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Introduction

1 The provision of adequate levels of open space is essential for the development of sustainable communities. The design and layout of open spaces are important in providing opportunities for play, and in contributing to the quality of the environment. The Council's standard for open space in new residential developments contained in Policy HS11 of its Local Plan reflects the advice given by the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) that 2.43 hectares (6 acres) of outdoor play space should be made available for each 1000 population. This figure includes all pitches, courts and greens which are available for public and private use, but excludes school fields which are not available under dual use arrangements, golf courses, verges, woodlands and amenity space not for use as play areas. The NPFA standard can be broken down into its component parts as follows:

Youth and adult use: 1.6-1.8 hectares per 1000 population.

Equipped children's play areas: 0.2-0.3 hectares per 1000 population.

Casual/informal play areas: 0.4-0.6 hectares per 1000 population.

2 The "Study of Open Space in the Five Towns", which is a background paper to the Local Plan, demonstrated that there is an overall deficit of open space in three of the District's five towns, namely Spalding, Holbeach and Sutton Bridge. The study also identified that there is a shortage of both equipped and casual/ informal play areas in all of the five towns, including Long Sutton and Crowland who do not have a general deficiency of open space.

Purpose and Objectives

3 This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) contains policy and guidance to supplement the adopted Local Plan policies HS11 and LT2 Safeguarding Open Space for Sport, Recreation and Leisure. It will also be relevant to some developments under policy LT1: Leisure, recreation and Tourist Facilities. Within this document the Council's policy in respect of provision, design and maintenance of open spaces and play areas in housing developments is set out.

4 The objectives of this SPD are:

- to supplement the Local Plan/Local Development Framework policies on open space – primarily Policy HS11 Open Space in New Residential Developments, but also Policy LT1 Leisure, Recreation and Tourist Facilities and Policy LT2 Safeguarding Open Space for Leisure, Recreation and Sport;
- to ensure that adequate open space is provided in new residential developments so that the overall level of provision for our population does not decline further;
- to provide guidance regarding the size and type of open space that will be required;
- to provide guidance on what and how much equipment will be required on an area of open space;
- to provide guidance on maintenance standards and costs for open space;

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- to facilitate an overall increase in provision of equipped play areas where there is a need;
- to protect/ provide areas of nature conservation/ biodiversity where possible;
- to better match the type of provision with needs across the District;
- to provide guidance on the requirement for the payment of commuted sums in respect of the maintenance of open space.

Provision of open space in new residential developments

5 The provision of well designed and accessible open spaces is essential in creating sustainable communities. This is especially important in an area with few areas of woodland and a general lack of open space within the built up areas.

6 Although private residential gardens provide some play space, public open space is important for play, as a place for social contact, and as a visual amenity.

7 Policy HS11 of the Local Plan states that:

“Proposals for residential development shall make provision for open space in accordance with the Council's adopted standards of not less than 14% of gross site area.

Where developments are unable to provide open space requirements on site, or where the development is adjacent to or in close proximity to a sufficient sized area of existing open space the District Council will accept, in appropriate circumstances, financial contributions from developers for the provision of open space off site or enhancement of existing open space if required to meet the needs arising from the development.

Developers will be required to ensure that long term future maintenance of the open space provided by the development is secured by a maintenance agreement or adoption by the District Council.”

8 The requirement of 14% of gross site area equates to requiring open space at the NPFA recommended standard (Appendix A). Whilst the Council expect that most developments that result in a net increase in dwellings will make an open space contribution, the provision of open space on-site may not necessarily be the most suitable option. In particular this may be the case for small sites (fewer than 15 dwellings) or for sites in close proximity to existing areas of open space. In such cases the Council will request a financial contribution to be used to enhance the quantity and/or quality of open space in the locality.

9 A contribution to open space will normally be expected to be provided on site. However, if there is a significant amount of open space in the area, or it would not be appropriate to provide an area of open space on site, as discussed above, the payment of a commuted sum will be acceptable. For planning applications where commuted sums are to be paid in place of on site provision it is expected that the permission will be accompanied by a unilateral agreement to provide such a commuted sum. Details of how the amount payable will be calculated can be found at Appendix D.

