
PPG17 Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study

Synopsis

To update Members on the progress and interim findings of the PPG17 Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study in order to enable the finalisation of the project as part of the preparation of options for the Local Development Framework

1. Relevant Background Details

The consultants PMP were commissioned to undertake a study of open space sports and recreation provision in Corby, in line with the requirements of Planning Policy Guidance Note 17. This was commissioned as a joint study with East Northamptonshire Council, although separate reports are to be submitted.

This is a formal study that follows the set procedures for a detailed evidence based assessment. PPG17 guidance sets out a five step process for undertaking a local assessment of open space. The consultants have been thorough and diligent in carrying out each stage.

2. Report**Summary of Study Report:**

The consultants PMP set out to answer several key questions: what does Corby have now; what is the quality of provision; how does this compare with other authorities; where are the gaps; where should resources be targeted?

The findings so far are reported below. The final results will be fed directly into the Borough's Local Development Framework process to guide the formulation of site specific policies and guidance.

Identifying local needs: Review of strategic background

The open space study and resulting strategies will contribute to achieving the wider aims of a number of local and national agencies. The consultants have identified a real need in Corby for:

- an open space vision for the Borough;
- a cross-cutting consistent drive towards the development and enhancement of open space;
- the promotion of the open space vision and its benefits within the Council's corporate priorities;
- new planning policies to integrate with and be supportive of all the cross-cutting developments and regeneration schemes.

Identifying local needs: Consultation process

In the summer, PMP carried out a local needs assessment of spaces including a demand assessment. A series of consultations were carried out as part of these assessments to establish the views on open space provision amongst both users and non-users in the Borough. Extensive consultations have been carried out in particular with organisations involved in sports and recreation, school pupils were asked about their needs and a

sample of 4000 households were sent a questionnaire. A 'drop in' session at the Willows was well attended.

The information gained from these consultations has been used to help understand the key issues/problems facing different Council departments and agencies; the needs and requirements of local residents; the attitudes and expectations for open space within the area; what is right and wrong about the existing provision.

From the household survey the provision for children and young people (all ages) was considered to be by far the least well provided for. There was also an emphasis on insufficient provision of outdoor sports facilities and a perceived problem of anti-social behaviour, dog-fouling, vandalism, graffiti and litter.

According to the household survey, West Glebe Park, East Carlton Park and the boating lake at Thoroughsale Wood were considered to be the most frequently used open space sites in Corby. Exeter Open Space also provides an example of a good local community development scheme including a mixture of facilities for all ages.

Auditing local provision

A full audit of open spaces has been undertaken and digitised on a GIS base consistent with the Council's own mapping systems. Site by site information is available on a database, including an assessment of size, quality, accessibility, usage and other information recorded for each site. The consultants have verified the audit of open space provision with the Council.

Setting local standards

The consultants have reviewed and examined existing national standards and local standards adopted by other authorities for each type of open space.

They have recommended draft local standards for Corby in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility of open space, sports and recreation facilities. These draft standards will be incorporated into the Corby LDF as site specific policies and/or supplementary planning guidance and used to help the Council determine major development proposals. The proposed key local provision standards are summarised as follows:

A. Local Standards for Parks, Gardens, Amenity Greenspace, Provision for Children and Young People, Outdoor Sports:

Quantity:

Parks and gardens: 2ha per 1000 pop urban; minimum of one pocket park (or equivalent) in each rural village.

Natural and semi natural greenspace: 2ha per 1000 pop urban; rural area standard is as for parks and gardens – minimum of one pocket park (or equivalent) in each rural village

Amenity greenspace: 1.82ha per 1000 pop urban; 0.54ha per 1000 pop rural.

Play provision: children 0.8 play areas per 1000 pop; young people and teenagers 0.3 play areas per 1000 pop.

Outdoor sport: 2ha per 1000 pop.

Accessibility:

Parks and gardens: 10-15 mins walk; 480 metres

Natural and semi natural greenspace: 15 minutes walk; 720 metres

Amenity greenspace: 5 mins walk; 240 metres

Children's play provision: 8 mins walk; 380 metres

Teenagers and young people: 10 mins walk; 480 metres

Outdoor sports facilities: 15 mins walk; 720 metres

Allotments: 15 minutes walk; 720 metres

Quality:

Individual standards are suggested for each category of open space. These generally reflect the overall aim to provide welcoming, clean, litter free facilities that encourage users, with appropriate ancillary provision such as seats, dog bins, and good signage. In the case of parks and gardens it is suggested that increased warden provision should be provided; in the case of play facilities it is suggested that CCTV should be considered where appropriate, to ensure community safety.

