
Local Development Framework Working Group

4th August 2008

Report of the Director of City Strategy

Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study

Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Member's approval to publish the full 'Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study'. The written study and large scale maps are available in the Members Library and an electronic version of the written study is available online. Further copies of the document are available from the author of this report and all documents will be available at the meeting . This study will form the open space, sport and recreation part of the evidence base for the Local Development Framework.

Background

2. National planning guidance on open space; Planning Policy Guidance note 17 (PPG17) states that local authorities should undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sport and recreational facilities. In November 2006, consultants PMP were appointed to undertake such an assessment.
3. The study has been undertaken in accordance with PPG17 and its companion guide. It assesses open spaces of public value which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation. The Study includes the background to the process, methodology for undertaking the Study, Strategic Context, and then addresses the quantity, quality and accessibility for each type of open space as part of the PPG17 Assessment. Finally, the Study considers the Strategy, Key Priorities and implementation of the outcomes of the Study.
4. It should be noted, there are many areas of open space across the City that are of high significance and importance in terms of biodiversity and conservation habitats. These sites, although not covered by this study, will be considered as part of the Council's wider approach to nature conservation through a Green Infrastructure Strategy. This approach was approved by Members at the LDF Working Group on 4th March 2008. A Green Infrastructure Strategy is currently being prepared and the intention is that it will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) that will be linked to a Core Strategy policy. In the long term, it is anticipated that the Green Infrastructure Strategy will act a tool for managing and subsequently

improving existing green assets as well as providing policy guidance on where new green assets should be created.

5. Members will be aware that Phase 1 of the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study was approved by the LDF Working Group on 27th June 2007. Phase 1 of the Study covered:
 - an analysis of existing provision;
 - local standards based on consultation and best practice; and
 - strategic recommendations for the City of York Council area as a whole.
6. Phase 2 was carried out during autumn 2007 and built on the work undertaken during the first phase to identify levels of open space deficiency and surplus for each of the prescribed open space categories set out in PPG17. It has allowed for the refining of information in Phase 1.
7. Members will recall at the LDF Working Group on 8th January 2008, a report recommending approval of the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study (Phase 1 and 2) as part of the evidence base for the Local Development Framework. At the meeting, members decided to defer a decision on the Study, the key reasons for this include:
 - the analysis area boundaries gave a false impression of provision - analysis of sites should be carried out by ward to make it clearer;
 - sites had been omitted from the audit - members should be consulted on their specific wards;
 - the recommended standards should be assessed alongside the local plan standards.
8. Following the 8th January meeting, all ward Members were sent copies of the relevant maps for their wards with existing open space marked on, together with a schedule of open space. Ward Members were asked if they agreed with the sites identified, and if any other sites (which meet the PPG17 criteria) could be identified in their particular ward. In such case, Members were specifically asked to outline the site on the map and fill in a proforma outlining the details of the site.
9. In total a further 93 potential sites were put forward by Members. These responses were fed into the assessment process and were tested against the PPG17 criteria. Those sites that were too small, didn't have a recreational function or did not have public access, were excluded and 68 sites qualified and have been included in the final report.

Accessible Countryside

10. The working group raised concerns that large areas of accessible countryside had been omitted from the work e.g. Clifton Ings, Rawcliffe Ings etc. The Study defines Accessible Countryside as "large areas of green space where the primary function is not recreation – many areas of countryside are used for agricultural purposes such as grazing or growing of crops. The recreational use of the site is incidental to its overall primary purpose." Officers and the consultants considered this issue but it

was felt that due to their size, and the fact that recreation is not their main function, they should not be included under any of the PPG17 typologies linked to a standard. Their inclusion would skew the provision standards as they would create the illusion of a higher provision of open space in the city resulting in lower requirements for development standards for the future.

11. Nevertheless in recognition of their role, it was decided that the revised study should include an additional designation, 'Accessible Countryside' (Section 12) that acknowledges that large areas of countryside around the City and its urban fringes provide important recreational opportunities for local residents, without affecting the overall open space provision standards for the city.