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10 Open space contributions provided on-site should be handed to the relevant Parish Council for adoption, unless exceptional circumstances dictate otherwise. Commuted sums, either in lieu of on-site provision, or for maintenance should be paid to the Parish Council. In the case of Spalding, on-site provision will be adopted by the District Council, with commuted sums payable to the District Council for inclusion within the Spalding Special Account.

Phasing of Large Sites

11 Where a site has been divided up for the purposes of phasing and construction, the open space contribution will be calculated as a percentage of the overall site area. Larger sites create a demand for play space that cannot be met at the one location without resident children travelling beyond the recommended distances to reach it. Therefore on larger developments it is expected that the open space provision be spread across the development to reduce travel times and increase accessibility. Provision at more than one location in a site may be split a number of ways, for example, a large central area, and smaller areas throughout the development.

12 On large sites, including those allocated in the Local Plan, we will expect the provision of public open space strategies demonstrating how the open space will be provided as an integral part of the development. Where development briefs are being produced, public open space strategies can be included as a part of that document.

13 For development where open space provision is to be made on site, open space provision should be made before the occupation of 50% of the total dwellings on site, or after 2 years from commencement of the development, or the relevant phase for phased sites, whichever is sooner. However, for the allocations at Holland Park and the urban extension to the west of Holbeach made in Local Plan policy HS3: New Housing Allocations, development briefs will set out the the approach to development and subsequently the locations of open spaces, the time frame for open space development will extend beyond the end of the Local Plan. In these circumstances, the provisions of the Briefs in respect of Public Open Space will take precedence particularly as they will need to take account of local needs which will influence the amount, location and timing of recreational provision in terms of both open space and built facilities.

14 When providing areas of open space for play in new developments, there are minimum size thresholds for different types of space, these are set out below:

Types of Open Space

- The smallest of the spaces identified by the NPFA is the Local Area for Play (LAP), the minimum size for such a play space is 100 square metres. The Council will only seek the provision of such spaces on large sites where multiple areas of open space are to be provided.
- The provision that will normally be sought by the Council as an on-site open space contribution will be an equipped play area for young children of 300 square metres identified by the NPFA as a Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP). The open space should be located so that they are no more than a short walk from any dwelling, no more than 200-300 metres, and a child would not have to cross a main estate road. The play area should also, wherever possible be located central to the area to be served. Three core pieces of play equipment should be

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provided on a play area of 300 square metres. For each additional 100 square metres an additional piece of equipment will be required (Further detail on the provision of equipment can be found at Appendices B and C). On larger sites of this type, hard landscaping such as hummocks and planting that allows for imaginative play may be more beneficial than the provision of traditional equipment.

- On very large developments (over 75 dwellings) it is expected that open space provision will include an area of casual/informal play for older children extending to at least 1800 square metres identified by the NPFA as a Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP). It is expected that this form of contribution is located so as to be no further than a reasonable walk for an older child, no more than 400-500 metres from any dwelling to be served, and that the crossing of a classified road would not be necessary in order for it to be accessed.

15 The type of open space provided on site will be expected to be appropriate to the development to be served. In most cases the provision of children's play space will be appropriate, many new residential areas will attract families who may also have teenage children, it would therefore be appropriate for there to be some form of youth type provision to be made, such as a youth shelter or similar. this will ensure that the provision is appropriate to the expected age range of residents.

16 In some cases, where there are a high proportion of bungalows or other dwellings that attract a substantially higher proportion of elderly residents, open space provision will still be expected, but rather than a play space a landscaped and planted amenity area with benching may be more appropriate. In such cases, the Council will still require an overall provision equivalent to 14% gross site area; however this may be split so as to provide half of the 14% as on site provision appropriate to the needs of the expected future residents and half as a commuted sum to improve a nearby area of open space.

17 Well landscaped areas of open space explicitly designed for amenity purposes where appropriate should incorporate existing natural features such as hedgerows and tree groups. Such features can greatly enhance the visual appearance of a development and the built environment in general, whilst helping to preserve wildlife and biodiversity in the area. Amenity areas will need to satisfy the adoption criteria and the location and design guidance set out below as closely as possible.

