

Open Space Strategy for Cornwall – A Supplementary Planning Document for open space standards

Cornwall Council is currently reviewing the Open Space Strategy for Larger Towns in Cornwall¹, which was adopted as interim planning guidance in 2014. This meets the requirement in the National Planning Policy Framework in 2012, that robust and up-to-date assessments are undertaken and used to inform policy and to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required at a local level.

Open spaces are valued community assets improving public health, well-being and quality of life, and bringing environmental benefits to an area. In 2012 a study of Cornwall's residents recorded that 95% rated having good quality open spaces as important or very important.

Open space is land that is regularly available for recreational or sporting use by the community, and also includes cemeteries & churchyards, and is a subset of green infrastructure. Open Space Provision Standards are necessary to inform town framework plans, neighbourhood plans and local green infrastructure strategies, and to provide consistent guidance to developers. 33 settlement areas based around the largest towns & villages have now been studied in depth. All open spaces deemed as strategic and in most cases over a minimum size, were mapped and categorized into one of 8 different types including equipped children's play, facilities for teenagers, cemeteries & graveyards and allotments. See Appendix 1 for further information.

Methodology

The methodology can be applied to all settlement areas and it is recommended that it be developed for use in informing Neighbourhood Planning in order that it may be rolled out to all of Cornwall.

The provision standards cover the following:-

- **Quantity** – m² of each type per local resident. Where information is available the open space mapping for your local town has been updated. Table 1 provides a comparison for your town with similar larger towns in Cornwall, as well as smaller settlement areas of 1000 residential dwellings and more.
- **Accessibility** – this is the maximum distance that a resident might be expected to have to walk (radial measurement). Consideration is given to barriers to access such as waterways, trunk roads and rail lines.
- **Quality** – derived from a quality audit to influence both the management of open spaces, as well as the type and level of provision & features required on new or enhanced spaces.

Accessibility and quality provision standards are based upon a hierarchy that relates to the strategic significance of the space – i.e. the size of community the open space would potentially serve, which have been evaluated with previous consultations. This aligns with the Council's method of determining the risk and level of service standards for its own environmental assets. See table 2.

¹ See <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/parks-and-open-spaces/open-space-strategy-standards> for further information.

Table 1. Existing quantity provision of all open space

| Open space type | Existing provision in Liskeard (m ² /person) | Average/ median for 16 larger Cornish towns -m ² /person | Average /median for 17 smaller settlement areas - m ² /person |
|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Parks, amenity | 5.34 | 8.56 | 6.46 |
| 2. Natural space | 16.41 | 17.32 (median) (28=average) | 40.00 (median) (80 = average) |
| 3. Public sport* | 1.16 | 2.57 | 2.79 |
| 4. Children's Equipped Play | 0.49 | 0.50 | 0.63 |
| 5. Teen provision | 0.13 | 0.14 | 0.19 |
| 6. Allotments | 0.42 | 1.24 | 1.17 |
| 7. Cemeteries | 2.81 | 2.77 | 3.93 |
| 8. School pitches & clubs* | 11.98 | 16.28 | 10.19 |
| Total | 38.75 | 49.39 | 65.36 |
| Total for 1 – 6 (standards apply) | 23.96 | 30.34 | 51.24 |

*Golf courses and pitch & putt facilities are now omitted from evaluations.

A full review of sports pitches in the county is required, following Sport England's latest advice. In the meantime a general standard of 14.76m² of sports pitches per person has been set for all settlements >1000 dwellings, based upon the average quantity standard recommended in the 2013 draft sports pitch strategy. This figure may be achieved from a combination of type 3 and type 8 outdoor sports facilities, and is supplemented in line with the current level of other sports provision such as tennis and bowling.

Table 2. Accessibility & quality provision standards for strategic open space in settlements > 1000 dwellings

| Open space type | Proposed accessibility standard ('as crow flies') depending on open space hierarchy | | | | Min size new (m ²) |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| | Regional significant | Town significant | Neighbourhood 1 | Neighbourhood 2 | |
| 1. Parks, amenity | 1000m | 800m | 600m | 400m | 1000 |
| 2. Natural space | 1400m | 1100m | 800m | 600m | 1000 |
| 3. Public sport | No limit | No limit | 960m | NA | 10000 (1Ha) |
| 4. Children's Equipped Play | 1000m | 750m | 600m | 450m | 500 |
| 'Playable space' of any of the above types | All housing to be no further than <u>330m</u> from at least one open space suitable for children's informal play | | | | 500 |
| 5. Teen provision | 1200m | 1000m | 800m | 620m | 500 |
| 6. Allotments | NA | No limit | 800m | NA | 2500 |
| Proposed quality standard | Excellent | Good | Fair/good | Fair | |

Liskeard Study

The key observations of the existing provision (see table 1) are as follows:-

- **38% lower than average level of useable general parks and amenity space** (typ1). There are a considerable number of smaller, isolated amenity greens and verges in residential areas that have been excluded, due to their size and limited capacity for recreation.
- Following a re-evaluation of Sungirt Valley to this type **the level of natural space (2) is typical for an inland town** (and 5% under the median value of the 16 larger towns studied). Whilst there are fewer significant areas of natural open space outside of the study area, improved links to trails & footpaths into the countryside would help meet the growing demand.
- **Lower than average level of both forms of outdoor sports** (3 & 8). If we extract the tennis and bowling, the combined the provision of sports pitches is below the latest countywide standard. With the growth in local population, new facilities proposed at the Roundbury will be vital.
- **Very low level of allotment space** (6) – 66% below average.
- In quantity terms the levels of children's equipped play & youth provision are typical.



