

## OPEN SPACE, SPORT AND RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND AUDIT

(Report by Head of Planning Services)

### 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Cabinet is asked to note the findings of the report and to adopt the new standards for open space, children's play areas, outdoor sports facilities and allotments as set out in Appendix 1 as interim policy.

### 2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Consultants PMP were commissioned by the Council to prepare a study to establish the current provision of open space within the District in order to comply with national policy guidance (Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation)). The guidance requires all local authorities to carry out a needs assessment and audit of provision to inform the development of local standards for the provision of open space.
- 2.2 The Study covers informal open space, outdoor recreation facilities, children's play areas and allotments, looking at any deficiencies in either quantity or quality, together with recommended future standards. It does not cover indoor recreational facilities such as sports halls, leisure centres and indoor sports courts.
- 2.3 The Study has been the subject of considerable consultation. It also takes account of previous work and consultation undertaken directly by the District Council.
- 2.4 Appendix 1 summarises how the study was carried out and some of its findings.

### 3 USING THE STUDY

#### *Planning Policy*

- 3.1 The Study includes a section which provides for a planning policy overview. It considers existing policy and policies in the emerging Local Development Framework. Crucially, it makes detailed recommendations on open space for the forthcoming Supplementary Planning Document which will set specific standards for social and physical infrastructure which may be required in association with development. In addition to its purpose of informing planning processes, it can also be used to inform decisions on the maintenance, management and future provision of open space, play areas and recreational land.

- 3.2 Current planning policy included in the Huntingdonshire Local Plan 1995 is based on the NPFA standard of 6 ac/1,000 population. The Study offers the opportunity for a more sophisticated approach which takes into account existing provision within close distance of development and would allow future provision to be targeted at specific aspects of need. The new standards will provide for a greater amount of open space/recreational facilities and includes a standard for allotments.
- 3.3 By applying a new higher standard it is not the intention to make up for past deficiencies but applied flexibly it will enable improvements to be made where they are most needed. It is intended in the interim to apply these standards using the thresholds of development set out in the saved policies of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan 1995. In the future the threshold level will be revisited.

#### ***Other Actions***

- 3.4 The Study may also be used by the District Council to take decisions on the maintenance, management and development of open space and associated facilities.
- 3.5 These could include:
- an action plan for the protection, development and improvement of parks and gardens and natural areas
  - development of a green infrastructure strategy
  - an action plan for playing pitches
  - an action plan for the use, improvement and future provision of allotments.

## **6 RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:
- Note the findings of the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Needs Assessment and Audit
  - Adopt as interim policy the new standards for informal open space, provision for children and young people, outdoor sports facilities and allotments, as shown in tables 1, 2, 3 and 4 of appendix 1, when considering developer's applications ahead of their inclusion in a supplementary planning document.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation).

**Contact Officer: Richard Probyn, Planning Policy Manager**  
 **01480 388430**