Green Corridors

12. Green corridors encompass towpaths along canals and riverbanks, cycleways, rights of way and disused railway lines. They have a primary purpose of providing opportunities for walking, cycling and horse riding whether for leisure purposes or travel, and opportunities for wildlife migration. The working group raised concerns in relation to green corridors in terms of them not being mapped or having specific provision standards. Similarly to 'Accessible Countryside', the study recognises the importance of green corridors for recreational uses and providing linkages between open spaces and the wider countryside however, due to their linear nature it is not appropriate to measure their area for the purpose of setting targets.
13. The study does however identify that future development needs to encompass linkages between large areas of open space, create opportunities to develop the green corridor network and utilise potential development sites and also recommends that the Council should produce a Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Provision Standards

Setting Local Quantity Standards

14. At the 8th January meeting, Members raised concerns that the study did not show the methodology of how the local standards had been derived and requested that the standards were reconsidered.
15. This revised study sets out the specific percentage increases which have been derived directly from levels of satisfaction in the household survey. This is based on PPG17 requirements which advocate that planning policies for open spaces, sport and recreation facilities should be based upon local standards derived from a robust assessment of local need. Table 1 below shows the percentages that are recommended on the basis that they are realistic and achievable but are reflective of local need. Furthermore, the recommended increases are drawn from similar studies undertaken in authorities across the country and are therefore based on good practice.

Table 1: Percentage increase in Provision Standards

Questionnaire response: “about right”	Increase current level of provision by:
50%+	Set at current level
40-50%	2%
30-40%	5%
20-30%	10%
10-20%	15%

16. For example, 39% of respondents stated that the amount of ‘Amenity Green Space’ in York was “about right”, a 5% increase of the current provision is required.

Comparison of Local Plan and Proposed Standards

17. Table 2 below sets out the recommended standard (based on local need as set out above) and the Local Plan standard (based on the National Six Acre Standard). It is difficult to directly compare the Local Plan standards and the recommended new standards as they refer to different typologies, however, by looking at the total required provision, it is apparent that the proposed new standards require a much higher level of open space provision compared to the Local Plan standards.

Table 2: Comparison of the Local Plan and recommended provision standards

Typology	Recommended standard (ha per 1000 population)	Local Plan Standard (ha per 1000 population)
Parks and Gardens	0.18	
Natural and Semi Natural Provision	2.11	
Amenity Green Space	1.14	0.9
Provision for Children	0.48 facilities per 1000 (0.08ha per 1000)	0.7
Provision for Teenagers	0.2 facilities per 1000 (0.01 ha per 1000)	
Outdoor sports Facilities	2.05	1.7
Allotments	0.29	
Cemeteries, Churchyards and Green Corridors	N/A	
Accessible Countryside	N/A	
Total provision	5.86	3.3

18. The only typology that appears to be a reduced standard compared to the Local Plan standard is for Children’s Play Space. The Local Plan standard is broadly based upon a 2001 National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) standard, “The Six

Acre Standard". The NPFA children's play space standard includes general playing space as well as areas for equipped facilities resulting in a larger area whereas the recommended new standard is based on tighter boundaries just covering the equipped facilities. In addition, the new standard is based on the number of facilities (equipped play areas) per 1000 population rather than the hectareage. The Study has based the size on that of a standard LEAP (Local Equipped Area for Play) which is 400m².

