

# Wansbeck District Council

## Provision for Sport and Play Supplementary Planning Document

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Head of Regulatory Services  
Wansbeck District Council  
Council Offices  
Front Street  
Bedlington  
Northumberland  
NE22 5TU

Telephone: 01670 843405

Fax: 01670 843484

Email: [LDF@wansbeck.gov.uk](mailto:LDF@wansbeck.gov.uk)

[www.wansbeck.gov.uk](http://www.wansbeck.gov.uk)

## Foreword

This is a draft supplementary planning document published under Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development)(England) Regulations 2004. Representations received during the consultation period will be considered by the Council and changes made as appropriate before the document is adopted.

Copies of the document will be made available on request in other languages and alternative formats including Braille, large print and audio format. Requests can be made to the Council's Planning Policy section:

Telephone: 01670 843405 or 01670 843494

Fax: 01670 843484

Email: [ldf@wansbeck.gov.uk](mailto:ldf@wansbeck.gov.uk)

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 In response to the requirements of Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation (PPG17), the District Council commissioned consultants (Strategic Leisure Limited) to undertake an assessment of open space, sport and recreation in the District. The aim of the assessment, completed in October 2007, was to identify the extent (quantity), the quality and the accessibility of the existing range of open space, outdoor sport and recreation facilities in the District. The results of the assessment give a comprehensive picture of the existing level and distribution of provision by type in Wansbeck. In particular, the study highlights a number of deficiencies in provision in terms of quantity, quality and/or accessibility and recommends actions to make good the shortcomings.
- 1.2 Within the context of deficiencies in provision of open space, it is important to ensure that new residential development does not exacerbate problems and that developers meet the needs generated by their developments for sport and play provision. Policies REC7, REC8 and CF7 of the Wansbeck District Local Plan provide the policy framework for provision by developers. This Supplementary Planning Document develops the policy approach set out in the three policies further, in particular in relation to the provision of commuted payments by developers in lieu of actual provision of facilities on site.

## 2. Policy Context

- 2.1 *Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation (PPG17)* emphasises the importance of well planned and maintained open spaces and quality sports and recreational facilities to people's quality of life. In assessing planning applications, local authorities should seek opportunities to improve the local open space network, to create new open space and incorporate open space within new development. Planning obligations may be used where there are deficiencies in the quantity or quality of open space, sports and recreational provision or where new development increases local needs.
- 2.2 *Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3)* advises that good design is fundamental to the development of high quality new housing. When assessing the design quality of new housing, the extent to which a proposed development provides, or enables good access to, recreational open space including play space is a matter to be considered.

- 2.3 *ODPM Circular 05/2005: Planning Obligations* advises on the concept and use of planning obligations under S106 of the Town and Country Planning Act. Planning obligations can be used in circumstances set out in Circular 05/2005 in order to make development acceptable which would otherwise be unacceptable in land use planning terms. Often they are negotiated and secured by agreement between a local authority and a developer where a proposed development creates a need for a particular type of facility which cannot be required through the use of planning conditions. Contributions may be sought towards this additional provision including subsequent maintenance or upkeep. The circular indicates that in order to allow developers to predict as accurately as possible the likely contributions they will be asked to make through planning obligations and therefore anticipate the financial implications for development projects, local authorities should publish as much information as possible in local development documents.
- 2.4 *The North East of England Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021* at Policy 24 identifies the provision of facilities for sport and play as a consideration in the delivery of sustainable communities, particularly in the context of reducing health and social inequalities and meeting the needs of an ageing population and the disabled.
- 2.5 *Policies REC7 and REC8 of the Wansbeck District Local Plan* indicate that planning permission will not be granted for residential development unless the developer meets the anticipated need generated by the development for additional children's play facilities and additional indoor and outdoor sports provision. If provision can be met by either new or improved facilities off-site, the developer can enter into an agreement to make a financial contribution towards a communal fund established by the local planning authority for the provision and improvement of sports and play facilities. The policies indicate that details of a commuted payments scheme will be set out in a Supplementary Planning Document.
- 2.6 *Policy CF7 of the Wansbeck District Local Plan* indicates the local authority's intention to enter into a planning obligation with developers where additional social, physical or environmental infrastructure is required to be provided in order for the development to go ahead. This may include recreational, sporting or other community facilities.

### **3 The findings of the PPG17 Study – Local needs and opportunities**

- 3.1 In line with PPG 17 and the accompanying Good Practice Guide *Assessing Needs and Opportunities*, the Council has had undertaken assessments of open space and sport and recreation provision in the District. The key findings of the PPG17 study of relevance to this SPD are as follows.

