

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION STANDARDS

Arun District Council
Adopted: October 2000



OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION STANDARDS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Supplementary Planning Guidance Note (SPG) is prepared by the Local Planning Authority to provide clear advice on the provision of open space and play equipment within new residential developments. The terms “open space and play equipment” cover the range of open space, children’s play equipment and informal and formal recreation facilities discussed in this document.

- 1.1 This guidance was adopted in October 2000, subsequent to the review of the Arun District Local Plan. It should be read in conjunction with Policy GEN20 of the Arun District Local Plan 2003 “Provision of Public Open Space within New Development”. Any further updates of this document will be placed on Arun District Council’s website, www.arun.gov.uk.
- 1.2 The inclusion of open space within housing developments is an integral part of any residential environment. Open space gives residents the opportunity for activities such as sitting, walking and recreational play, and for more formal sporting activities such as football, hockey and cricket, and for children's play. A balance of indoor and outdoor recreation provision is required in larger developments, where community activities need to be provided.
- 1.3 Different types of open space are required by different types of development, depending on which age group and sections of the community are to use them. Grassed areas, public gardens, sports pitches and children's play areas all constitute public open space. It is essential for developers to be aware of who they are building for, so that areas of public open space can be planned appropriate to the needs of the residents. This would prevent unusable areas of open space and the consequent waste of land open to dereliction. In addition, it is important that open space is provided in convenient and safe locations, whilst not invading the privacy of private gardens.
- 1.4 Recognising the importance of these public open spaces, Arun District Council have adopted standards that developers should conform to within housing developments. These standards are given below.
- 1.5 A well designed scheme could incorporate areas of open space, existing landscape features such as mature trees and hedgerows, appropriate new planting, provision of children's play areas and car parking, and a mechanism for long-term management of the developing landscape. It is vital that the landscape scheme maximises the biodiversity of the site by the inclusion of native species and the creation and retention of a variety of habitats.

This can, therefore, be a very positive process, a way of creating an attractive, prosperous environment both for the future users and surrounding neighbours.

- 1.6 It is important that negotiations begin at the earliest stage of design and it will be a requirement that open spaces are designed as an integral part of the development, and not simply left for the areas of land which are most difficult to build on. For example, the provision of children's play areas next to railway lines will not be acceptable.
- 1.7 The following general criteria apply:
 - ◆ Where the open space is provided on site, it is to be in large usable blocks. A quantity of small spaces scattered throughout the development will not normally be acceptable.
 - ◆ The land allocated for public open space is to be land in addition to that required for the purposes of the Highway Authority.

2.0 THE STANDARDS

- 2.1 **The following standards apply to developments of houses only. Standards for large developments of flats (50 units or more) can be found in Section 6 of this guidance.**
- 2.2 The Council's standards are based broadly upon the National Playing Fields Association's (NPFA) "Six Acre Standard". This requires that 2.4 hectares of open space (or six acres) are provided for every 1,000 people. In general terms, this can be broken down to 24 square metres of open space per person.
- 2.3 However, these standards differ in that they seek, in certain circumstances, informal open space and, where appropriate to that development, informal "sports"-style recreation equipment (such as basketball hoops or goals) rather than provision for formal sports. (Careful consideration will be given to the design, location and layout of these facilities, in order to minimise risk of disturbance to residents.) In the case of larger developments (200 dwellings or more) formal pitch provision will be sought on-site.
- 2.4 This approach has been taken, in part, because of the age profile of Arun's residents; it is also considered important to provide sports-type equipment within easy reach of residents of the development and because it is considered important that informal open space is provided on-site, suitable for all. The application of the overall standard takes into account the characteristics of the District and past experience of recreational provision in the District.
- 2.5 The standards also seek a 'hierarchy' of play areas for children.

2.6 **These standards represent a guide. Exact requirements will need to be discussed with the Council.**

2.7 By estimating the number of people who are likely to be housed in a particular development, it is possible to calculate the amount of open space required. This ensures a direct relationship between the scale of development and the provision of recreation space. As it is not possible to predict exactly the number of people who will live in a particular development, occupancy will be estimated on the basis of 2.4 people per dwelling. This figure has been derived from the 1991 Census. This approach will also apply when applications are submitted in outline form.

