

Briefing Note for Planning & Highways Committee

Revision to 'Recreational Open Space Provision and Commuted Payments' Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)

1. Introduction

1.1 Stockport Council's 'Recreational Open Space Provision and Commuted Payments' Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), July 2006 outlines the commitment of the Council to promote a wide range of well-designed sport, leisure and play facilities. The guidance document demonstrates how commuted sums will be used in maintaining and enhancing the open space assets across the borough.

1.2 The existing Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), has proved successful in helping to ensure the open space needs are met across the borough. However, it needs to be refreshed to recognise considerable changes that have occurred since it was adopted. In the context of these changes, the Planning Policy team, in liaison with Public Realm, have undertaken a comprehensive review of the SPG within the framework of relevant policies in the adopted Core Strategy DPD relating to open space, design and amenity, etc. and national policy and legislation changes. The SPG has also been reviewed in light of the increasing costs associated with providing recreational facilities. The review has led to the development of a draft 'Recreational Open Space Provision and Commuted Payments' Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The use of the SPG since 2006, together with updated demand evidence, has highlighted a number of challenges in continuing with some of the current approaches which the review has sought to address. Although we are mindful that the timeframes for **consultation on the SPD and GMSF will have some overlap**, it is critical that the SPD is adopted to ensure that future development in the borough can be supported by the necessary play and recreational facilities. There is no direct link between the GMSF and the SPD, as the latter relates to existing policies in the Council's Core Strategy.

1.3 The draft SPD seeks to ensure that all stakeholders have a clear understanding of how the relevant policies should be implemented and their desired outcome. This will help to ensure that the open space needs of Stockport continue to be successfully met; delivering safe, high quality open spaces that are well-located, well-designed, well-managed, and meet the aspirations of local communities. The SPD is therefore an important element in securing a sustainable future for the borough.

2. Commuted Sum Charges

2.1 The rates at which Section 106 Commuted Sums for Open Space for both provision and maintenance are calculated need to be revised as they no longer reflect the actual cost to the Council of providing and maintaining high quality play spaces.

2.2 Good play spaces are designed as places in their own right and would follow Play England's ten design principles. As a guide for establishing the real life costs of improving equipped play areas, Tables 1 and 2 in Appendix 1 of the SPD detail the costs associated with improving existing play spaces. In addition, a benchmarking exercise has been undertaken to compare the commuted charges across the Greater Manchester Authorities. The council currently charges £67 per sqm of play space compared to the actual cost of £326. Table 3 from Appendix 2 highlights the revised costs we have to set out in the draft SPD.

2.3 The local authority would make a judgement on the most economically cost effective way to split the contribution between provision and maintenance and formal and children's. For projects requiring high capital investment the contribution would be split up to a maximum of 70 / 30 percent in favour of provision. For projects requiring high ongoing maintenance costs the contribution would be split up to a maximum of 70 / 30 percent in favour of maintenance. For developments likely to generate demand for children facilities, a higher portion of the contribution will go to children's facilities than formal recreational.

3. Changes to National Guidance

3.1 The National Planning Practice Guidance emphasises that planning obligations assist in mitigating the impact of development in order to make it acceptable in planning terms, which benefits local communities and supports the provision of local infrastructure. Adopted Core Strategy Policy SIE-2, 'Provision of Recreation and Amenity Open Space in New Developments', outlines how development is expected to take a positive role in providing for open space to meet the needs of the occupants. In implementing this policy, planning obligations are sought for open space provision in the borough. The Section 106 contribution is split into the following four categories;

- Children's Play Provision
- Children's Play Maintenance
- Formal Sport Provision
- Formal Sport Maintenance

3.2 The SPD has been updated to ensure the legislation surrounding planning obligations is fully adhered to when seeking planning obligations from development proposals. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010 (as amended) specify that local authorities can only pool planning obligations from up to five planning obligations towards any particular infrastructure project or infrastructure type (Regulation 123) after 6 April 2015. The SPD provides guidance on ensuring the appropriate procedures are followed when allocating commuted sums to play and sports facilities and that funds are allocated in a way which secures maximum benefits to the borough's residents.

