

**Green Infrastructure, Open Space, Sport and Recreation – Consultation – September**

**Overview**

Green Infrastructure (GI) performs a variety of functions including the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity as well as providing space for informal and formal recreation. GI can include parks and gardens (non-domestic), natural and semi-natural urban green spaces, green corridors, outdoor sports facilities, amenity green spaces, formal and informal play areas and facilities, allotments, cemeteries and churchyards, river and canal corridors.

Retention, improvement and management of informal and formal existing facilities across the District is a priority. Further provision of additional informal and formal recreational facilities for public use is also important to ensure suitable levels and standards are available to the public in the future. The intention is to bring forward a GI Network of designated and important green areas all across the District.

**Policy Context**

**Core Strategy Policy SP10** of the adopted Sevenoaks Core Strategy (February 2011) identifies the generic requirements in relation to GI, open space, sport and recreation facilities and the recognised value that such facilities provide to the community. It states that a GI Network will be developed and that open space will be retained.

**Core Strategy Policy SP11** on Biodiversity states that the biodiversity of the District will be conserved and opportunities sought for enhancement to ensure no net loss of biodiversity.

**Core Strategy Policy LO8** on countryside and the rural economy states that the extent of the Green Belt will be maintained and that the countryside will be conserved and...its biodiversity will be protected and enhanced where possible.

**Draft Development Management Policy GRN1** states that development proposals will only be permitted where it has been demonstrated that any impact on the GI network and biodiversity has been fully considered.

**Draft Development Management Policy SC2** on Design Principles states that new development should...retain important GI Network features and should not result in the loss of buildings or related spaces that would have an unacceptable loss on the character of the area

**Background**

The above policies were informed by one of the LDF evidence base commissions, the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study, published in

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January 2009. This was based on an audit of open space provision. It indicated generally that:

- There is enough accessible natural and semi natural green space
- More allotments and specific built sports facilities are needed (i.e. tennis courts)
- There is a shortfall in amenity open space, playing fields, parks and children's playgrounds in some locations (particularly in Swanley south of the railway line and in West Kingsdown).

The Allocations and Development Management (ADM) DPD now seeks to identify specific sites for protection and additional provision. As part of the Allocations Options consultation in February 2010, we invited comments on existing facilities and provision and requested details of possible new sites for inclusion. We also included a call for sites for open space provision within the draft Development Management Policies consultation in May - August 2011.

We are now conducting this further, site specific consultation to inform the future policy approach and the consideration of the wider GI network issues.

**Previous Open Space Designation ('EN9' sites)**

It is noted that many of the sites are protected under saved Local Plan Policy EN9. Once the ADM DPD is adopted, the EN9 designation will be superseded by the open space sites identified in this consultation. Where both designations are shown on the mapping, it is the Open Spaces Study boundary that will be taken forwards.

There are two EN9 sites that it is proposed to de-designate, because they are either subject to an approved development scheme, or have been allocated for development via the draft ADM DPD. These sites are:

- Sevenoaks – site south of Rockdale – planning permission for care-home development
- Westerham – site off London Road (previous Churchill school site) – allocated for development

**Protection of Existing Sites**

For the purposes of the ADM DPD, the designations for open space and recreational facilities have been assessed against the following criteria:

- Function of the open space (from Open Space Study typology)
- Sites within defined settlement boundaries (towns and villages)
- Quality and management arrangements
- Size threshold

**Function / Typology**

The Open Spaces Study, which is the evidence base document that has informed this policy, has outlined the function of each of the identified open spaces. This typology is outlined below:

Allotments and Community Gardens  
Amenity green spaces  
Cemeteries and churchyards  
Green corridors  
Natural and semi-natural urban green spaces  
Outdoor sports facilities  
Parks and Gardens  
Young People and Children's playspace

### **Boundary**

All the open space sites that have been identified are within the urban confines of towns and villages. Sites have not been identified for protection outside these areas, since all areas outside the identified towns and villages are protected by virtue of being part of the Metropolitan Green Belt. Thus it would be unnecessary duplication to identify open space sites for protection in the Green Belt. Additionally, the GI Network defined within the draft ADM DPD is District wide and affords protection to all sites identified by the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study which lie in the Green Belt.

### **Quality**

Sites have been identified which are important to the visual amenity of the locality or provide informal recreation/playspace and wildlife habitats. The Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study sets quality standards for each typology and each site has been graded in terms of their current quality level. Sites graded as good and very good should be maintained and sites graded average to very poor should be improved to meet the local quality standard outlined in the Study.

### **Size**

A minimum size threshold for has been set at 2000sqm or 0.2ha for GI sites, partially due to cartographic reasons, since mapping every open space would not be practicable, and also to be consistent with the allocations for housing and employment sites, where a 0.2ha threshold is also applied. However, it should be noted that if a site is smaller than 0.2ha, and is therefore not mapped or listed in the schedule, it does not mean that this site is not protected. The policies outlined in the adopted Core Strategy and the draft ADM DPD seek to protect all areas of GI that are of value to the local community, regardless of their size.

Please note that if a site is not mapped because it is below the 0.2ha threshold, this does not mean it is not protected. It is likely that smaller sites, such as play areas, are likely to fall under the threshold.

### **Schedule**

A list of the Open Space sites identified for protection is included as a Appendix to this document, together with plans of the sites.

### **Additional Provision to address Deficiencies**

The Core Strategy Policy SP10 sets out that the Council will seek opportunities, including through new development, to create and extend green

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space and to enhance the biodiversity value of open space. Residential development in areas where there is an existing shortage in open space, or where the development would result in a shortage of provision, will be expected to contribute to overcoming the shortage, either through provision on site, a financial contribution or to off site provision.

We would like the ADM DPD to include proposals for new sites to address deficiencies in provision identified in the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study, where these are supported by the local community. There is a need to provide for new sites and to improve the access to some existing sites within the District. The Study found a shortage of open space provision in Swanley, particularly south of the railway line, and in West Kingsdown.

If you are aware of any land or sites, in these areas of deficiency, which could be suitable for open space or recreational use, we would like to receive details of them. Please provide a site plan and details of ownership.

**Draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Open Space**

The draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in July 2011, facilitates the Government's commitment in the Natural Environment White Paper to allow communities to designate important local green spaces for special protection. Local Green Space can be designated where the area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds particular local significance because of its beauty, historic importance, recreational value, tranquillity or richness in wildlife. This consultation invites the local community to put forward any local green space within Sevenoaks District, that is of value to the local community. It is suggested that land designated as natural and semi natural or amenity green space might be the most appropriate type of land for this designation. Any proposed space should be in close proximity to a centre of population, not overlap with the Green Belt (which is already protected by virtue of its designation) and should be local in character and not an extensive tract of land.

**Allocation Policy:**

The following sites within the urban confines of towns and villages across the District, shown on the attached site maps and schedule, are allocated for GI, Open Space, Sport and Recreation and shall be protected in this use in line with Core Strategy policies SP10, SP11 and LO8 and draft Development Management policy GRN1 and SC2.

**Consultation Questions**

- Please assist us in identifying any additional existing open space, amenity value, sport and recreational facilities (within a town or village

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boundary) or spaces which you think should be designated as Local Green Space

- If you are aware of any other land or sites which could be suitable for open space or recreational use, we would also like to receive details of them.
- If there are any sites currently safeguarded as open space (EN9) or shown as proposed allocations that you think should not be allocated, or should have a different boundary, then please let us know.

**Appendices:**

Maps of GI in urban areas (above 0.2ha threshold)

Schedule of open spaces (above 0.2ha threshold)