2.8 Once the population of the proposed development has been determined, the amount of open space required can then be calculated as follows.

Population of the development x 24 square metres = amount of open space to be provided in total

2.9 When the total amount of open space to be provided equates to 400 square metres or more, the District Council will normally require this to be provided on-site as part of the development. As explained below, these areas will generally be expected to include children's play areas and informal recreation facilities, as outlined in Tables 1 and 2; requirements for larger developments are discussed below. These play areas do not require additional open space, but should be located within the area of open space as calculated above. The remaining general open space should be used, at least in part, to form a "buffer zone" around the children's play areas. This is important, so as to reduce the impact of the play area on residential amenity. Where appropriate, the buffer zone may include footpaths, planting, other appropriate landscape features, and informal recreation facilities. This is discussed further below.

2.10 Requirements for play areas and formal pitch provision are based on the "Six Acre Standard". The type and amount of children's play areas depends on the size of the development proposed. The standards are **cumulative**; developments of more than 15 dwellings may require more than one play area, of varying types, depending on their size, as indicated in Table 2.

2.11 Larger developments (200 dwellings or more) will also be expected to provide formal pitch facilities, and in the case of developments of more than 300 dwellings, indoor leisure/sports/ community facilities may be sought where a need for such facilities can be demonstrated. (See Table 2.) Small grassed/landscaped areas provided outside of residential curtilages within a development for visual amenity purposes only, should not be included as part of the open space provision.

Table 1 "Trigger Points" for Play Facilities

"Trigger Point" (No. of Houses)	Facility	Minimum Size	Characteristics
15	Local Area for Play (LAP)	100 sq.m.	Mainly for 4-6 year olds. Low key games area with seats. Well-drained site with grass or hard surface and landscaping. May include spring rockers, wooden animals, mounds and small trees.
50	Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)	400 sq.m.	<p>Mainly for accompanied children aged 4-8, plus unaccompanied 8 plus'. Should offer at least 5 types of equipment plus seating for adults and small games area. Site should be well-drained grass and/or hard surface playing space. Equipment must comply with relevant European/British standards. Site must be fenced (dogproof) with two self-closing gates. Area to be landscaped and include footpaths and bike racks.</p> <p>Where possible and appropriate, the open space must be laid out to include informal sports facilities such as basketball hoops, mini goals, skateboard ramps and kickabout areas. Disturbance to residents must be minimised through careful design and appropriate planting.</p>
			Safety surfacing to be provided to all equipment; a cambark pit filled with playgrade bark and in situ rubber crumb under moving equipment. All equipment and surfacing to BS EN 1176 and BSEN 1177.

140	Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)	1,000 sq.m.	Mainly for older children (8-14) but with opportunities for younger children. Should contain about 8 types of equipment, as well as kickabout and cycle play/skateboard ramps/rollerskating. Seating should be provided for accompanying adults and a meeting place included for teenagers. Site to be well landscaped and planted so as to be attractive, maximise biodiversity and minimise conflict with residents/other users. Safety surfacing to be provided to all equipment, as detailed above. All equipment and surfacing to conform to BSEN 1176 and BSEN 1177.
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2.12 Further details may be obtained from the NPFA Six Acre Standard and from the District Council. In some cases, opportunities may arise to combine certain play areas.

2.13 Opportunities for informal recreation on appropriate open spaces should be taken wherever possible. Most open spaces are suitable for children to play ball games and, wherever possible and appropriate, goals and basketball hoops should be provided. On larger sites exceeding 200 houses provision for formal sports pitches will be required and should be included in development proposals and, where appropriate, development briefs. (See Table 3 below).

**Open Space Provided On-Site:
Commuted Sum Payments for Maintenance**

2.14 Commuted sum payments will also be required towards the maintenance of open spaces where these are provided on-site. These will be calculated once a detailed landscape plan has been submitted. The commuted sum per play area is £750 per annum for 16 years. Sites may be handed over immediately following practical completion.