4. Good Quality Design

4.1 The SPD has been updated to ensure that a more balanced approach is taken when reviewing the overall landscaping arrangements for residential development, in order to ensure new open space provision can provide multifunctional benefits, to ensure the existing parks and

facilities can best benefit from commuted sums and to minimise conflicts with onsite open space and household occupiers. In taking this approach the document will provide guidance on the implementation of following policies;

- Core Policy CS8 - Safeguarding and improving the Environment
- Core Strategy Policy SIE-1 - Quality Places
- Core Strategy Policy SIE-2 - Provision of Recreation and Amenity Open Space in New Developments

4.2 The existing SPG supplements the Unitary Development Plan policies below

- UDP L1 Leisure in Stockport (unsaved policy)
- UDP L1.1 Land for Active Recreation
- UDP L1.2 Children's Play

5. Conclusion

5.1 Ultimately the SPD seeks to achieve the following;

- Aid the smooth functioning of the planning application process by explaining the Council's process and procedures for using planning obligations and the creation of new play areas to local residents, developers and landowners.
- Ensuring the appropriate costs for open space provision are secured through the s106 process.
- Ensure new play and recreational equipment is delivered to an appropriate specification.

6. Next Steps

6.1 The Council is out to consultation on the draft SPD for a period of 6 weeks in accordance with section 5 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, due to end March 22nd. The SPD will go to Cabinet for approval April 23rd.

6.2 If and when adopted, the SPD will be an important material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

6.3 The Council would, at the same time, revoke the existing 'Recreational Open Space Provision and Commuted Payments' Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), July 2006.

6.4 A mechanism will be put in place to ensure costs can be easily amended to reflect inflation.

7. Recommendation

7.1 That the Committee take note of the SPD which is out for consultation.

Appendix 1

Costs associated with equipped Play Areas

A Local Equipped Area of Play is primarily aimed at junior aged children that can play independently. It will typically have a minimum activity zone of 500 square metres and have at least **5 play opportunities**.

A Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play is aimed at children of all ages and include dynamic equipment for older children, it will typically have an activity zone of 1000 square metres and at least **8 play opportunities**.

Whilst the FiT Six Acre does not prescribe the type of play equipment that should include, a standard equipped area would allow for the following core play experiences;

- Climbing
- Sliding
- Swinging
- Rotating
- Rocking

Good play spaces are designed as places in their own right and would follow Play England's ten design principles. However, as a guide for establishing the real life costs of improving equipped play areas the tables below detail the costs associated with improving existing play spaces.

Table 1 (Below) shows the typical costs of providing and installing play equipment and associated impact attenuating surface for a LEAP. The figures have been based on tendered play area improvement works in 2017.

Table 1: Typical costs for costs for play equipment (core play experiences)

	Footprint SQM	Supply and Install Cost	Safer surface cost	Total Item cost	Cost per SQM
Multi Use Play Unit with slide	70	£25,000.00	£7,000.00	£32,000.00	£457.00
Three bay swing including junior and toddler and inclusive seats	70	£ 6,000.00	£7,000.00	£13,000.00	£186.00
Roundabout	30	£ 6,000.00	£3,000.00	£ 9,000.00	£300.00
See saw	20	£ 3,000.00	£2,000.00	£ 5,000.00	£250.00
TOTAL	190	£43,000.00	£19,000.00	£62,000.00	£326.00

A NEAP would include the above core items and dynamic play opportunities such as those detailed below in Table 2.

