
PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE NOTE 17-SPORT, OPEN SPACE & RECREATION - CONSULTATION

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report outlines the proposed changes to Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 which deals with sport, open space and recreation.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Government has stated that it is committed to delivering an urban renaissance and a better quality of life. As part of this process, a revised version of PPG17 has been prepared which aims to help secure the provision and protection of sport and recreation facilities and of open space.
- 2.2 The consultation draft seeks responses to a series of questions and these are considered below. A response is required by 15 June 2001 and therefore it will be necessary to make arrangements under the urgency procedures to agree the Council's response. A full copy of the draft PPG has been placed in the Members Room.

3 QUESTIONS FOR CONSULTATION

Does the guidance provide sufficient clarity to enable authorities to protect open space that is or has the potential to be of value to local communities?

- 3.1 The guidance highlights the key role of the development plan in identifying by way of the proposals map and a schedule, those sites to be protected because of their particular value to the community. The key factors relating to recreational quality are specifically listed in the guidance and clear advice is provided on the matters to be taken into account when considering any application for planning consent that might affect an open space.

An approach is proposed that is designed to inform plan preparation on future requirements for open space, etc. Is this readily understood and applicable?

- 3.2 Local authorities are advised to adopt policies for the protection of existing open space, and the provision of new facilities based on a robust assessment of need. Planning policies and proposals should be framed as a response to the analysis of existing provision. This advice makes sense, though it does not seem to be significantly different from the process that has been followed when the Rochford Local Plan was prepared. Nevertheless, the document provides clear guidance on the assessment process.

Is the guidance on preferred locations for particular sport, open space and recreation uses clear and workable?

- 3.3 Given that the current version of PPG17 was published in 1991, this revised draft had a lot of catching up to do in respect of revisions to key planning principles. The document now includes reference to accessibility, town centre locations, design criteria, previously developed land, and social inclusion and crime, all issues to be taken into account when considering appropriate locations for new recreational development. The guidance is quite specific in identifying town centre as the key location for intensive recreational facilities: However, no advice is then provided about the assessment of the traffic implications that may occur as a result. This is a matter that perhaps should be discussed, though of course further advice on traffic and transport issues is provided in another PPG.

Will the guidance ensure sufficient weight is given to making provision for sport, open space and recreation?

- 3.4 The document advises that local plans should develop clear policies for the provision, protection and enhancement of sport, open space and recreation. The advice seems to be clear and unambiguous and highlights the importance of dealing comprehensively with these matters in the Local Plan.

Is the guidance as a whole sufficiently clear and wide-ranging to enable sport, open space and recreation to contribute to achieving sustainable development?

- 3.5 The advice does reflect the principles of sustainability espoused elsewhere in Government guidance, and in particular the need to site facilities in appropriate locations to generate sustainable patterns of development.

Would local planning authorities welcome the Government setting more specific guidelines, such as that all dwellings in significant new housing developments should have access to a park or open space within 500 metres walk?

- 3.6 Much guidance on this issue is already available from the National Playing Fields Association and Sport England. There seems little to justify the development of further guidance on these matters, particularly given the need for there to be some flexibility to take account of local circumstances.

Alternatively would they prefer to retain complete discretion to establish their own standards and define deficiency for some of the range of recreational requirements?

- 3.7 The guidance does not actually give local authorities complete discretion given that it highlights to assessment standards prepared by The National laying Fields association and Sport England. It is considered that the framework of advice from such organisation,

together with an element of local discretion is more than adequate to establish standards in individual local plans.

Would developers welcome the greater certainty that standards would provide, and if so, do they have a preference on whether these are set centrally or by individual planning authorities?

- 3.8 This is a question specifically aimed at developers, but from the local planning authority perspective it is to be hoped that developers would welcome a clear statement of requirements within a Local Plan that better reflects the requirements of a local area.

Does the guidance provide a realistic approach as to the kinds of sports facilities which would be appropriate in the Green Belt?

- 3.9 At the present moment, the existing policy in respect of sports facilities in the Green Belt is that applications for small scale facilities would normally be looked upon favourably. The guidance in the draft PPG has a slightly different emphasis, though this reflects the detail in the latest version of PPG2. This states that the building of essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation is not inappropriate development in the Green Belt. However, the guidance also states that the aim should be to preserve the openness of the Green Belt and to keep development to the minimum scale consistent with the requirements of the outdoor recreational activity. The advice in the draft PPG does not really add significantly to the advice included in PPG2, and given the wording of the latest Green Belt policy included in the adopted Essex and Southend Structure Plan, which continues to refer to small scale facilities, it is not envisaged that there will be any requirement for a change in emphasis in the replacement Local Plan.

Do planning authorities consider that there is sufficient scope at present for Section 106 agreements to secure adequate maintenance of recreational facilities in appropriate cases?

- 3.10 Where a deficiency in provision is created as a result of a new development, it is clear that a 106 obligation should be sought from the developer for the provision of suitable facilities. The guidance highlights the situations where an obligation would be required and the arrangements that could be adopted by the local planning authority. It is not considered that further guidance is required.

4 RECOMMENDATION

It is proposed that the Sub-Committee **RECOMMENDS**

That, subject to additional comments from Members, this report forms the basis of the Council's response to the consultation on the revisions to PPG17 Sport, Open Space and Recreation. (HOPS)

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Background Papers

Consultation Draft.

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