3.0 SMALLER DEVELOPMENTS - COMMUTED PAYMENTS

3.1 Developments of 7 dwellings or more are expected to provide open space on site. Developments of 14 dwellings or less are not required to provide a children's play area on site. However, a commuted payment towards children's play equipment and/or informal recreation equipment will be sought.

This is to ensure that the development can make a contribution towards the additional need it has generated, through the expansion, improvement or upgrading of children's play/informal recreation facilities in the vicinity of the development. This will normally be within walking distance of the development and may be within the same Parish, or adjacent Parish if the development is near a Parish boundary. This approach ensures that there is a direct relationship between the development, and the play area which benefits from the sum. Details of potential projects which such commuted payments could contribute towards, can be obtained from the Parks and Landscapes section.

- 3.2 The commuted payment towards children's play facilities and informal recreation facilities will be calculated on the basis of £1,000 per dwelling (index linked). This sum has been derived from the approximate cost of a LAP play area, divided by 15 units. The sum only relates to provision of play equipment and not land.

Types of development to which recreation and open space standards and commuted payments scheme applies

- 3.3 The basic principle of the District Council's open space standards is that residential developments should provide for the recreational needs that they generate. All new housing developments should therefore make a contribution to children's play equipment/ informal recreation either on site, or in the form of a commuted payment. A Section 106 Agreement will be used.
- 3.4 However, the scheme and standards will not apply to smaller developments of residential flats, where problems of public access could arise. Similarly, in the case of developments aimed at non-family dwellings, such as accommodation for the elderly, there will be a need for other forms of open space more appropriate to the needs of these other groups of people. These areas need to be attractive, accessible and appropriately designed; standards of provision and location will be subject to negotiation at an early stage. Replacement dwellings (on a one-for-one basis) will not be required to meet the standards, as they do not create an additional need.
- 3.5 In summary, the following types of development will not be required to meet the standards: replacement dwellings; extensions and granny annexes; rest homes, nursing homes, and other institutional uses; temporary permissions for mobile homes; accommodation for the elderly; and developments of less than 50 flats. (Requirements for developments of 50 or more flats can be found in Section 6.).

4.0 LARGER DEVELOPMENTS: FORMAL SPORTS PITCHES AND INDOOR COMMUNITY/LEISURE DEVELOPMENTS

- 4.1 The provision to be made within residential developments will depend upon the size of development. The District Council's requirements are set out in Table 2. Early consultation with the Council is desirable, particularly with the provision of formal sports pitches, etc.
- 4.2 The need for formal sports pitches is unlikely in developments of less than 200 dwellings. Where the scale of development exceeds this figure provision will need to be made within the development area or in certain circumstances a commuted sum may be negotiated to enable the District Council to make provision for this facility themselves, possibly on a more comprehensive basis.
- 4.3 All sports pitch areas should be prepared by a recognised specialist company having submitted plans and specifications for approval. Guidelines for the preparation and establishment of grassed areas are available from the District Council on request.
- 4.4 Developments of 300 dwellings or more may be requested to provide social/community/leisure facilities, where a need can be demonstrated.

Siting of LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs

- 4.5 It is vital that negotiations begin at the earliest stage of design to ensure that open spaces, children's play areas and sports facilities form an integral part of the development and are not simply left for areas of land that are most difficult to build on; for example the provision of play areas next to railway lines will not be acceptable. Children should not need to cross roads, railways or waterways to get to play areas.
- 4.6 The NPFA's "Six Acre Standard" advises that play areas should be:
- ◆ sited in open, welcoming locations, not on backland with accesses along high-fenced narrow alleyways;
 - ◆ separated from areas of major vehicle movements and accessible directly from pedestrian routes;
 - ◆ sited on land suitable for the type of play opportunity intended. For example, slopes too steep for building can provide one kind of experience, but are not suitable for most play equipment. Conversely, a flat kickabout area can be too bland a setting for other types of equipment;
 - ◆ normally overlooked by houses or visible from well-used pedestrian routes;

- ◆ far enough away from houses to reduce the likelihood of general disturbance, noise and other nuisances - particularly to households without children.
- ◆ these should be linked as far as possible, with other open spaces, footpath systems, amenity planting areas and other devices to provide the maximum separation from nearby residence;
- ◆ accessible by hard-surfaced footpaths.
- ◆ care should be taken to avoid psychological barriers such as playgrounds at the "wrong end" of pedestrian bridges across busy roads, or having to move from one clearly defined housing estate to another to reach a playground.

