following breakdown of uses:

<u>Playing fields and specialist activity areas</u>	<u>1.6 ha</u>
<u>Equipped Play Space</u>	<u>0.8 ha</u>
<u>Public Amenity Space</u>	<u>0.6 to 1.9 ha</u>
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<u>Total</u>	<u>3.0 to 4.3 ha</u>

1.5 Policy RL1 recognises the form, scale and distribution of the public open space will depend on local circumstances, however, in determining the appropriate mix of

open space types, the above breakdown will be used. It should also be noted that the above standards are minimum standards.

2.0 Value of Open Space

2.1 PPG17 (July 2002) establishes that open spaces, sport and recreation all underpin people's quality of life, and that well designed and implemented planning policies for open space, sport and recreation are therefore fundamental to delivering the Government's objectives and supporting urban renaissance, rural renewal, health and well-being and promoting social inclusion, community cohesion and sustainable development.

2.2 West Berkshire District Council, in line with government guidance, recognises the value of open space, sport and recreation facilities. The West Berkshire Local Plan, sets out the Council's aims for the provision of open space, sport and recreation. These aims are:

- To ensure the appropriate level and distribution of public open space and recreational facilities to meet local needs;
- To improve available opportunities for recreation provision in West Berkshire and to make them accessible to as wide a section of the community as possible;
- To seek improved access to the countryside in a manner which conserves its landscape and wildlife value, is sustainable in the long term, and which minimises the conflict between users, landowners and local residents;
- To continue to support the restoration of the Kennet and Avon Canal and measures to enhance its recreational value, providing such measures do not demonstrably harm the environmental character and ecology of the canal;
- To identify and maintain an appropriate balance between recreation and nature conservation in areas important for both activities.

2.3 In setting out the planning policies, the Local Plan establishes a standard of open space provision designed to help meet the aims as set out above.

3.0 Commuted Maintenance Sums for Developments of 10 or More Dwellings

3.1 Policy RL.1 of the local plan requires developments of ten or more dwellings to provide open space at a standard of between 3 and 4.3 hectares per 1000 population, and seek the transfer of the open space to local authority ownership, together with any appropriate sum for ongoing maintenance.

Methodology

3.2 The Council's methodology for calculating the appropriate sum for ongoing maintenance is set out below:

3.3 The sum is calculated according to an approved landscaping plan for the open space to be provided, as set out within the approved planning application (normally

dealt with by way of a condition requiring the submission and agreement of a landscape plan prior to development commencing). The approved landscape plan should show all relevant details of proposed landscaping, shrub planting and trees and, as appropriate, any recreational facilities such as play areas and equipment.

3.4 The Council recognises Spon's "Landscape and External Works Price Book 2002" (Spon Press 2002) as providing the industry standard costs for the majority of grounds maintenance work, and will use the prices set out within the document to calculate the cost of maintenance per annum. As the "Landscape and External Works" document is updated annually, to reflect changing costs for maintenance, the Council's grounds maintenance costs will be subsequently updated in line with revised editions of "Landscape and External Works Price Book"

3.5 In recognising Spon's Price Book as providing industry standard costs, the Council also recognises that Spon's does not necessarily provide figures for all landscaping and maintenance activities. Additionally the cost of landscaping and maintenance may vary as a result of factors such as local labour rates. In order to accommodate this variation the Council will apply in-house cost rates where costs cannot be calculated using Spon's. It may also apply landscape and maintenance costs lower than those set out within Spon's where there is clear evidence that the required maintenance can be provided at a lower cost than that calculated using Spon's. Conversely the Council also recognises that in exceptional circumstances required landscape and maintenance costs may exceed those set out in Spon's. Accordingly where there is clear evidence that the required works can only be provided at a higher cost than that calculated using Spon's the Council will apply the higher costs.

3.6 Where it appears that the grounds maintenance figure cannot be calculated using Spon's "Landscape and External Works Price Book" or that it would be inappropriate to do so in the light of other factors (such as those set out in the above paragraph) applicants are advised to contact the Council's Grounds Maintenance Manager.

3.7 The cost of the maintenance per annum figure is then multiplied by 20 years, including compound growth of the maintenance cost based on the General Index of Retail Prices (all items) published by the Central Statistical Office, at the time of the agreement.