18 The provision of open space on site may also provide opportunity for a sustainable urban drainage system (SUD) to be incorporated within the development. Such systems are required by Policy SG11 (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems) where an unacceptable increase in surface water drainage will occur as a result of development.

Adoption Criteria for Open Space

19 Before adoption by the relevant Parish Council the developer will be responsible for the necessary site preparation works, provision of equipment and the initial two years maintenance in accordance with a landscaping scheme to be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to commencement of development. In order for Parish Councils to adopt the land, facilities and fittings and be responsible for its maintenance in the longer term, the following criteria must be met:

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- A one-off commuted sum will be paid to the relevant parish Council based on the cost of 10 year's maintenance, as detailed in Appendix C.
- The open space to be adopted must be drained and leveled; provided with fences or hedges as appropriate and not have any natural hazards such as streams or overly steep gradients; and must be easily overlooked by nearby properties to provide observation for supervision and security purposes;
- The surface of the open space must have adequate cover of top soil; be provided with a grassed playing surface and be weed and stone free and smooth; planting should be of indigenous species appropriate to their location on the site.
- Size of play areas should accord with the standards set out in paragraph 1.14 above for the different types of open space.

20 Where an equipped area of open space is to be provided, an appropriate safety surface is also to be provided.

21 It should be noted that site leveling for the whole of the site may not be appropriate where natural features have been incorporated. Specific areas that are provided as wild areas or areas to promote habitats and bio-diversity will not be expected to meet the criteria in relation to being weed free and smooth.

Location and Design

22 Open space provided on site should be an integral part of the overall development scheme. When designing open space into developments, the design needs to be such that it does not encourage crime and disorder or anti-social behaviour, therefore dark corners should be avoided, and open spaces should be well lit. Open space should not be made up of occasional and oddly shaped pieces of land not otherwise capable of being developed. Open space provision should therefore be the product of express design with due regard having been paid to all other considerations in this guide.

23 Where there are areas of waste land, these should be incorporated into adjacent gardens. Areas of open space relating to the highway hierarchy, or part of the footpath/ cycleway system will not be considered as acceptable open space for the purposes of adoption, nor indeed as a part of the provision to meet the 14% requirement. Within larger sites, there is scope for footpath and cycleway systems to provide green corridors that have both amenity and wildlife value. Although green corridors would not count towards the 14% requirement.

24 Where existing natural features of a site such as hummocks or mature trees can be retained and used to the advantage of the open space, they should be incorporated as an integral element of the scheme.

25 The design, location and appearance of open spaces and play areas should have due regard to the privacy and security of housing in the vicinity of the site, and should be designed so as to minimise impact and disturbance, whilst maintaining the opportunity for natural surveillance.

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- Suitable fencing will be required (conveyed to the adjoining property) and planting to ensure that properties are adequately screened.
- Wherever possible play areas should not be located immediately adjacent to the gable end of properties in order that adequate surveillance is maintained and to ensure that residents' enjoyment of their property is not affected.

26 Play areas should be readily accessible to all houses served, and where ever possible not tucked away in odd corners. Wherever possible these areas should be well related to the footpath/cycleway system, whilst not having direct access, and be divorced from roads by the provision of appropriate fencing and gating in the interests of road safety, and the safety of those using the site. Accesses to play areas should be of a standard that will allow for maintenance and access by the emergency services.

27 Where possible smaller open spaces should be located so as to be sheltered from the very worst of inclement weather, and where possible be located so as to maximise the benefit of daylight hours. The careful orientation of open space within a site will help to maximise the usability of the site, and prevent damage to grass surface resulting from the site not drying out during the wetter winter months. Careful attention to the location of open space can maximise its ability to dissipate surface water and contribute to surface water drainage.