Table 2: Typical costs for dynamic play items

	Footprint SQM	Supply and install cost	Safe surface cost	Total cost	Cost per SQM
High Rope Climber	110	£15,000.00	£11,000.00	£26,000.00	£236.00
Cantilever swing	40	£ 6,000.00	£ 4,000.00	£10,000.00	£250.00
Dynamic rotator	85	£ 6,500.00	£ 8,500.00	£15,000.00	£176.00
Electronic play (cost estimate)	40	£25,000.00	X	£25,000.00	£625.00
TOTAL	375	£52,500.00	£23,500.00	£76,000.00	£202.00

The average real life cost of delivering equipped play improvements is **£264.00 per sqm.**

Maintenance costs are calculated at 30% of the capital investment, **£79.20 per sqm.**

Appendix 2

The case for revising Commuted Sums for Play and Formal Sport

Introduction

The rates at which Section 106 Commuted Sums for Open Space for both provision and maintenance need revising as they no longer reflect the actual cost to the Council to provide and maintain high quality play spaces.

Commuted Sums for Open Space are required in four areas;

- Play Provision
- Play Maintenance
- Formal Sport Provision
- Formal Sport Maintenance

Background

Section 106 (S106) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) allows the drafting of legal agreements for the Council to control the impacts of development, which cannot otherwise be achieved via planning conditions. This is an established mechanism to secure the delivery of services or facilities needed as a result of new development, and are referred to as “commuted sums”. Contributions to infrastructure are delivered by way of physical works on- or off-site, land transfer, or financial contributions.

The commuted sums for Open Space Provision and Maintenance are used to enable the Council to provide / improve open space for the increase demand that the development has created.

Policy and Standards

Core Strategy Policy SIE 2 ‘Recreation and Amenity Open Space in New developments’ applies the Fields in Trust Standard (FiT), commonly known as the ‘*Six Acre Standard*’ to determine the improved open space required by a development. This is widely used as the National Standard.

In order to meet the *Six Acre Standard*, Stockport Council must provide 2.4ha of open space provision per 1000 population.

Of this provision approximately 0.7ha should be for children’s play. The *Six Acres Standard*, further recommends that this would normally contain approximately 0.25ha of equipped play space and approximately 0.45ha of casual play space. 1.7ha should be for Sports provision of which approximately 1.15ha should be sports pitches.

Meeting the Standard

In order to meet the *Six Acre Standard*, Stockport Council should provide 2.4ha or 24,000 square metres per 1000 population. This equates to 240 square metres of open space provision per person. This will include;

Play Provision - 7 square metres of play provision per person, of which approximately 2.5 square metres would be for equipped play space and 4.5 square metres would be for casual play (amenity grass land).

Sport Provision - 17 square metres of formal sport provision per person, of which approximately 11.5 square metres should be sports pitches.

When a new development creates a bedroom space it increases population capacity, this is calculated using the table below.

Table 1

Development type	Population Capacity Increase
1 Bedroom dwelling	2 persons
2 Bedroom dwelling	3 persons
3 Bedroom dwelling	4 persons
4 + Bedroom dwelling	5 persons

Current Commuted Sums Rate

The Commuted Sums contributions were last revised in October 2006. The following rates per person are currently used to calculate the commuted sum contribution.

Table 2

	Provision capita	per	Maintenance capita	per	Combined Total
Childrens Play	£167.31		£83.02		£250.33
Formal Sport	£198.35		£201.62		£399.97
					£650.30

Stockport Council requires that commuted sum cover a maintenance period for 25 years. Any commuted sum maintenance received is then drawn down by Stockport Council at a rate of one twenty fifth per year (once the associated capital payment has been spent).

Revising the Commuted Sum Contribution

The existing rate charged through Commuted Sum for play is not reflective of the current cost to the Council for improving and maintaining open space provision in line with the increasing population.

In order to establish a fair commuted sums contribution the Council has attributed an asset value per metre square to its open space provision. This is detailed in Table 3: Proposed Rate for Commuted Sums for Open Space Provision.