4.0 Off-Site Financial Contribution for Open Space Provision or Improvements to Existing Facilities for Developments of 10 or More Dwellings

4.1 Policy RL2 of the Local Plan, maintains that the provision of public open space may be satisfied by:

- i. Provision within a development site;
- ii. Provision made through formal agreement on other land in the applicants control which is readily accessible from the development site and appropriate for public open space/recreational use;

- iii. In certain circumstances by making payment to meet the necessary public open space or other recreational requirements within a reasonable distance of the development site. The Council will accept such a payment only if it is able to provide new public open space or other appropriate recreational facilities easily accessible to the development site within a reasonable period of time.

Or by a combination of i, ii and iii.

- 4.2 The Council will accept the principle of an off-site financial contribution, in line with Policy RL.2, providing it has been agreed (as part of the planning application process). The Council will apply the following methodology for calculating the appropriate sum to be provided:

Methodology

- 4.3 Due to the fluctuating nature of land costs and the likelihood of it varying depending on availability and location within the West Berkshire area, no assumed land cost rate is included within this SPG. ~~The sum is calculated using the assumption that the Council will be required to acquire an appropriate piece of land, which it would then landscape and subsequently maintain.~~
- 4.4 In the majority of cases the Council expects the open space requirement to be met through the improvement to existing public recreational facilities. Where this is the case the Council will not seek to apply a land cost rate. For all other cases, in determining the land cost applicable the council will have regard to local circumstances and the availability of suitable land, and will seek to apply a land cost rate commensurate with local circumstances. ~~The land cost is assumed at a rate of £5,000 per acre (£12,350 per hectare). However, the Council may review this figure in the light of local circumstances and the availability of suitable land. It may also agree to a lower financial contribution for land cost if provision of the open space requirement is met through an improvement to an existing recreational facility.~~
- 4.5 The Council will normally calculate the cost of landscaping using relevant data from Spon's "Landscape and External Works Price Book". However, in line with paragraph 3.5 (see above) the Council, where applicable, will apply its in-house cost rates. The landscaping to be provided will be as set out within a landscape plan, agreed between the Council and the applicant, normally prior to the granting of permission.
- 4.6 The cost of ongoing maintenance of the resulting open space, will be calculated using the methodology for calculating commuted maintenance sums, as set out above.

5.0 Residential Developments of less than 10 Dwellings.

- 5.1 In line with Policy OVS.3 of the Local Plan, the Council considers it appropriate to seek contributions towards open space provision from residential developments of

less than 10 dwellings, as the cumulative effects of such development places additional demands on the existing open space provision within the District.

- 5.2 Where developments of less than ten dwellings are sought, the Council considers it would be generally inappropriate to seek on-site provision of open space due to site constraints and the likelihood that any such provision would result in open space areas of unusable size. The Council will therefore seek contributions towards the improvement and maintenance of the nearest or most appropriate open space to the development or, where appropriate, the provision and subsequent maintenance of new open space.
- 5.3 It is recognised that the contribution sought from new development may be insufficient or uneconomic on its own to provide new open space or improvements to existing open space. This may be particularly the case in some areas where a limited level of new development would be expected. The Council may therefore consider it appropriate and cost effective to provide new open space or undertake improvements once funding has been secured from a number of smaller developments.
- 5.4 In determining the level of contributions required the Council will have regard to the public open space minimum standards set out in Policy RL.1 and paragraph 1.4 above.

Methodology

- 5.5 In line with paragraph 5.2 the sum per dwelling is calculated assuming the open space demands arising from the development will be met by improvements to existing open space, or where appropriate, the provision and subsequent maintenance of new open space, and will meet the minimum standards set out within Policy RL.1 and paragraph 1.4 above.
- 5.6 In line with the methodology adopted for developments in excess of 10 dwellings, the Council recognises that Spon's may not provide figures for all landscaping and maintenance activities and that costs may also vary as a result of factors such as local labour market rates. In order to accommodate this variation, the Council will apply in-house costs where costs cannot be calculated using Spon's. It may also apply landscaping and maintenance costs lower than those set out within Spon's where there is clear evidence that the required work can be provided at a lower cost than that calculated using Spon's. Conversely the Council also recognises that in exceptional circumstances required landscaping and maintenance costs may exceed those set out in Spon's. Accordingly where there is clear evidence that the required work can only be provided at a higher cost than that calculated using Spon's the Council will apply the higher costs.
- 5.7 For the purposes of providing a guide to developers, as to the likely sum per dwelling sought by the Council for the provision and subsequent maintenance of public open space arising from residential developments of less than 10 dwellings, the following methodology uses costs taken from Spon's "Landscape and External Works Price Book 2002" and the Council's current contract rates. These costs will

be kept under review and will be subject to change in the light of revisions to Spon's and future contract rate changes.