## Children's Play

- 3.2 The audit of provision for children and young people identified 34 play areas, covering 5.01 ha, unevenly distributed across the District. This provision equates to 0.34 ha per 1000 population. The study established that whilst most areas of the District are able to access a play area (in terms of National Playing Fields Association accessibility standards), the provision and quality of the play area may not meet the needs of the local community. The study revealed a significant variance in the quality of play areas across the District.
- 3.3 Overall provision for play was rated in the PPG17 Study as follows:

Play value/quality	Ambience/setting
1 site rated as Excellent	8 sites rated as Excellent
8 sites rated as Good	7 sites rated as Good
11 sites rated as Average	9 sites rated as Average
6 sites rated as Below Average	6 sites rated as Below Average
8 sites rated as Poor	4 sites rated as Poor

- 3.4 The study highlighted the need for the Council to lead on provision by developers. The rating of a number of play areas, particularly in housing estates was poor or very poor and they had a limited value to older children and young people. It was noted that a number of sites had been equipped with play equipment but that it had not been maintained. The Council had made a positive step forward, however, with the establishment of a refurbishment and improvement programme. This programme needs to be developed to include provision for older children.

## Outdoor Sports Facilities

- 3.5 The PPG17 assessment considered the following outdoor sports facilities – playing pitches, bowling greens, tennis courts, golf courses and athletics tracks.
- 3.6 The study identified 83 *playing pitches* available for community use in the District, 43 being on school sites. The total area occupied was 93.8 ha or the equivalent of 1.53 ha per 1000 population. Whilst there was adequate provision in terms of the number of pitches, the quality assessment revealed significant deficiencies. The quality of pitches varied across sites with ratings varying from 26% (poor) to 93% (good). The district-wide average for pitch quality was 70% (good). The quality scores for ancillary provision (changing rooms, parking etc.) ranged from 34% (bordering on below average and poor) to 93% (excellent). Changing rooms were present on 55% of sites.

- 3.7 The audit identified 7 *bowling greens* occupying a total of 1.12 hectares. The quality assessment showed an average score for the quality of bowling greens in the District as 61% (good). The quality scores ranged from satisfactory to excellent.
- 3.8 The only *public tennis courts* in the District are at Hirst Park in Ashington and they are in need of upgrade. There are no tennis clubs.
- 3.9 There are no *athletics tracks* in Wansbeck although some schools mark out tracks on their grassed areas in summer. There are no good quality facilities for athletics elsewhere in South East Northumberland either and the PPG17 assessment suggests that a new 6 lane track/training centre should be a priority development in the area.
- 3.10 There are two *golf courses* in Wansbeck at Newbiggin and Bedlington. Both courses were assessed as being of good quality.

### **Indoor Sports Facilities**

- 3.11 There is a wide range of existing sport and leisure facility provision across the District provided by the commercial, education, public and voluntary sectors but investment is required to improve quality and increase capacity.
- 3.12 There is one *swimming pool* in the District at Ashington which the PPG17 assessment suggests is not adequate in terms of size, location and quality of facilities to meet swimming needs in Wansbeck. Shortcomings of the pool include poor quality changing facilities; the shortness of the lanes (25 yards not 25 metres); the number of lanes (only four); the lack of space for spectators and competitors and officials at gala events; fluctuating water temperatures because of old plant and equipment; and a fixed floor with a deep end of 2 metres. The study suggests the pool is nearing the end of its useful life and that the development of a new 25 metre, 6 lane pool is needed in the District.
- 3.13 The study indicates that whilst there appears to be sufficient *sports hall provision* overall in the District to meet the needs of the local population and the potential increase in participation, there is a need to address accessibility issues at existing sites and improve the quality of provision. There is a particular need to invest in modern, attractive and well designed facilities at Ashington Leisure Centre and to bring sporting facilities (excluding the fitness suite) at Newbiggin Sports Centre up to the same standard as the refurbished community side of the building. Facility needs in Bedlington should be addressed through a new build multi-use complex with a diverse facility mix or through a new community partnership with one of the two high schools.

3.14 *Health and fitness provision* is only found in the most densely populated areas of the District, namely Ashington, Bedlington and Newbiggin by the Sea. The study suggests that there is a deficiency of 18 health and fitness stations and that some of the equipment in the education and voluntary sectors is very poor. Quality of equipment in the public sector is noted as excellent.

#### **4 Assessing whether a development has a sport and/or play requirement**

4.1 All new residential developments leading to a net gain in dwellings, including conversions and changes of use, will generate a requirement for sport and play provision i.e. there will not be a minimum threshold. The only exceptions from a requirement will be in relation to:

- a. one bedroom housing and housing for the elderly – there will be no requirement to provide for play
- b. one to one replacement of housing – there will be no requirement at all for either sport (indoor and outdoor) or play.

