

OPEN SPACE DEFICIENCY REPORT

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Appendix 1: Plans of the 6 areas identified as deficient in open space

This is a short report that sets out the findings of the open space audit that could have an implication in terms of the need to allocate land for the provision of open space to overcome existing deficiencies. It is prepared as a background evidence paper for the preparation of the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) that forms part of the Wycombe Development Framework.

1. Background

The visual, environmental, social and economic benefits of open spaces are widely recognised (CABE/CABESpace, ODPM etc) and Local Authorities have been asked to actively protect, manage and enhance their open space resource. For the wider benefit of open spaces to the district and in order to meet the requirements of PPG17: Open Space, Sport and Recreation and its Companion Guide, Wycombe District Council commissioned consultants in 2005 to carry out open space audits and assessments on behalf of the Council.

More than 500 Open spaces in the main centres of the District were audited, mapped and analysed in respect of their quality, quantity and accessibility. Their existing state was measured against their potential to deliver across a range of themes, chosen to reflect the Council’s Community Plan as well as other relevant strategic work.

Although a report was produced, the main outputs of the study were a “live” database and GIS mapping, which can be updated and will be capable of demonstrating trends in the quality and enhancement of local facilities. The Council has refined both data and mapping since the final report and will continue to do so in the future.

2. Assessment

All open spaces have been grouped into typologies, which reflect their primary use, status or visual importance. Typologies are in accordance with the PPG 17 and comprise allotments, amenity spaces, churchyards/cemeteries, civic spaces, common/greens, gardens, green corridor, institutional, operational/vacant/derelict, outdoor sports, park, playgrounds and semi-natural sites.

In order to assess both quantity of, and access to, open space local and neighbourhood buffers were applied to sites that are considered to meet open space deficiencies. While neighbourhood and local parks are key to defining deficiency areas, other sites, including outdoor sport sites, amenity spaces and semi-natural spaces, may provide sufficient outdoor recreational space depending on size, use and importance of these sites within a settlement area.

Although determining deficiency can be structured into a number of steps it is not a mechanical process of selection but professional judgement has to be applied at each step of the process.

- Step 1: Determine, which sites contribute to the deficiency mapping
- Step 2: Apply local and neighbourhood buffers in accordance with NPFA standard
- Step 3: Assess how open space deficiencies can be overcome

Step 1: Open space criteria for site selection

Not all open spaces are sufficient in size or character to contribute to the open space deficiency mapping. The following list sets out the criteria, which have been employed to determine the sites that contribute to the deficiency mapping.

- Ownership: Only publicly owned sites or sites, of which the Council knows that public right of access and use exists due to a legal agreement. There are few exceptions but some private areas were included where a space was designed for recreational use and it was welcoming to everybody, although it is privately owned or run (e.g. some of the sport clubs)
- Safety: Sites that are sufficiently safe.
- Access: Sites that are well accessible.
- Size: Sites of sufficient size that allow multi-functionality.

- Multi-functionality: in so far that they are able to meet the needs of several independent people at the same time.
- Typologies: All sites of the typology 'park' (but not in the sense of parks and gardens). Sites of the typology 'outdoor sports', 'amenity space' or 'semi-natural' but a professional judgement was made of which ones should be included.
- Hierarchy: Local sites represent sites only of local importance. Neighbourhood sites represent sites that serve a neighbourhood. They are usually larger, offer more facilities and often include a specialist function such as a sport pitch, a playground or allotments.
- Professional judgement: the auditor and assessor makes a professional judgement how the site can be used

Step 2: Application of buffers

In a next step catchments for each of the selected sites of open space have been drawn. These are based on the NPFA Six Acre standard and comprise 5 min walk time or 400 m walking distance for local sites and 10 min walk time or 800 m walking distance for neighbourhood sites. As it usually not possible to walk as the crow flies, these figures translate into 280 m buffer for local sites and 560 m buffers for neighbourhood sites. In assessing these catchments, barriers (lines of severance) that restrict access to open spaces have been taken into account, such as busy roads or the railway line.

Step 3: Assessment of how deficiency areas can be overcome

The objective is to ensure that everyone has access to good quality green spaces within their communities, either by the provision of local or neighbourhood facilities. Where areas currently fall outside of the catchment areas of open spaces, consideration was given to the extent to which access could be improved through the provision, for example of further pedestrian crossings on busy roads, or by upgrading rights of way to improve recreational opportunities in the countryside. Consideration was also given to whether existing open spaces could be 'upgraded' in terms of the provision on offer. In addition, consideration was given to the provision of individual private amenity space in form of gardens in the area.

3. Outcomes

A detailed schedule is being prepared of how the different areas of open space deficiency can be overcome. Where appropriate, contributions will be sought from developments to help to overcome these deficiencies by improving access or by improving the facilities. In most cases deficiency areas do not require the provision of further land for open space and are therefore not relevant to the preparation of the Site Allocations DPD.