B. Local Standards for Indoor Sports and Recreation:

Quantity

Sports hall: 49.52m² provision per 1000 pop. (equivalent to 0.29 indoor badminton courts per 1000 people in Corby)

Swimming pool: 10.26m² water space per 1000 pop. (one pool unit is equivalent to 212m² or a 4 lane 25m pool)

Health and Fitness: 16.47m² provision per 1000 pop. (3.66 stations where one station equates to 4.5m² floorspace)

Accessibility:

Sports Hall: 15 mins drive time

Swimming Pool: 10 mins drive time

Health and Fitness: 10 mins drive time.

Quality:

The suggested vision for indoor sports provision in Corby is:

‘A clean and well maintained indoor sports facility that provides a wide range of indoor sports facilities and activities. Indoor sports facilities should provide adequate changing facilities, car-parking, welcoming staff and ease of booking.’

Further Quality Standards relating to Design and Technical, and Facility Operation and Management, following Sport England guidance and industry best practice principles, are suggested.

Applying draft standards to local areas

The consultants are now completing the next stage, which is to bring together all the available information on a site specific basis and to analyse it by geographical areas. The draft standards are being applied to the mapped open space provision, to identify catchments of each existing facility and to identify where deficiencies and/or surpluses exist.

The consultants will identify where existing or proposed facilities may cover any local deficits, where there is a high or low priority need for new and/or enhanced provision and where there may be a need to apply particular protection to readily accessible, high quality open space sites. The analysis will also establish where, on less valued spaces, some new development could be accommodated.

Final Report Submission

The final report will provide a clear picture of Corby’s existing and future needs for open space, sport and recreation. It will identify surpluses and shortfalls in provision, recommendations for resolving key issues, sources of external funding and advice regarding formulae for developer contributions.

This stage was programmed to have been completed by the end of September but some slippage occurred as a result of the study being undertaken in conjunction with East Northamptonshire Council, where there were small delays. Furthermore and most significantly there have been a higher number of audited sites than anticipated at the start of the study, across both authorities, which has required additional digitisation and site visits. The consultants also added an audit check stage to the study process where consultants met with Council officers to verify the site audit. Neither this meeting, nor the process afterwards of adding/visiting/amending sites, was accounted for at the outset of the project, but has been a valuable exercise in the long run.

3. Options to be considered

None at this time.

4. Issues to be taken into account:-

Policy Priorities

The adoption of the Corby LDF and constituent LDD's is and will remain a CBC priority. This study is essential baseline work for that purpose.

Financial / Best Value / Human Rights

None directly from this report.

Legal

It is important to ensure that the assessment of open space and recreation land is a sound basis on which to propose allocations of land for development in the LDF

Performance Information

Maintaining progress against the approved Local Development Scheme will be important in the future calculations of Planning Delivery Grant.

Sustainability, Best Value, Human Rights, Equalities, Community Safety

The provision of an adequate supply of open space, play, sports and recreation facilities, close to people's homes, is a key element of the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan.

5. Conclusion

The audit and database for the study is extremely comprehensive and covers every open space site and indoor sports facility in the borough. Discussions with Council Officers and agencies who have detailed knowledge of open space and recreation uses have been used to verify the audit. Extensive consultations have taken place by various means throughout the Borough.

The information gained from these consultations has been used to help understand the key issues/problems facing different Council departments and agencies; the needs and requirements of local residents; the attitudes and expectations for open space within the area; what is right and wrong about the existing provision.

The draft local standards proposed for Corby in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility of open space, sports and recreation facilities will be incorporated into the Corby LDF as site specific policies and/or supplementary planning guidance and used to help the Council determine major development proposals.

The study identifies where existing or proposed facilities may cover any local deficits, where there is a high or low priority need for new and/or enhanced provision and where there may be a need to apply particular protection to readily accessible, high quality open space sites.

The analysis also establishes where, on less valued spaces, some new development could be accommodated. This information will be incorporated into the Urban Housing Capacity Study previously approved by Committee.

The final report will provide a clear picture of Corby's existing and future needs for open space, sport and recreation. It will identify surpluses and shortfalls in provision, recommendations for resolving key issues, sources of external funding and advice regarding formulae for developer contributions. The final report will be presented to this committee at its next meeting.

6. Recommendations

It is recommended that the draft local standards contained in this report be adopted as a basis for ongoing work on the Local Development Framework.

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