Accessibility and Quality Standards

19. Within PPG17 as well as quantity standards there are also accessibility and quality standards. The Local Plan just focuses on the quantity of open space in relation to developer provision.
20. Accessibility is a key assessment of open space sites. Without accessibility for the public the provision of good quality or good quantity of open spaces would be of very limited value. The accessibility standards recommended in the Study have been derived from an understanding of the community views, particularly with regards to the maximum distance that people are willing to travel as well as the analysis of national and existing local standards. A summary of the accessibility standards are highlighted in Table 3.
21. The accessibility standards are set in the form of a distance in metres where walking is considered to be the most appropriate mode of travel, and a drive time where driving to the open space site would be more appropriate. For each site, a threshold (maximum distance people are expected to travel) has been mapped in the form of a buffer which provides a good indication of where areas of the city are deficient in terms of accessing open spaces.
22. In addition, all sites were assessed for their quality. They were given a score for a range of factors (see examples below) which were then weighted to reflect the perceived importance of the factors.
 - cleanliness and maintenance
 - security and safety
 - vegetation
 - ancillary recommendation
23. The commentary set out in Table 3 outlines the main findings related to the quality of open space in York. In general the quality of open spaces across the City is good. However, there are concentrations of poor and average quality sites dispersed across the City. Rowntree Park and Museum Gardens were both highlighted as being of a high quality.

Key Findings

24. The analysis contained in the Study provides an overview of provision of each type of open space in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility. Table 3 set out a brief summary of the findings.

Table 3: Summary of Findings

	Current Provision	Current Provision per 1000 population	Recommended Standard per 1000	Accessibility Standard	Comments
Parks & gardens	35.40ha	0.18ha	0.18ha	City Park: 20 minute walk (960 metres) Local Park: 15 minute walk (720 metres)	On the whole there is a good level of access to the City's parks and gardens. There is an adequate quantity in terms of the standards, although this is mainly focused in the urban area. The quality is generally good especially as several Green Flag awards have been awarded.
Natural & Semi-natural	408.96ha (74 sites)	2.11ha	2.11ha	15 minutes walk (720 metres)	Access to natural and semi-natural open space is high across York – urban and rural areas. There is a high quantity of sites although there is an uneven distribution. Several sites scored extremely highly (e.g. Askham Bog) in terms of their quality and can be considered to be examples of good practice.
Amenity green space	216.20ha	1.11ha	1.14ha	5 minute walk (240 metres)	The distribution of amenity green space is uneven across the city, although many residents devoid of AGS have access to a park. There is a great variation in the quality of AGS across the city, this was also reflected through consultation.

Provision for Children	10.07ha (84 sites)	0.44 facilities	0.48 facilities	10 minute walk (480 metres)	The distribution of facilities across the City is uneven and the size of sites varies significantly. The quality of these facilities was identified as being average or poor by the majority of respondents.
Provision for teenagers	4 facilities	0.02 facilities	0.2 facilities	15 minutes walk (720 metres)	Although there are very few teenage facilities across the city, there general quality of these is perceived as being relatively good.
Outdoor sports facilities	378.7ha (158 sites)	1.96 ha	2.05 ha	Local outdoor sports: 15 minute walk (720 metres) Synthetic turf pitches: 20 minute drive (8km)	All residents are within the suggested 20 minute drivetime of a strategic site (synthetic turf pitches). There is a wide range in the quality of outdoor sports facilities across the city.
Allotments	42 sites	0.28 ha	0.29 ha	15 minute walk (720 metres)	Allotment provision across the city is unevenly spread and when compared against the local standard, there appears to be a general shortfall. The quality varies, although Pit Lane allotments (Derwent Ward) score the highest and are considered to be an example of good practice.

Conclusion

25. The Study recommends that the local standards for quantity, accessibility and quality within the study and set out in Table 3 above are embedded into LDF policy. These standards should be used when considering the future growth and development of the City. They will also form the basis for criteria-based policies that will set the levels of open space provision for new developments.
26. It is recommended that an SPD, linked to a Core Strategy policy, is prepared which details the approach towards open space developer contributions, ensuring that the system is fair, transparent and consistent.
27. As part of the work, PMP have not simply provided the Council with a snapshot of open space provision and needs in 2008, they have also provided a dynamic tool which the Council can use to assess the future needs and provision of open space in the City. This includes an 'Access 2000' audit database of open spaces, linked to GIS, including site locations and site areas, as well as additional fields of attribute data for quality, site access and wider benefits. As new developments come forward in the future, the Council will be able to update the fields of information within the database, giving an up to date picture of provision and need. This will allow site specific assessments to be undertaken.
28. In addition to providing a planning tool, the study will also help to inform future management of the sites and guide any potential investment opportunities.