Fig.25 All weather pitch, Lux Park, Liskeard

Liskeard open space proposals

1. Table 3 proposes future quantity standards for the towns, based upon an increased population. Column 2 identifies the existing areas of deficiency based on the current population data and applied accessibility standards shown in Table 2. The delivery of open space provision for the area as a whole, which incorporates growth in line with the Local Plan, as recommended in column 3 and column 4 (value 'per person'), can only partly be delivered by new development, with existing deficits being rectified by other methods e.g. regeneration projects, change of use etc. Column 5 of Table 3 provides the minimum quantity of open space specifically needed to be delivered as part of new housing proposals in support of the town wide standard. This is given as a 'per dwelling' value for ease of use by developers and planners, and to avoid ambiguity in making the necessary calculations.

2. As shown in the accessibility map for Liskeard in the Appendix, there is a deficiency in provision of children's equipped in north-east and the south-west of the town (Turnpike Place area) and the extreme north-east (Pengover Rd) area. Equipped play areas are highly expensive to maintain and require regular specialist inspections. The improved standard of provision can still be met through fewer, larger & better designed sites. There can be consolidation of play sites in some areas, resulting in the removal of low value sites such as at Connoc Close and Stanley Maggs.
3. Further investment through local partnerships will be required to supplement the increases required in parks & amenity, outdoor sports, children's equipped play, teen provision (equipped) and allotments.

Table 3. Proposed quantity provision standards for strategic open space in Liskeard

| Increased population estimate of: 13,388 (1400 new dwellings) | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Type | Existing requirements based upon assessment of distribution | Recommend.s on future provision | Future quantity provision standard town wide (m²/person) | Minimum quantity needed for new housing (m²/dwell) |
| 1. Parks, amenity | North (Addington) and west areas | On-site in developments. New Roundbury space. More formal access opportunities in type 2. | 8.75 | 20.12 |
| 2. Natural space | New provision as part of GI routes. Access improvements in Lanchard Woods, Old Road & Sungirt | In line with new growth. | 15.44 | 28.49 |
| 3. Public sport | Additional rugby pitches needed. Strategic hub site only | Increase with new Roundbury playing Fields. | 15.3 - typ8 | 35.26 |
| 4. Children's Equipped Play | West (Woodgate Rd) and south (Turnpike Place) areas | New strategic sites with some consolidation to ensure maintainable. | 0.70 | 1.61 |
| 5. Teen provision | North-east & north-west | Increase significantly | 0.25 | 0.58 |
| 6. Allotments | 1 in south-west. Eg. Gipsy Lane or Old Rd. | Increase | 0.75 | 1.73 |
| 7. Cemeteries | Assumes no increase within town study boundary | | 2.13 | - |
| 8. School pitches & clubs | Requires increased availability to community. | See typ.3 | 15.3 - typ3 | - |
| Total | | | 43.36 | - |
| Total for 1 - 6 (standards apply) | | | 32.12 | 87.78 |

Delivering new open space as part of developments

The standards in table 3 will apply to Liskeard as a whole, new development should be assessed for its proportional impact and the on-site requirement based on local future needs. In some cases new provision may not be viable or necessary within the development boundary, but an improvement in quality will be needed to mitigate for the additional population. Developments will be required to meet their share of the costs with off-site contributions (through Section 106 or Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payment), which will be required for investment in local open space improvements, such as play enhancements.

The green infrastructure network, of which open space is a part, should be designed at the outset, and where possible should promote sustainable access to key local open spaces. Equally open space must in the future provide a greater degree of multifunction with regards to biodiversity, connectivity and hydrology.

The Open Space Strategy for Larger Towns in Cornwall contains a set of design principles that relate primarily to the open space function and it is recommended that their use be extended to the rest of the county.

Open space provision summary

Through an evaluation of existing open space provision in Liskeard, provision standards have been developed for the quantity, accessibility and quality of six different types of open space required as part of any town or neighbourhood plan. Locations, design principles and types of provision are identified, along with the means of delivering these standards through new development and local partnerships. The work will be finalised in spring 2017 as part of a new open space supplementary planning document, after which it should be updated and reviewed every three years.