28 All trees provided in planting schemes shall be healthy specimens that are appropriate for their location and securely staked and tied. It would be inappropriate to have trees such as Willow, Oak and Horse Chestnut within 20 metres of a dwelling; spacing of trees should also have regard to the need for grass maintenance. Shrub planting by way of dense ground cover, or as protective screening, may also be required. Where trees and shrubs are provided, they should be native species that are in keeping with the wider landscape where appropriate, and a suitable species for the location in terms of the size that they are likely to grow to, their water demand and the soil type of the area. The use of native species will be beneficial in biodiversity terms.

29 Planting schemes for trees and shrubs will need to be approved by the Local Planning Authority, and will also need to have regard to the need to prevent crime and disorder and anti-social behaviour. Planting schemes, and in particular screening that restricts views across open spaces, should not be so dense as to create corners that allow for such anti-social behaviour to occur.

30 Appendix E sets out a guide to the minimum distances that a number of common trees should be planted from dwellings. The distances provided are only a guide, as factors such as soil type and the water demand of the tree itself can impact on planting distances. The Local Planning Authority will be able to provide additional advice in respect of planting distances.

Checklist for on site-provision of open space

- The open space to be provided is not less than 14% gross site area of the development.
- The open space contribution is calculated as a percentage of the site area of the overall development.
- Open space provided must be integral to the development.

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- The open space is centrally located in respect of the area it is intended to serve, unless retention of existing features dictates otherwise.
- On large sites, a public open space strategy should be submitted with the planning application for development unless a development brief for the site as a whole has been prepared.
- Provision of open space should be made before the occupation of 50% of the development, or after 2 years from commencement of the development, whichever is sooner.
- The type of open space provided is appropriate to meet the needs of expected residents.
- Where equipment is to be provided, it should be at a minimum standard of 3 core pieces on an area of 300 square metres, with an additional piece of equipment for each additional 100 square metres.
- Open space provided should meet the Council's adoption criteria.
- A commuted sum for 10 years maintenance of open space to be adopted should be paid.
- Where possible, appropriate existing site features should be incorporated in to the open space.
- Open space should be orientated so it makes the best use of natural surveillance and daylight.

Safeguarding open space for sport, recreation and leisure

31 The existing open spaces in the District are a valuable resource both in terms of their opportunity to provide for sport, recreation and leisure, and their contribution to the quality of the built environment. Policy LT2, which seeks to protect existing areas of open space, states that:

“Development which would result in the loss of public open space, parks or playing fields will only be permitted provided that:

- 1) alternative provision of equivalent community benefit is made in the locality;**
- 2) or, there is an excess of provision taking into account the long term recreation and amenity value of such provision;**
- 3) or, sport, recreation and leisure facilities can be retained and enhanced through the redevelopment of a small part of the site.”**

32 When redeveloping a part of an open space regard needs to be had to the size of the remainder and its future use. The NPFA in its six acre standard sets out the space requirements for the most popular outdoor sports. The space requirements for those sports most popular in the District are provided in the table below.

33 The redevelopment or enhancement of areas of open space, be they play spaces or sports pitches can, respectively, result in increased usage of the site or a site being brought back into active use. Although such actions do not actually result in an increase of open space (some may result in a decrease) the benefits of having a site that is more actively used outweigh the losses, and increase the amenity value of an open space. When considering proposals for the re-development on part of an open space the scope for such re-development to increase the value of the area for local communities will be considered.

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Space requirements for the most popular outdoor sports in the District (taken from South Holland District Council's Playing Pitch Assessment).

Type of Facility	Area in hectares	Area in Acres
Association Football	0.82 – 0.90	2.0 – 2.22
Mini Soccer: for 2 pitches	0.70	1.65
Rugby Union	1.26	3.1
Bowling Greens: flat and crown	0.14	0.35
Cricket		
1 square with boundary of 46m	1.50	3.70
1 square plus 2 senior soccer pitches	2.05	5.07
1 square plus hockey/ senior soccer	2.01	4.98

Appendix A

Calculation of requirement

The requirement for 14% of gross site area to be provided as open space provision has been calculated using the District average number of people per dwelling, taken from the 2001 Census, and the average density of completions on large schemes approved during 2004/2005, which is 26.8 dwellings per hectare. The calculation set out below shows how the 14% minimum requirement has been calculated.