It was found that there were 6 areas in the district, where these approaches did not resolve the lack of accessibility to, or availability of, open spaces, and are thus relevant to the site allocations document.

These 6 areas are:

1. Southern part of the Hughenden Quarter, High Wycombe
2. Southern Princes Risborough
3. Cressex area, High Wycombe
4. Eastern part of Desborough, High Wycombe
5. Bowerdean, High Wycombe
6. Eastern Marlow (South of Little Marlow Road)

Southern part of the Hughenden Quarter, High Wycombe

Whilst some of the deficiency east of Hughenden Road can be overcome by improving pedestrian access to Hughenden Park the southern part of Hughenden Quarter remains deficient because none of the sites in the vicinity fulfils the criteria mentioned above. Site 1522 is a vegetated bank, which is important from a visual point of view but does not offer any recreational facilities. Site 1317, is of insufficient quality and too restricted but has potential to be widened and improved as part of any new development. The proposed development on site 1506, the former Bellfield School site, will overcome some of the deficiencies in Downley but is not accessible enough from the valley bottom, and the cemetery, site 1321, allows only restricted recreational use.

In the southern end of the Hughenden Quarter, the Compair site, is available for redevelopment. Open space, associated with the Hughenden Stream, will have to be provided on this site to meet the deficiency. This needs to be incorporated into the site allocations document in the section that deals with individual sites.

Southern Princes Risborough

There are no open spaces in the southern part of Princes Risborough that contribute to the deficiency mapping. Site 710, Molins Recreation Ground, is privately owned with no

public access as well as being severed from the town by the railway line. Site 702 and 707 are small amenity spaces of insufficient size and site 722 is a school.

The situation in the south of Princes Risborough is similar to the one in the Hughenden Quarter. Again, this deficiency can only be overcome if the policies regarding the redevelopment of the site require the provision of on-site open space. It is understood that this could have the dual use of also addressing potential flood risk issues.

Cressex area, High Wycombe

The open spaces in the vicinity of the deficiency area in Cressex are almost exclusively school sites with no public access or narrow landscape strips of visual importance. The Leisure centre, site 1001, though providing an important leisure facility, does not provide unrestricted access for informal recreation. None of these sites was therefore considered to contribute to the open space deficiency in this area.

Within Cressex, sites are not available for redevelopment in the immediate future to overcome the deficiency. However, there are opportunities in the longer term through which the provision of a Neighbourhood Park could be provided. Policy approaches to handle the site allocation aspects of this need to be incorporated into the emerging site allocations DPD.

In addition, within the Cressex area, there is development pressure to intensify the existing residential area. Where these schemes are implemented, this has the effect of reducing the garden sizes in an area that is already deficient in public open space. The provision of financial contributions to improve off site open spaces is therefore insufficient in this area. Additional contributions need to be sought to begin to build a pool of funds for the implementation of a future neighbourhood facility.

East Desborough, High Wycombe

There are hardly any open spaces in East Desborough. Green Street, site 1101 and 1104 are too small and too restricted in their use to contribute to the open space deficiency mapping. In Desborough a similar policy approach as outlined for Cressex will have to be adopted.

Bowerdean, High Wycombe

Since Bowerdean is already a densely developed area there would not seem to be any long-term potential regarding land availability. There are two main open spaces in the area, Bowerdean Recreation Ground (site 1414) and Lucas Wood (site 1447), latter of which is privately owned. Access to the woodland could potentially be negotiated

although woodland is steep, and improving access to it would be a challenge. However, it is regarded that this might be a way to mitigate for the deficiency. This action needs to be identified in the full set of actions emerging from the open space audit and funded through developer contributions. Opportunities for other sources of funding should also be explored. There are, however, no issues that need to be included in the emerging site allocations DPD

Eastern Marlow (South of Little Marlow Road)

Similar to Bowerdean there are no opportunities for the provision of redevelopment in the eastern part of Marlow, either in the immediate or long term. There are only two open spaces in the area site 437, a small multi-games area, and site 430, a landscape strip, both of which are not capable of providing for open space needs on a wider level. However, the area of the Little Marlow Gravel Pits lies to the east. Improving access to this area, as well as improving the recreational opportunities, is seen as the way to mitigate for the open space deficiency in this area. Again, these are not issues to be addressed in the site allocations DPD.

4. Conclusion and Summary

As outlined above the Council believes that Southern part of the Hughenden Quarter and Southern Princes Risborough can be addressed through redevelopment opportunities that are already identified. The policy framework needs to require the provision of open space on these sites.

Open space deficiencies in the Cressex area and the Eastern part of Desborough may well be able to be addressed through longer term redevelopment opportunities. This needs to be addressed in the policy framework, even though land may not be actually allocated at this stage. In addition, supplementary contributions should be sought in the Cressex area.

Bowerdean and Eastern Marlow do not present opportunities for the provision of further open space in the immediate or longer term, and thus the site allocations DPD does not need to make provision for this. Other measures need to be put in place to address these deficiencies.