Appendix 1: Open space type definitions

| Open Space Type & Ref No. | Planning Policy Guidance PPG17 typology | Category descriptions likely to be found in Cornwall | Unless adjacent other OS, min. size of space (m ²) |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>1. Parks and gardens; Amenity green space; Civic spaces</p> | Parks | <p>Urban parks, 'recreation grounds', 'King George V playing fields' or any decent 'playing fields' with multiple formal uses other than sport. Could contain equipped play areas. Millennium Greens.</p> | >1000 |
| | Amenity green space | <p>Informal recreation spaces, landscaped & managed (formally rather than natural) green spaces in and around housing, hospitals, colleges & public buildings. Village greens.</p> | >1000 |
| | Civic Spaces | <p>Civic and market squares and other hard surfaced areas designed for pedestrians.</p> | <p>>500 These are sometimes relatively small, but highly strategic</p> |
| | Public gardens. | <p>Highly formalized public gardens, comprising floral displays, seating.</p> | |
| <p>2. Natural and semi-natural green spaces, Green corridors, accessible countryside in urban fringe areas</p> | <p>Natural and semi-natural green spaces</p> | <p>Land that is open to the public that is predominantly managed for nature conservation. Publically accessible nature reserves, woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, heath, grasslands (e.g. commons and coastal), wetlands, open and running water, reservoirs, heritage mine workings and derelict open land and rock areas (e.g. cliffs, quarries and pits). Country Parks – Tehidy & Kitt Hill. Accessible beaches down to Mean Sea Level. Unlike other typologies the majority of the space will not receive regular short grass mowing. Long established & permanent grasslands managed for meadow flora through one or two crops per year or by natural or livestock grazing, accessible beyond any PROW.</p> | >1000 |
| | Green Corridors | <p>Riverside and other narrow strips of land associated with public access, bridleways, cycle ways, national trails, former tramways and rights of way.</p> | >500 |
| | Accessible countryside in urban fringe areas | <p>Generally agricultural or private natural space adjoining housing areas where informal recreation has been established and permitted for at least five years. This is more than a mere public right of way across land, and implies that the public may roam & play throughout the land as long as they adhere to the Countryside Code.</p> | >1000 |

| Open Space Type & Ref No. | Planning Policy Guidance PPG17 typology | Category descriptions likely to be found in Cornwall | Unless adjacent other OS, min. size of space (m ²) |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3. Public access sports facilities (outdoor): available for community games | <p>Outdoor sports facilities (with natural or artificial surfaces and either publicly or privately owned)</p> <p>[Split based upon accessibility for general public]</p> | <p>Seasonal and fixed spaces that are formally used for junior or adult sports leagues and are openly accessible to the public (fees may apply). Outdoor gym equipment. Natural or artificial surfaces and either publicly or privately owned - including tennis courts, sports pitches, athletics tracks and other outdoor sports areas, which may be used for informal recreation when not in sporting use. Public access should be interpreted as available for community use for appropriate sports matches. It might not necessarily mean that the sports ground can be accessed by others for informal uses e.g. dog walking.</p> <p>Very often these facilities are located within parks or recreation grounds (typology 1), in which case only the formal pitch should be distinguished in this category.</p> | >500 |
| 4. Children's play area – equipped | Provision for children | Public areas specifically laid out for children's play either comprising landscaping or equipment to provide a range of play opportunities. Free access playgrounds and Adventure Playgrounds (e.g. Gwel-An-Top, Redruth). | No minimum for existing. Usually, but not always, part of other open space. In future minimum of 500m ² |
| 5. Provision for teenagers– equipped facilities | Provision for teenagers | Public areas specifically laid out for young people such as multi-use games areas (MUGA), wheeled sports & skate parks, outdoor basketball hoops, and informal 'hanging out' areas or teenage shelters. Extreme play equipment aimed primarily at 12-17yrs age group. | No minimum for existing. Usually, but not always, part of other open space. In future minimum of 500m ² |
| 6. Allotments, community gardens, and city (urban) farms | Allotments, community gardens, and city (urban) farms | Local authority or privately operated allotments, community orchards. Permaculture and community food growing initiatives. | Non-standard small plots & access: >300m ² In future minimum of 2500m ² |
| 7. Cemeteries and churchyards | Cemeteries and churchyards | Operating & closed graveyards, cemeteries, gardens of remembrance, church grounds, woodland burial land. | >1000 |

| Open Space Type & Ref No. | Planning Policy Guidance PPG17 typology | Category descriptions likely to be found in Cornwall | Suggested size threshold. Unless strategically significant the minimum size of space (m ²). |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8. School pitches and outdoor sports club facilities (No or limited public access) | <p>Outdoor sports facilities (with natural or artificial surfaces and either publicly or privately owned)</p> <p>[Split based upon accessibility for general public]</p> | <p>School playing fields and any land or portions of land associated with a school used for outdoor sporting purposes. Golf courses*, pitch & putt*, bowling greens and private sports clubs with limited public (non-member) access. Includes pitches on military bases, college campuses and semi-private institutions. Sports involving motorised vehicles or weapons are excluded.</p> <p>* Facilities omitted from evaluations to enable clearer comparison.</p> | >1000 |