Land Cost (where applicable)

- 5.7 Where it is appropriate to apply an assumed land cost, the rate applied shall be commensurate with local market costs and calculated with regard to local circumstances and the availability of land (see paragraph 4.4).
- 5.8 Where a land cost is applied a cost per dwelling (cost per employee in the case of commercial development) shall be calculated based on the applied rate of provision (the minimum rate of provision is 3 hectares per 1000 population)

Initial Landscaping Cost

Playing fields and specialist activity areas

<u>Cost of landscaping</u>	<u>£33,900 per hectare</u>
<u>Minimum provision standard per 1000 persons</u>	<u>1.6 hectares</u>
<u>Landscaping cost per 1000 persons</u>	<u>£54,240</u>
<u>Landscaping cost per person</u>	<u>£54</u>
<u>Landscaping cost per dwelling *</u>	<u>£137</u>

- 5.9 The same methodology is also applied to equipped play space and public amenity areas this results in the following costs

Equipped Play Space

<u>Cost of provision</u>	<u>£750,000 per hectare</u>
<u>Minimum provision standard per 1000 persons</u>	<u>0.8 hectares</u>
<u>Provision cost per 1000 persons</u>	<u>£600,000</u>
<u>Provision per person</u>	<u>£600</u>
<u>Provision cost per dwelling *</u>	<u>£1,524</u>

Public Amenity Space

<u>Cost of landscaping</u>	<u>£17,708 per hectare</u>
<u>Minimum provision standard per 1000 persons</u>	<u>0.6 hectares</u>
<u>Landscaping cost per 1000 persons</u>	<u>£10,625</u>
<u>Landscaping cost per person</u>	<u>£11</u>
<u>Landscaping cost per dwelling *</u>	<u>£27</u>

Total initial landscaping cost per dwelling £1,688

Maintenance Cost

* Assuming average household size of 2.54 persons per dwelling

Playing fields and specialist activity areas

<u>Cost of maintaining playing fields</u>	<u>£861 per hectare</u>
<u>Minimum provision standard per 1000 persons</u>	<u>1.6 hectares</u>
<u>Maintenance cost per 1000 persons per year</u>	<u>£1,377</u>
<u>Maintenance cost per person per year</u>	<u>£1.38</u>
<u>Maintenance cost per dwelling per year</u>	<u>£3.50</u>

5.10 The same methodology is also applied to equipped play space and public amenity areas this results in the following costs

Equipped Play Space

<u>Cost of maintaining equipped play space</u>	<u>£42,025 per hectare</u>
<u>Minimum provision standard per 1000 persons</u>	<u>0.8 hectares</u>
<u>Maintenance cost per 1000 persons per year</u>	<u>£33,620</u>
<u>Maintenance cost per person per year</u>	<u>£34</u>
<u>Maintenance cost per dwelling per year</u>	<u>£86</u>

Public Amenity Space

<u>Cost of maintaining public amenity space</u>	<u>£856 per hectare</u>
<u>Minimum provision standard per 1000 persons</u>	<u>0.6 hectares</u>
<u>Maintenance cost per 1000 persons per year</u>	<u>£514</u>
<u>Maintenance cost per person per year</u>	<u>£0.51</u>
<u>Maintenance cost per dwelling per year</u>	<u>£1.30</u>

Total maintenance cost per dwelling per annum £91 (2002 prices)

5.11 The cost of the maintenance per annum figure is then multiplied by 20 years, including compound growth of the maintenance cost based on the General Index of Retail Prices (all items) published by the Central Statistical Office, at the time of the agreement.

This gives a 20 year maintenance sum per dwelling £2,445 (2002 prices)

Total per dwelling £4,133 (2002 prices)

(sum of initial landscaping cost and commuted maintenance sum - excludes assumed land cost)

Exemptions

5.11 The West Berkshire Local Plan 2002 recognises that in respect of sheltered and other special needs housing greater flexibility may be applied in the application of this standard. For example, in such cases the Council accepts that the occupants are unlikely to have dependent children and are unlikely to have significant

* Assuming average household size of 2.54 persons per dwelling

demands for playing fields and similar areas. The Council will not therefore seek contributions towards equipped play space or playing fields.

