

REPORT TO THE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL
MEETING ON 25th MARCH 2021

Status: For information and comment
Title: Open Spaces Strategy 2021
Originator: Matthew Bills
Where from: Report writer
Where to next: Cabinet

Objective: To update Scrutiny Panel on the progress of the Open Spaces Strategy review and to seek the Panels comments and feedback concerning the draft Strategy.

1. Outcome sought from Panel

1.1 To review and comment on the draft Open Spaces Strategy (the Strategy).

2. Background

2.1 The Open Spaces Strategy has been reviewed over the last ten months by The Environment Partnership (TEP) with the support of an officer steering group from sections of the Council that will implement the Strategy.

2.2 The new draft Strategy (see **Appendix A**) will, when approved for adoption, replace the existing Open Spaces Strategy 2016 to 2021.

2.3 The Strategy has been prepared after consultation with residents, Parish Council, officers, other stakeholders and developers. Further consultation was undertaken with 4 resident groups to consider amongst other issues the adoption of open space from developers by the Council (see **Appendices C to F**).

2.4 Detailed audits have been undertaken on 299 sites selected using agreed criteria in accordance with Green Flag audit guidelines. All other sites received a partial audit to confirm use and site boundaries. A map of all sites can be found at **Appendix B**.

2.5 The Strategy has been written to reflect not only the importance placed on mitigating climate change and providing space for biodiversity but also to reflect the changing economic climate in which the Council and its partners operate and the requirement to reduce costs where possible.

- 2.6 The methodology followed to produce the Strategy is in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) for Open Space.
- 2.6 The Strategy considers the provision and use of 8 typologies of open space but does not consider outdoor sport as this is dealt with by the Playing Pitch Strategy. Additionally, the provision of cemetery and burial grounds is considered in detail as part of the Cemetery and Burial Ground Strategy for the capacity of cemeteries, but the typology is included here for accessibility, quality, value and amount of provision.
- 2.7 The Strategy proposes a number of quantity standards as set out accompanying appendices and has provided a quality and value score for each site. This will allow the site owners to assess where quality might be high, but value is low and where, by changing how the site is used, a better value can be achieved.
- 2.8 The accessibility of sites has also been assessed to identify where there might be barriers to access, or where new sites should be provided.
- 2.9 Recommendations have been made in Chapter 8 Recommendations and Strategy. The recommendations include:
- Adopt the recommended standards (Chapter 6);
 - Increase the multi-functional open spaces where possible, including increasing green travel routes, improving aesthetic, increasing habitat for wildlife and the cultural offering;
 - Production of a Supplementary Planning Document such as Open Space Strategy; and
 - Seek funding opportunities including Section 106 Agreements, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and developer contributions.

3. Points for discussion

- 3.1 Does the Panel consider the quantity provision thresholds and accessibility thresholds are about right?
- 3.2 Does the Panel consider that the policy concerning adoption of open space by the District Council is sufficiently clear and robust?
- 3.3 Does the Panel have a view on the time period for commuted sums for maintenance and how does the Panel consider a longer or shorter term would affect the Council's ability to deliver a grounds maintenance contract within budget?
- 4 Equality Impact Assessment Implications/Outcomes (attach completed EIA)
- 4.1 The equality impact assessment has not identified any issues that require attention.
- 4.2 A Due Regard Analysis is attached as part of this report (**Appendix G**).

5. Impact on Communities

5.1 The draft Strategy has identified that the District Council will not adopt open space on new development unless a 30-year maintenance sum is received.

5.1.1 This may be perceived by new communities as being detrimental to their home and their wider living environment.

6. Legal Issues

6.1 None associated with this report.

6.2 The Panel should note that developers cannot be compelled to transfer open space to the District Council. A Management Company may present better value for a developer.

7. Resource Issues

7.1 By securing a commuted sum for 30 years the cost of maintaining open space through the ground's maintenance contract is reduced.

7.2 The Open Space Strategy has recommended that existing play areas are renovated as part of the provisions of an S106 agreement rather than new play areas being installed on all developments.

8. Community Safety Implications

8.1 None associated with this report.

8.2 Well maintained, accessible and valued open space will help reduce the incidence of antisocial behaviour and improve the feeling of safety of the community.

9. Risk Management Implications

9.1 By not adopting all open space the Council risks an increase in complaints if Management Companies do not maintain sites to the satisfaction of residents.

9.2 The Strategy is clear that once open space has been transferred to a management organisation, concerns or complaints regarding the long-term management of open spaces should be referred to the management organisations in the first instance.

10. Consultation

10.1 The Strategy has been prepared after consultation with residents, Parish Council, officers, other stakeholders and developers. Further consultation was undertaken with 4 resident groups to consider amongst other issues the adoption of open space from developers by the Council (see **Appendices C to F**).

11 Background Papers

11.1 [Open Spaces Strategy 2016 to 2021](#)

Previous report(s): [Open Space Implementation and Delivery \(12 March 2020\)](#)

Information Issued Under Sensitive Issue Procedure: Y/N

Appendices:

A. Draft Open Spaces Strategy 2021

B. Open Space typology map

C. Sub Area breakdown

D. Community Consultation

E. Developer Consultation

F. Key Stakeholder consultation

G. Due Regard Analysis