#### **5 Calculating the requirements**

##### **Play and outdoor sports**

5.1 The open space requirements for play and outdoor sports are based on the following standards (based on those of the National Playing Fields Association):

Children's playing space	0.8 ha per 1000 population 8 m <sup>2</sup> per person
Outdoor sports:	1.6 ha per 1000 population 16 m <sup>2</sup> per person

5.2 The per person requirements have been converted to a per dwelling requirement by multiplying them by the average dwelling size in Wansbeck of 2.29 persons (as indicated by the 2001 Census):

Children's playing space	8m <sup>2</sup> x 2.29 = 18.3 m <sup>2</sup> per dwelling
Outdoor sports	16m <sup>2</sup> x 2.29 = 36.6 m <sup>2</sup> per dwelling

##### **Indoor sports**

5.3 The level of contribution sought from developers in relation to indoor sports provision will be based on the per capita costs of fully meeting indoor sports needs in the whole of the District. The Wansbeck Indoor Sports Facility Strategy (Strategic Leisure October 2007) identifies a

number of specific investment needs across the District to improve quality and increase capacity.

## **6 Whether requirements should be met on-site or off-site**

### **Play areas**

- 6.1 Provision for children's play will be required to be made on-site, as an integral part of the design wherever the size of a new development is sufficient to justify a realistic and usable provision. All developments containing 50 or more dwellings are likely to have such a requirement. The most appropriate form of provision on a particular site will be determined according to local circumstances. Provision will be required to comply with detailed design guidance found in the National Playing Fields Association's document 'Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play'. A financial contribution for the maintenance of play facilities provided on-site will be required to be made to the Council or an agreement to maintain them to satisfactory standards set by the Council.
- 6.2 Where provision for play is not made on site by the developer, financial contributions will be sought to install or upgrade play areas in the vicinity of the site and also to maintain facilities.

### **Outdoor and indoor sports**

- 6.3 On-site provision for indoor and outdoor sports will not normally be expected to be made by developers. A payment towards the costs of upgrading existing facilities, providing additional facilities and/or improving accessibility will instead be required.

## **7 Calculating payments in lieu of on-site provision and for maintenance**

### **Contributions for children's play provision**

- 7.1 Financial contributions towards off-site provision for play have been calculated by applying the costs per m<sup>2</sup> of providing facilities in the District to the space requirement per dwelling (as set out in Table 5.2). The current costs applied were £34 per sq metre for construction of play facilities. This figure was provided by the Council's Leisure Services Department and is based on current actual costs of provision in Wansbeck. Appendix 1 refers further.
- 7.2 Contributions towards the maintenance of play facilities will be sought where this will be the responsibility of the local authority including where the developer provides facilities on site. The current maintenance costs applied were £8 per sq metre for a five year establishment period.



7.3 The financial contributions to be sought per dwelling in lieu of on site provision of play facilities and/or their maintenance are as follows:

Table 7.1 Per dwelling contributions towards provision for children's play

Provision of children's playing space	$18.3 \text{ m}^2 \times \text{£}34 = \text{£}622$
Maintenance of children's playing space (5 years)	$18.3 \text{ m}^2 \times \text{£}8 = \text{£}146$

### Contributions towards outdoor sports

7.4 Financial contributions towards off-site provision for outdoor sport will also be based on the current per m<sup>2</sup> costs of providing and maintaining facilities in the District. Recognising that outdoor sports facilities serve a wider community need, the authority will not require new housing developers to bear the full costs, only half. The overall costs of providing facilities per dwelling were calculated by applying the per m<sup>2</sup> costs of providing and maintaining facilities in the District to the space requirement per dwelling (as set out in 5.2). The current cost of providing facilities applied was £16 per sq metre. Further information on how this figure was established is included in Appendix 2. The current maintenance cost applied was £9 per sq metre for a five year establishment period. The total cost of provision and maintenance was therefore £25 per m<sup>2</sup>.

7.5 The financial contributions to be sought per dwelling in lieu of on site provision for outdoor sports and maintenance are set out in Table 7.2 below.