- 5.12 Similarly for one bedroom dwellings the Council recognises that occupants are unlikely to have dependent children and it will not therefore seek contributions towards the land, initial landscaping and maintenance costs of equipped play space.

6.0 Commercial Development

- 6.1 The Council considers that commercial, as well as housing development impacts upon existing public open space. In order to minimise this impact the Council will encourage open space provision and/or financial contributions towards existing open space provision from commercial development. Any provision or contributions agreed in respect of commercial development will be individually assessed or calculated dependent on the details of the development, its location and other site specific details.

Methodology

- 6.2 Notwithstanding the above, the Council considers it is appropriate to base the level of contribution from commercial development in line with that established for residential development (see above).
- 6.3 The Council recognises however, that the use of open space by employees and visitors to commercial developments will be unlikely to involve the use of equipped play space. Accordingly the methodology excludes equipped play space provision.
- 6.4 The maintenance contribution per employee sought for developments of less than 10 dwellings, excluding equipped play space, is £1.89 (see page 7). The cost of the maintenance per annum figure is then multiplied by 20 years, including compound growth of the maintenance cost based on the General Index of Retail Prices (all items) published by the Central Statistical Office, at the time of the agreement. This gives a 20 year maintenance sum per employee of £51 (2002 prices)
- 6.5 Where it is appropriate to apply an assumed land cost, the rate applied shall be commensurate with local market costs and calculated with regard to local circumstances and the availability of land (see paragraph 4.4)
- 6.6 Where a land cost is applied a cost per employee shall be calculated based on the applied rate of provision (the minimum rate of provision for commercial development is 2.4 hectares per 1000 population)

The initial landscaping cost equates to £65 per person

Total per employee **£116 (2002 prices)**
(sum of initial landscaping cost and commuted maintenance sum - excludes assumed land cost)

- 6.6 The above contribution per person will be applied to the number of employees resulting from the commercial development. Unless otherwise given as part of the planning application process, and in cases where it appears to the Local Planning Authority that the number of expected employees resulting from the proposed development is artificially low, the number of employees will be established using the floorspace to employee ratios given in the following table.

Use	Floorspace: Employee Ratio (gross floorspace)
Class B1a	20 m ² : 1
Class B1c (Light Industrial)	25 m ² : 1
Class B2 (Industrial)	33 m ² : 1
Class B8 (Distribution)	48 m ² : 1
Class A1 (Retail)	27 m ² : 1
Class A1 (Retail Warehousing)	90 m ² : 1
Class A3 (Restaurants)	13 m ² : 1

*Derived from: Babtie Employee Ratio Study (1998) and English Partnerships
"Employment Densities: a simple guide" Sept. 2001*

Exemptions

- 6.7 **In addition to the exemption set out at paragraph 6.3**, contributions towards **public** open space provision from commercial development proposals will not be sought where public open space is provided on site as an integral part of the development.

7.0 Planning Policy Guidance PPG17 (July 2002)

- 7.1 The Government's policy for planning for open space, sport and recreation is set out within PPG17. This requires local authorities to undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sports and recreational facilities. Local authorities are also charged with undertaking audits (in both quantitative and qualitative terms) of existing open space, sports and recreational facilities.
- 7.2 These assessments and audits are seen as necessary to allow the specific needs for open space, sport and recreational facilities in their areas to be identified, and

the starting point for the local authority to establish an effective strategy for open space, sport and recreation.

- 7.3 West Berkshire District Council, in line with PPG17, is committed to undertaking an assessment and audit of the District's open space and has targeted completing this research in 2004. Following completion of the assessment and audit, the Council aims to review its standards for provision of open space and associated planning policies, including this supplementary planning guidance.
- 7.4 PPG17 (2002) recognises the role of open space, sport and recreation and includes reference to commercial development. In reviewing its standards for provision of open space (following the programmed assessment and audit of the District's open space as set out above) the Council will take into account the potential impact of commercial development and expects to include new standards of provision for commercial development within its subsequent revision to this SPG. As an interim measure and until such time as the standards of provision are revised, the Council will continue to seek open space provision and/or financial contributions from commercial development in line with section 6.0 above.

8.0 Contacts

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