

Recreational Open Space

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE NOTE NO. 1

Introduction

This leaflet sets out the Council's policy and standards for recreational space, as contained in the Local Plan. It offers additional information and advice which should be of use to those providing public open space or seeking to use existing public open space for other purposes.

Our Inheritance



The Council owns and maintains a wide range of public open space, ranging from large areas of parkland, playing fields and play areas to many small areas of incidental open space in housing areas. In some areas land is held as public open space to retain access to underground pipes and cables, to ensure that there is clear visibility at road junctions or to keep cleared sites tidy prior to redevelopment. The open space is not evenly spread across the area and it varies widely in the level of use.

Changes in Open Space Provision



Over the last few years, several new issues have arisen in the provision of public open space. The introduction of "Compulsory Competitive Tendering" to open space maintenance means that the Council has to look carefully at the value which the public gets from public open space and the cost to look after each area. As the public's available "leisure time" increases, the demand for further open space for new sports, long distance paths etc. increases. In addition, there has been increasing concern to ensure the safety of children in play areas and to obtain separate provision of open space for dogs.

Council Policy & Standards

Outdoor Recreational Space Provision should be considered as an integral part of the creation of new housing areas and should so far as practicable be made as development proceeds, not as a supplementary phase after development is substantially complete. The design for open space should cover new residential areas as a whole, not isolated development schemes by individual housebuilders. Provision should ensure access free from motor traffic for all ages. The use of landscaped linear open spaces with paths will be encouraged to provide safe routes to active play areas as well as providing for amenity open space and active recreation in their own right.

The design for open space should include an analysis of existing children's play areas in the vicinity and developers will be encouraged to make contributions to their upgrading. Where suitable existing or upgradable play areas are not available conveniently and within a safe distance for unaccompanied children, they should be provided. Within larger developments, they should be at least 2,000m² with separate equipment for children above and below 6 years of age located to be safely accessible from all parts of the development and related to schools and shops.

Informal ball games A minimum of 0.4 to 0.5 hectares, should be available for each unit of 1000 population on well drained and reasonably level ground.

Organised Sports - Provision should be made within the largest developments, or a contribution should be sought from developers towards provision outwith the site, for pitches, courts and tracks for organised sports at the rate of 1.6 to 1.8 hectares per 1000 population.

Passive Open Space - The Council, in considering applications will take into account the adequacy of



proposed landscaping for visual relief and variety relative to the extent and density of housing. In the largest developments, there may be scope for aggregating this provision into new parklands connected to housing areas by landscaped traffic-free routes.

Any play areas to be provided or upgraded should be surfaced and equipped to satisfy the current British Standards or European Standard. Satisfactory arrangements will require to be made for maintenance and the Council will be prepared to enter into maintenance agreements with developers, subject to the provision of a commuted payment to cover an agreed maintenance period.

Providing New Open Space

Public open space provision does not become satisfactory just by conforming to these minimum standards. Care must be taken in site selection (for example by making best use of existing natural features such as trees and slopes). Consideration should be given to retaining

native trees and areas of value for nature conservation. It is not acceptable just to allocate those areas unsuitable for house



building. Care must be taken to locate play areas where they can be supervised from nearby houses and will not create unreasonable disturbance to neighbours. Particular care is needed to design those areas which will be used for ball games. Designs should avoid small areas of incidental open space which are difficult and costly to maintain. The landscape plan should seek to protect attractive views and create new features of interest. Where possible, separate provision should be made for dogs, separate from children's play, in consultation with the Council's Animal Welfare Officer.

Disposal of Public Open Space

The Council has agreed a general policy not to dispose of public open space. However, it will consider making an exception where both:-

- There is special reason:
- Special need (such as disabled access)
- Security
- Maintenance (cost/viability)
- Amenity value (derelict, vacant or under-used ground)
- There is an agreement of all Council departments that the land is no longer required.

Since the acquisition of public open space will usually need Planning Permission, all enquiries should initially be made to Development Services.

Who Maintains Public Open Space?

In the past, the Council has usually maintained public open space from developers and thereafter maintained it indefinitely. With escalating maintenance costs and diminishing Council resources, the Council now seeks a "lump sum" from developers, calculated to cover ten years' annual maintenance cost of the land. Alternatively, some developers prefer to make a separate arrangement with groups of house purchasers who will pay separately for maintaining the public open space, at their own expense.

Town Centre Open Space

Public open space can be particularly valuable in town centres. Levels of use can be very high and sites often very small. Great care must be taken to choose both an appropriate layout and hard and soft landscape materials along with suitable "street furniture".

Produced by:
Development Services
Clackmannanshire Council
Kilncraigs, Greenside Street
Alloa, FK10 1EB
Telephone: (01259) 450000
development_services@clacks.gov.uk
www.clacksweb.org.uk