Table 7.2 Per dwelling contributions towards the provision of outdoor sports facilities

Provision of outdoor sports facilities	$36.6 \text{ m}^2 \times \text{£}16 \times 0.5 = \text{£}293$
Maintenance of outdoor sports facilities (5 years)	$36.6 \text{ m}^2 \times \text{£}9 \times 0.5 = \text{£}165$

## Payments for indoor sports

- 7.6 The level of contribution sought from developers in relation to indoor sports provision is based on the per capita costs of fully meeting indoor sports needs in the whole of the District. The per capita cost was calculated by dividing the total costs of the works required to bring District facilities up to full standard (as indicated by the PPG17 study) by the total population of the District. The works required in the District and the associated costs are set out in Appendix 3. The total cost was £19.5m.
- 7.7 The division of the cost of meeting indoor sports needs in the District by the total population of the District of 61,700 (mid-year estimate 2006) gives a per capita cost in round figures of £316. When this per capita cost is multiplied by the average household size in Wansbeck of 2.29 people, a per dwelling cost of £724 is arrived at. Recognising that indoor facilities serve a wider community need, including people living beyond the local authority administrative boundary, the authority will not require new housing developers to bear the full costs, only half. This approach also allows for the possibility of some external funding for indoor sports provision. Table 7.3 demonstrates how the total payment for a development can be calculated.

Table 7.3 Per dwelling contributions for indoor sports

Provision of indoor sports facilities	$£316 \times 2.29 \times 0.5 = £362$
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## Viability considerations

- 7.8 On certain sites development viability may be affected by a range or combination of factors such as high abnormal costs associated with site remediation, competing or existing use values, or significant costs associated with additional infrastructure provision. Developers and landowners will be expected to consider the overall cost of development, including all known requirements associated with infrastructure necessary to implement the development and any other planning obligations, prior to negotiating the purchase price of land or the acquisition of an option. It is expected that these costs will be reflected in the negotiated price of the land. Early consultation with the Council on such requirements is therefore encouraged.
- 7.9 Where there are a range of high abnormal costs, for instance on heavily contaminated or difficult to develop land, or where development viability is affected by other factors, the Council may, in exceptional circumstances, consider a reduction in the level of contribution which would otherwise be required through this supplementary planning document. Where development viability is considered to be affected,

the developer should identify these issues and associated costs and submit detailed information to the Council at the earliest opportunity.

- 7.10 An assessment of the development viability will be undertaken by the Council, usually in conjunction with the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) District Valuer or other independent Valuer. This assessment will include a thorough appraisal of the site economics and will require co-operation and an open book approach between the applicant, developer or landowner and the Council. The applicant will be expected to cover the full cost of this independent assessment of viability which must be conducted prior to the submission of a planning application. For this reason it is important that applicants make early contact with the Council before submitting an application. A reduction in the level of contributions will only be considered in circumstances where development viability is proven to be affected to a critical point by the payment of those contributions.

## **8 Securing and spending contributions**

- 8.1 When financial contributions are required in lieu of on-site provision for sport and play these will need to be secured by a planning obligation. Planning permission will not be issued until a planning obligation has been signed by all appropriate parties. Having regard to the schedule of charges set out in this supplementary planning document, an applicant may wish to submit the planning obligation as a unilateral undertaking. Provided that such an undertaking meets the terms of the supplementary planning document, and there are no other unresolved matters, this approach can assist in speeding up the process of dealing with planning applications. Any legal costs associated with submitting a unilateral undertaking or negotiating a planning obligation by agreement must be met by the applicant.
- 8.2 Contributions are required to be paid for new or improved equipment and facilities on commencement of development unless otherwise agreed with the Council. The commencement of development will be taken as defined in the Planning Acts. Maintenance payments will be required immediately following adoption of facilities by an appropriate public body or other community based organisation. The payment terms and any phased payment arrangements will be set out in the planning obligation. All contributions received by the Council will be placed in ring-fenced accounts managed specifically for the provision and maintenance of new or improved facilities. These funds will be individually ring-fenced for the purposes set out in Appendix 4 and shall be applied only for those purposes.
- 8.3 Funds may be spent for the purposes set out in this supplementary planning document either alone, as matched funding or as a contribution towards the provision or maintenance of facilities. The funds will be available to the Council, to other local authorities or to other formally constituted community based organisations involved in

the provision and maintenance of sports and play facilities. Funds will be distributed on application to the local planning authority and will not be transferred other than to meet the specified purposes. Funds will be directed to the provision of new or improved facilities in accordance with the identified needs of communities in the district based on the key findings of the PPG17 study.

- 8.4 The schedule of charges set out in Appendix 4 will be reviewed annually on 1 April to ensure that charges reflect the cost of provision and maintenance. This review will have regard to published rates of inflation and any appropriate cost and price index. The reviewed schedule will be published annually and will form part of this supplementary planning document.