4.7 Detailed recommendations on play area design are given in other NPFA publications, but in the context of this section it is worth stressing that:

- a wide range of play opportunities should be provided if possible. Playgrounds are for children, and not all need to be neatly "manicured". There should be unobstructed open space to kick or throw a ball as well and natural opportunities for play in such areas as spinneys and wasteland where there is more opportunity for creative development;
- appropriate species of shrubs should be planted next to house and garden walls while high climbing equipment or equipment on mounds should be sited sensitively, well away from nearby windows. Very popular items sited as far away as possible from houses can help to make play areas more acceptable to neighbours;
- play areas should be designed in a way which is attractive and safe for children, and meets their needs and of those living nearby.

5.0 HOW TO ASSESS OPEN SPACE REQUIREMENTS

- 5.1 (1) Calculate population generated by a development.
 Number of dwellings x 2.4 (average population per house) = *a*
- (2) Calculate area of open space required on-site.
 $a \times 24$ square metres = *b* sq.m. of open space
 If *b* equals 400 sq.m. or more this must be provided on-site; if lower, there is no requirement for on-site open space; however, see (4) below.
- (3) If there are 15 dwellings or more, play equipment will be sought on-site. Consult tables 1 and 2 above.

- (4) If there are 14 dwellings or fewer, a commuted payment on a sliding scale will be sought towards play facilities;
£1,000 per dwelling (this sum will be index-linked).
- (5) Play areas must be sited in open space in accordance with this guidance.
- (6) A commuted sum for maintenance will also be required, where open space is provided on-site.

Table 2: Recreation and Open Space Requirements

Provision Required per Number of Houses	Provision or Equivalent Required
6 or under	A commuted payment may be sought towards children's play/informal recreation equipment
7	Landscaped open space; a commuted payment may also be sought towards children's play/informal recreation equipment
15	This normally equates to 1 LAP and landscaped open space
50	This normally equates to 1 LEAP, 3 LAPs, landscaped open space (inc. informal rec.)
140-199	This normally equates to 1 NEAP, 3 LEAPs, 9 LAPs (exact mix to be agreed by LPA) plus landscaped open space (including a range of informal recreation opportunities)
200-299	Children's play, plus formal pitch provision (and where appropriate, suitable changing accommodation), plus landscaped open space (including a range of informal recreational opportunities)
300-500	Children's play, plus landscaped open space (including a range of informal recreation opportunities) plus formal pitch provision. Furthermore, indoor leisure/sports/community facilities may be required where such a need can be demonstrated
500+	It is expected that sites of this size will require detailed consultation with Arun District Council and a development brief to incorporate children's play, plus landscaped open space (including a range of informal recreation opportunities) plus formal pitch provision. Furthermore, indoor leisure/sports/community facilities may be required where such a need can be demonstrated

Please note: where the development falls between two "trigger points" the category below will be used as a starting point to determine requirements. For example, a development of 30 dwellings may be asked to provide two LAPs and landscaped open space. Commuted payments for maintenance will also be sought.

6.0 OPEN SPACE REQUIREMENTS FOR LARGER FLAT DEVELOPMENTS

- 6.1 Requirements are given above for housing developments. As mentioned above, these standards do not apply to smaller developments of flats, where problems of public access might arise. However, it is considered that larger flat developments should provide some degree of open space facilities. Consequently, the following standard will apply.
- 6.2 Developments of 50 flats or more should provide a LEAP play area, with an appropriate buffer area. Careful attention will be paid to the siting and design of the play area, and the type of equipment provided, to minimise disturbance to residents. These facilities should be sited according to the guidance in “Siting of LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs” elsewhere in this guidance. There are no standards for general recreational open space for flats. A commuted sum for maintenance will also be required (£750 per annum for 16 years). There are no requirements for developments of 49 flats or less.