Consultation

29. Public consultation was a key aspect of the Study. A series of public consultation exercises were undertaken, these are summarised below:
 - questionnaires sent to a sample of 5,000 residents across the City;
 - questionnaires to Parish Councils;
 - school pupil IT based questionnaire survey;
 - consultation with Council officers;
 - consultation with interest groups / external agencies, sports clubs / outdoor leisure providers, adjacent local authorities;
 - workshops with local interest groups;
 - advertising via local media;
 - drop in sessions / exhibitions at Parliament Street, and Tesco's Askham Bar & Clifton Moor;
 - officer attendance and / or displays at Ward Committee meetings;
 - response text messaging service; and
 - e-mail response service.
30. The above consultation methods have helped ensure that residents and interest groups / organisations across the City have been involved in the consultation process. This has enabled PMP to clearly identify the local need for open space.

Options

31. Members have three options relating to the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study:

Option 1: To approve the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study for publication as part of the Local Development Framework evidence base; or

Option 2: To seek amendments to the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study through recommendations of the LDF Working Group; or

Option 3 : To request further work from officers.

Analysis

32. The Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study forms an important part of the evidence base for the LDF. The approach to the study is based on national guidance and best practice and the recommendations are taken from extensive consultation with local communities. The additional sites submitted by Members have been fully considered against the PPG17 criteria and therefore the audit identifies all the open spaces in York as per national guidance. The study will be the primary evidence base used to guide planning policy issues regarding open space provision in the City.
33. The LDF Core Strategy which sets out the Strategic Vision for the City is approaching its preferred options stage and it is critical that the open space evidence base is available to influence future decisions on the strategic policies for York.
34. Work is also currently being done on assessing the sites submitted as part of the Allocations DPD Issues and Options. An approved Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study is important for this process ahead of the preferred options being taken forward at the end of the year.
35. The working group is therefore asked to approve the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study, as part of the evidence base for the Local Development Framework.

Corporate Priorities

36. The option outlined above accords with the following Corporate Strategy Priorities:
- Increase the use of public and other environmentally friendly modes of transport;
 - Improve the actual and perceived condition and appearance of the city's streets, housing estates and publicly accessible spaces;

- Improve the health and lifestyles of people who live in York, in particular among groups whose levels of health are the poorest.

Implications

37. The following implications have been assessed.

- **Financial** – *None*.
- **Human Resources (HR)** – *None*.
- **Equalities** - *None*
- **Legal** - *None*
- **Crime and Disorder** - *None*
- **Information Technology (IT)** - *None*
- **Property** - *None*
- **Other**

Risk Management

38. In compliance with the Council's Risk Management Strategy, there are no identified risks associated with the recommendations of this report.

Recommendations

39. It is recommended that Members:

- (i) approve, subject to the recommendations of this Working Group, the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study, for publication as part of the Local Development Framework evidence base.

Reason: So that the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study can be used as part of the Local Development Framework evidence base and to avoid further delays to the Core Strategy production .

- (ii) delegate to the Director of City Strategy, in consultation with the Executive Member and Shadow Executive Member for City Strategy, the making of any incidental changes arising from the recommendation of the LDF Working Group, prior to its publication as part of the Local Development Framework evidence base.

Reason: So that any recommended changes can be incorporated into the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study.

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Report Approved

Date 24th July 2008

Report Approved

tick

Date Insert Date

Specialist Implications Officer(s) *List information for all*

Implication ie Financial

Implication ie Legal

Name

Name

Title

Title

Tel No.

Tel No.

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study

Annexes

None