

## **BRECKLAND COUNCIL**

### **POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW PANEL 1 - 5 FEBRUARY 2008**

#### **REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR (BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION)**

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### **OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT**

**Summary:** This assessment forms part of the evidence base for the Breckland Local Development Framework. The assessment includes an audit of all open space provision within Breckland as required by the Government's Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG17). A detailed qualitative and quantitative assessment is made on outdoor sports facilities and children's play facilities, and the results of this assessment has helped formulate local standards for outdoor sports provision and children's play provision. The report also outlines proposed developer contributions and on-site provision for outdoor sport and children's play areas. The assessment was developed with input from the Community Engagement Team, and the assessment has provided evidence for the Breckland Play Strategy. The standards proposed in the Open Space Assessment should also help deliver the goals of the Breckland Play Strategy.

#### **1. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 In 2005 Breckland commissioned consultants, Leisure and the Environment to undertake a quantitative audit of all open spaces within Breckland in line with the typologies identified in PPG17. This audit was consulted widely with town and parish councils in December 2005 and was consequently updated by members of the Planning Policy team throughout 2006. This enabled RoSPA (Royal Society of Prevention of Accidents) to undertake a qualitative audit of the children's play areas identified. This was followed by a qualitative audit of outdoor sports areas by members of the Planning Policy team toward the end of 2006. The data collected was analysed and developed into the Open Space Assessment in early 2007 and was subject to consultation with Sport England in the Spring of 2007

#### **2. KEY DECISION**

- 2.1 This is not a key decision.

#### **3. COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

- 3.1 The matter raised in this report falls within the following Council priorities:
- A safe and healthy environment
  - A well planned place to live which encourages vibrant communities

#### **4. MAIN BODY OF REPORT**

- 4.1 The Breckland Open Space Assessment identified 542 sites of open space that were in conformity with the typologies listed in PPG17. These typologies include:
- Outdoor Sport Areas
  - Children's Play Areas
  - Parks and gardens
  - Natural and Semi-Natural Green Space
  - Amenity Green Space

- Green Corridors
  - Allotments
  - Cemeteries and Churchyards
- 4.2 PPG17 states that standards for open space are best set locally. The Breckland Open Space Assessment proposes local standards for outdoor sports areas and children's play areas, collectively termed as outdoor playing space. In order to set local standards the Open Space Assessment has tested the current provision of outdoor playing space in Breckland against the National Playing Field Association's (NPFA) 6 acre standard (equivalent to 2.4 hectares).
- 4.3 The NPFA standard consists of 2.4ha of total outdoor playing space per 1000 people. This standard is broken down to 1.6ha of outdoor sports provision per 1000 people and 0.8ha of children's play area provision per 1000 people.
- 4.4 There is an overall deficiency of outdoor playing space throughout the district when compared to the NPFA standard. The situation is particularly poor in the case of children's play provision, where the provision in all the Parishes except Guist fails to meet the NPFA standard. It should be noted that the play area in Guist has no fixed equipment. The picture is more balanced for the provision of outdoor sports where a number of rural villages do meet the standard. In all types of provision the Market towns, which will see the most housing growth over the next 20 years, are the most deficient in outdoor playing space provision.
- 4.5 The comparison of provision against NPFA standard only covers the amount of provision in terms of area. To produce an accurate audit of outdoor playing space, and develop local standards for provision, an assessment of quality was undertaken on all children's play areas and outdoor sports areas in the District.
- 4.6 The quality of the 92 children's play areas identified in the study was assessed by RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents). The assessment showed that the quality of children's play areas throughout the district is poor with few exceptions. 96% of children's play areas in the district have a 'Poor' play value in at least one age group. The situation for the quality of teenage play provision is particularly bad, not one Parish in the district has provision for teenagers that scores above an 'Average' quality score.
- 4.7 The quality of outdoor sports facilities were assessed by Planning Policy Officers using a methodology adapted from Sport England. The results from this assessment found that the average quality score for most parishes was either 'Average' or 'Above average'.
- 4.8 The Assessment found that access to outdoor playing space is fairly good in the towns and larger villages. However, there is a lack of access to children's play areas and outdoor sports facilities in some rural areas.
- 4.9 In addition to these audits, an array of consultation data was collated to help assess the need for outdoor playing space in the District. The themes from this data indicated that there was a general need for easily accessible play areas that were exciting, challenging, clean and safe and for a wide range of age groups
- 4.10 From the assessment on quantity and quality and from previously collected consultation data, the assessment concludes that higher standards than NPFA are required in the LDF to ensure there is adequate provision of outdoor playing space to meet the needs of the population. The assessment suggests a standard of **3ha** of outdoor playing space per 1000 people. This standard is broken down to 2ha per 1000 people for outdoor sport provision and 1ha per 1000 people for children's play area provision. The standard is slightly higher than NPFA to account for some of the current deficiencies and to ensure that new development does not exacerbate the situation. The assessment suggests that the standard should be partly achieved through on-site

(for developments of 30 dwellings or more) and off-site (for developments of less than 30 dwellings or where on-site open space would not be the most efficient use of land) contributions from housing developments. The standard and suggestions were put forward in Preferred Option DC12 of the Core Strategy and Development Control Policies Preferred Options consultation which was agreed by Cabinet on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2007. Additionally Preferred option DC12 seeks to protect all open space sites identified in this Assessment.

- 4.11 In the case of off-site provision, the Open Space Assessment suggests commuted sum payments are made based on the number and size of dwellings within the development. The commuted sums for children's play area provision range from £406 for a two bed dwelling to £700 for a four bed dwelling. The commuted sums for outdoor sports provision range from £600 for a one bed dwelling to £1200 for a four bed dwelling. These sums take into account factors such as the proposed 3ha standard, average land values, and average equipment and development costs.
- 4.12 These financial contributions should go to local projects related to the development. These could either be new open spaces or improvements to existing open spaces. It is evident that some smaller parishes will not see many developments and therefore, contribution for outdoor playing space will be limited for those parishes. Therefore, the assessment suggests that parishes are grouped, and that contributions from developments within that group are spent on projects within the group. The parishes are grouped together by their geography, transport links, population, likelihood of future development and current provision of outdoor playing space. It is acknowledged that these proposed groupings of parishes will need to be consulted on with Parish councils.
- 4.13 To conclude, the assessment provides detailed evidence around the provision, quality and accessibility of open space throughout the district. This evidence can be used in the formation of future Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents. Furthermore the evidence and proposals in this document, with particular reference to the proposed developer contributions, will help deliver the Breckland Play Strategy which was resolved by Cabinet on the 17<sup>th</sup> July 2007.

## **5. OPTIONS AVAILABLE**

- 5.1 This Report is for information only and no options are available.

## **6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 6.1 To allow the successful progression of the Local Development Framework evidence base.

## **7. RISK**

- 7.1 This report does not require a risk assessment because the changes/issues covered by the recommendations are not significant in terms of risk.

## **8. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 8.1 Members to note the contents of this report for their information

### *Appendices:*

Where appropriate, this report has taken account of the need for compliance with

- The Council's Equal Opportunities Policies
- Section 17, Crime & Disorder Act 1998
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Section 40, Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006