Table 3: Proposed Rate for Commuted Sums Open Space Provision

		A1	B1	C1	D1	E1	
		Area required per person by the Standard (sqm)	Cost provision of per sqm	Cost maintenance of per sqm	Total per sqm (B1 + C1)	Cost per Capita (A1 x D1)	Total Contribution Sought per capita
Children's Play	Equipped Play	2.5	£125.00	£50.00	£175.00	£437.50	£595.00
	Casual Play space (Amenity Open Space)	4.5	£20.00	£15.00	£35.00	£157.50	
Formal Sport	Sports Provision	17	£33.00	£20.00	£53.00	£901.00	£901.00
							£1,496

Table 4: A comparison between the current rates and proposed rate for Open Space Commuted Sum

	A2	B2	C2	D2		
	Current cost per capita for provision	Proposed cost per capita for provision	Current cost per capita for Maintenance	Proposed cost per capita for maintenance	Current combined provision / maintenance per capita (A2 + C2)	Proposed combined provision / maintenance per capita (B2 + D2)
Childrens Play	£167.31	£402.50	£83.02	£192.50	£250.33	£595.00
Formal Sport	£198.35	£561.00	£201.62	£340.00	£399.97	£901.00
					£650.30	£1496

Benchmarking

Whilst all the GM Authorities base their Planning Guidance for Open Space Provision on the *Six Acre Standard*, the formula by which they work out commuted sums is often different, which can make direct comparison or rates unclear. As an example Wigan Council apply an Open Space Commuted Sum contribution per dwelling rather than per capita and Trafford Council use a different formula (to Stockport) to calculate the population increase per development.

Salford Councils Planning Guidance is set out in a similar way to Stockport's and therefore is the more appropriate for the comparison of the individual rates.

Table 3: A comparison between Salford's commuted sum rates with the proposed for Stockport.

	Childrens Play Provision per capita	Childrens Play Maintenance per capita	Formal Sport Provision per capita	Formal Sport Maintenance per capita	Combined Open Space Contribution per capita
Salford (June 2015)	£314.00	£214.00	£571.00	£340.00	£1,439.00
Stockport Proposed	£402.50	£192.50	£561.00	£340.00	£1,496.00

Worked Example

The below shows what neighbouring Councils would charge in Open Space Commuted Sums for a development of 15 houses – 5 with two bedrooms, 5 with three bedrooms and 5 with four bedrooms.

Council	Combine Play rate per capita	Formal Sport rate per capita	Population Capacity	Play Contribution	Formal Sport Contribution	Combined Open Space Commuted Contribution Sum
Stockport Council Proposed	£595.00	£901.00	60	£35,700.00	£54,060.00	£89,760.00
Salford City Council 2015	£528.00	£911.00	60	£31,680.00	£54,660.00	£86,340.00
Trafford Council 2014	£540.54	£520.00	37	£19,999.98	£19,240.00	£39,239.98*
Bury 2015						£41,553.90
Stockport Council Current 2006	£250.33	£399.97	60	£15,019.80	£23,998.20	£39,018.00
Stockport Council Current 2006 with inflation	£347.39	£555.05	60	£20,843.40	£33,303	£54,146.40

Trafford have adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). In this instance CIL replaces the use of some planning obligations, including contributions towards open space in Trafford. Although the costs associated with s106 contributions appear low; it is important to note that improvements required for local open space, semi natural green space, children's play equipment and outdoor sports facilities to address impacts arising from development will be named on the CIL Regulation 123 list, which describes what type of infrastructure projects CIL funds will be

spent on. The link to Trafford's Supplementary Planning Document on Planning Obligation can be found here;
<http://www.trafford.gov.uk/planning/strategic-planning/docs/revised-spd1-planning-obligations-2014.pdf>

Conclusion

It is recommended that the Commuted Sum for Open Space Provision is increased from £650.30 to £1,496.00 per person and commuted sums are charged at the following;

Childrens Play Provision: per person	£402.50
Childrens Play Maintenance per person (25 year period)	£192.50
Formal Sport Provision per person	£561.00
Formal Sport Provision per person (25 year period)	£340.00
Total	£1,496.00