## **9 Local Biodiversity Opportunities**

- 9.1 When assessing proposals sport and play provision in the District, the Council will be mindful of the multi-functional role that sport and play areas can have in the wider green infrastructure network, in particular the contribution to biodiversity. The Council will seek to ensure, for example, that appropriate landscaping in and around children's play areas is used both to enhance their attractiveness and their biodiversity value. The provision of additional sport and play facilities should not impact negatively on any wildlife conservation areas, in particular international sites.

## Appendix 1 Calculating the per m<sup>2</sup> costs of providing children's play space

1. The costs per m<sup>2</sup> are based on the costs of meeting the needs for approximately 1000 people i.e. the provision of 8,000m<sup>2</sup> of play space.
2. For the purpose of the calculation, the 8000 m<sup>2</sup> is broken down roughly as follows:  
  
 $4 \text{ LAPs} \times 400 \text{ m}^2 = 1600 \text{ m}^2$   
 $2 \text{ LEAPS} \times 1600 \text{ m}^2 = 3200 \text{ m}^2$   
 $0.4 \text{ NEAP} \times 8500 \text{ m}^2 = 3,400 \text{ m}^2$   
Total 8,200 m<sup>2</sup>
3. The cost of providing the above play facilities in Wansbeck (as indicated by the Council's Leisure Services Department) would be as follows:  
  
 $4 \text{ no. LAPS @ } \pounds 20,000 \text{ per LAP} = \pounds 80,000$   
 $2 \text{ no. LEAPS @ } \pounds 60,000 \text{ per LEAP} = \pounds 120,000$   
 $0.4 \text{ NEAPs @ } \pounds 200,000 \text{ per NEAP} = \pounds 80,000$   
Total  $\pounds 280,000$
4. Dividing the costs of provision ( $\pounds 280,000$ ) by the area of play space provided (8,200 m<sup>2</sup>) gives a construction cost per m<sup>2</sup> of  $\pounds 34$ .
5. The Leisure Services Department indicate that average annual cost of maintaining the above play facilities is  $\pounds 12,800$ . This gives annual maintenance costs per m<sup>2</sup> of  $\pounds 1.60$  and maintenance costs for a 5 year period of  $\pounds 8$  per m<sup>2</sup>.

Note: The breakdown of facilities used in the calculation is a proxy and used only as a means of assessing costs of providing for children's play. The number of LAPs, LEAPs, NEAPs etc. required in a particular development will be assessed on a site by site basis.

## **Appendix 2 Calculating the costs per m<sup>2</sup> of meeting needs for outdoor sports**

1. The costs per m<sup>2</sup> are based on the costs of meeting the needs for approximately 2,250 people i.e. the provision of 36,000 m<sup>2</sup> of outdoor sports facilities.
2. For the purpose of the calculation, the 36,000 m<sup>2</sup> is broken down as follows:  
  
4 no. football pitches @ 80m x100m each = 32,000 m<sup>2</sup>  
1 set of changing facilities with car parking = 4,000 m<sup>2</sup>
3. The cost of providing the above facilities in Wansbeck (as indicated by the Council's Leisure Services Department) would be £565,000.
4. Dividing the cost of providing the facilities (£565,000) by the area of open space provided (36,000 m<sup>2</sup>) gives a per m<sup>2</sup> cost for provision of £16.
5. The annual cost of maintaining 4 no. football pitches is £18,000. Assuming a total area of 32,000 m<sup>2</sup>, this gives a per m<sup>2</sup> cost for maintenance each year of £1.80. The maintenance costs for a 5 year period will therefore be £9.

Note: The breakdown of facilities used in the calculation is a proxy and used only as a means of assessing the costs of providing for outdoor sports.

### Appendix 3 Investment required to fully meet needs for indoor sport in Wansbeck

	Facility	Reference in Wansbeck Indoor Sports Strategy	Estimated costs
1.	Replacement of Ashington Leisure Centre including pool, indoor bowls etc.	FD1	£12 m
2.	Refurbishment of Newbiggin Sports and Community Centre Sports Hall including essential repairs and refurbishment of squash courts, changing facilities and the central core of the building.	FD2	£2.5 m
3.	New or refurbished multi-use sports hall at a local school in Bedlington plus a new pool and gym at Bedlington.	FD3	£5m
Total			£19.5m

Notes:

1. Facility requirements as set out in the Wansbeck Indoor Sports Strategy (Strategic Leisure October 2007)
2. Costs provided by the Council's Leisure Services Department

**Appendix 4      Summary of financial contributions sought per dwelling in lieu of on-site provision for sport and play**

Provision of children's play space	£622
Maintenance of children's play space	£146
Provision of outdoor sports facilities	£293
Maintenance of outdoor sports facilities	£165
Provision of indoor sports facilities	£362
Total contribution (where no provision for sport and play at all made on site)	£1588