10 hectares at 26.8 dwellings per hectare = 268 dwellings

Apply district average of 2.3 persons per dwelling

$2.3 \times 268 = 616.4$ persons

Open space provision of 2.43 hectares per 1000 people

$2.43\text{ha} \times 616.4 = 1.4$ hectares

1000

= 14% gross site area

Guidelines on the Provision of Play Equipment

Play equipment provided should be suitable for the location, size and expected age range of users as set out at Section 3. The style and design of new equipment should be such that it is in keeping with the surrounding landscape in order that it adds rather than detracts from the visual appearance of the area.

All play equipment provided should be of a professional manufacture from recognised suppliers and conform to current safety standards prevailing at the time of specification. Further information can be sought from the Council's Parks and Grounds manager.

Suitable safety surfacing as applicable to the needs of the play items will be considered an integral part of the equipment provision.

The recommended types of equipment suitable for children's play areas are listed in Appendix C along with the maintenance contribution that would be required in respect of each piece of equipment provided.

Appendix C

Play Equipment – Recommend types and commuted sum for maintenance contribution

Provision Type	Total maintenance cost for 10 years (£)
Safety Surfacing	
Rubber surfacing (tiles or wet pour) per square metre (as per manufacturers recommendation)	157.72
Tarmac	75.60
Core Equipment for all Equipped Play Areas	
Small Slide - max height of chute 1.5m (requires safety surface)	1102.50
Spring mounted ride (requires safety surface)	1766.00
Small climbing frame - max height 1.8m (requires safety surface)	1324.50
Optional Additional Equipment for Larger Equipped Play Areas	
Swings - per 2 seat unit. Max crossbar height 2.4m with rubber safety seats (cradle type seats for toddlers) (requires rubber type safety surface)	2312.00
Roundabout - 1.8 to 2.4m diameter (requires rubber type safety surface)	1540.80
See-saw - non bump action essential (requires safety surface)	1348.20
Multi-play structures including climbing frames, ladders, slides etc (requires safety surface)	4095.00
Landscaping per 100 sq. m.	
Grass - plots <u>over</u> 500 sq. m.	243.00
Grass - plots <u>under</u> 500 sq.m.	370.00
Shrubberies - general (e.g. higher growing/hedging)	208.00

Appendix C

Provision Type	Total maintenance cost for 10 years (£)
Shrubberies - ground cover	177.00
Hard landscaping - paving etc	123.20
Miscellaneous others	
Garden bench (each)	884.80
Metal bin	336.00
Classic signboard/post	472.50
Trees - standard	54.60
Galvenised fencing per m.	84.00
Pedestrian self close gate	1000.00
Vehicle/pedestrian gate	1000.00

The figures provided in the table above are as at the 2006/07 year, and will be increased annually for the total cost for a 10 year period in line with the retail price index (RPI). The updated table will be made available along side the SPD on the District Council's website.

Appendix D

Calculation for working out contributions for off site provision

The sum payable for off site provision will be calculated using the equation set out in Appendix A to establish what the needs of the development would be. This area, in square metres is then multiplied by the cost per metre of providing the open space. An example has been worked through.

The development is to be 12 dwellings, and at a density of 30 dwellings per hectare, this would give a development site area of 0.4 hectares.

The estimated population of the development would be, using the District average of 2.3 people per dwelling, $2.3 \times 12 = 27.6$ people. This figure can be rounded up to 28 people.

The 14% minimum requirement for open space in new residential developments equates to a provision of 2.43 hectares per 1000 people. The open space requirement for a development of 12 dwellings would therefore be:

$$\frac{2.43\text{ha} \times 28}{1000} = 0.06 \text{ hectares or } 600\text{m}^2$$

1000

Using the cost per m² of providing different types of open space within the District is

Type of provision	Cost per m ² for type of provision
Large equipped area for play, including for older children (NEAP)	£6.40
Equipped Play area for young children	£89
Local area for play	£15.20

As the development is under 75 dwellings, the requirement on site would have been for an equipped play area for children. The commuted sum required for off site provision will be $600 \times £6.40 = £3840$.

**Guideline to Minimum Distances at which
Trees may be Planted from Buildings**

