



CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL OPEN SPACE STANDARDS

GUIDANCE FOR INTERPRETATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Updated following adoption of the new Cambridge Local Plan, July 2006. It includes information from the Planning Obligation Strategy adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance by Environment Scrutiny Committee on 27 April 2004 and the adoption of the Open Space and Recreation Strategy following scrutiny by the Environment and Community Development and Leisure Committees on 13 and 15 July 2004

1. INTRODUCTION

The City Council's Open Space Standards are included in the Cambridge Local Plan adopted on 20 July 2006. Policy 3/8 requires all new residential development to include public open space and sports facilities in accordance with the Open Space and Recreation Standards, included as Appendix A. It states that provision should be on-site as appropriate to the nature and location of the development or where the scale of the development indicates otherwise through commuted payments to the City Council..

This guidance sets out how all residential developments should make provision for public open space, if not on site then by commuted payments. It incorporates elements from the Planning Obligation Strategy and the Open Space and Recreation Strategy adopted as above. Although these documents currently have reduced status as they relate to the 1996 Local Plan they are still material considerations. They are being updated/revised, and when this has been done this Guidance Note will be updated. Where appropriate, open space may be required for non-residential development, including major centres of employment, under Policy 3/7.

2. SUMMARY OF THE CITY COUNCIL OPEN SPACE STANDARDS

The Standards are summarised in table 1 and apply to all schemes for new residential development and conversions of buildings to residential use.

Table 1: The City Council's Open Space and Recreation Standards

Type of Open Space	Definition	Standard
Outdoor Sports Facilities	Playing Pitches, Courts and Greens	1.2 hectares per 1,000 people (12 sq m per person)
Indoor Sports Provision	Formal provision such as Sports Halls and Swimming Pools	1 Sports Hall for 13,000 people 1 Swimming Pool for 50,000 people
Provision for children and teenagers	Equipped children's play areas and outdoor youth provision	0.3 hectares per 1,000 people (3 sq m per person)
Informal Open Space	Informal provision including Recreation Grounds, parks and natural greenspaces	1.8 hectares per 1,000 people (18 sq m per person)
Allotments	Allotments	0.4 hectares per 1,000 people (4 sq m per person)

3. DEFINITION OF OPEN SPACE TO WHICH THE STANDARDS APPLY

The open space required under the standards is defined as any land laid out as a public garden or used for the purposes of public recreation. It must be of a suitable size and nature for sport, active or passive recreation or children's and teenager's play. For example, a green corridor with sufficient width to be enjoyed by passers through and to benefit biodiversity would fall within this definition, whereas incidental spaces necessary to screen the development would not be included.

Open space such as a toddler play area, informal activity area or natural greenspace within smaller development could be considered to meet the standards even if it is principally to be used by residents of that development. This is to encourage open space provision on site in smaller developments where there is insufficient space to provide open space which would be used to a significant extent by those outside the development area. Open space in larger developments should have unimpeded public access.

4. WHEN THE STANDARD SHOULD BE APPLIED

The standards are applicable to:

- All new build self contained residential units. Where the proposal relates to redevelopment of an existing residential site the open space required will be based on the number of additional units, for example if two houses are demolished and replaced by 10 flats, open space provision would be based on the 8 additional flats.
- Conversions or change of use from a non-residential or mixed use to residential, including for example a flat created over a shop.

- The conversion of one type of residential use to another. The open space required will be based on the number of additional bedrooms created, if any. For example if one two-bedroom house is converted to three one-bedroom flats, open space provision would be based on the one additional bedroom.

Certain types of housing will not always need to meet the full standard, as shown in table 2.

Table 2: Application of the Standards

	Private Residential/ Housing Association	Retirement housing ⁺	Non family Student housing	Family student housing
Outdoor Sports Facilities	Full provision	Full provision	Full provision *	Full provision *
Provision for children and teenagers	Full provision #	No provision	No provision	Full provision **
Informal Open Space	Full provision	Full provision	Full provision **	Full provision **
Indoor Sports Provision	Full provision	Full provision	Full provision *	Full provision **
Allotments	Urban Extensions only	Urban Extensions only	No provision	No provision

Provision for children and teenagers will not be sought for those parts of developments consisting of one bedroom units.

+ Retirement housing is any accommodation in Class C3 where there is an age restriction of over 55. The standards do not apply to nursing homes within Class C2.

* Full Provision will not be sought if the accommodation is directly linked to a college by a Section 106 agreement and it can be shown that adequate provision of outdoor or indoor sports facilities is made by that college. Although such provision will not meet the definition of public space, it is accepted that if adequate provision is made by the college, students will be unlikely to use public sports facilities.

** Full provision will not be sought if the development is on a college campus and it can be shown that adequate appropriate open space is provided by the college such that students are unlikely to make significant use of other informal open space.

The open space requirement for other specialist housing will be considered on its merits.

5. HOW THE STANDARDS SHOULD BE APPLIED

The amount of land required to meet the standards (excluding indoor sports provision) is calculated for each type of open space. This will be done by calculating the number of new residents accruing from the development using the number of bedrooms in each unit as a guide. The number of people is taken to be the same as the number of bedrooms, except for one bedroom units which will be assumed to have 1.5 people. The only exception to this will be for student housing, where the number of students to be accommodated will be used.

To calculate the open space required, the number of people accruing from a development should be multiplied by the open space required given in table 1. An example is given in table 3. If a Section 106 Agreement is signed for an outline consent and details of house sizes are not known a formula for calculating the open space/commuted sums will be included in the agreement, consistent with this Guidance.

Table 3: Calculation of open space requirements

No of units	Unit size	No of people	Outdoor Sports Facilities	Provision for Children and teenagers	Informal open space	Allotments
20	2 bedroom	20 x 2 = 40	40 x 12 = 480 m ²	40 x 2 - 3 = 80 - 120 m ²	40 x 18 = 720 m ²	40 x 18 = 720 m ²

Having calculated the amount of land required consideration will then be given as to whether this should be provided on site or through commuted payments for each type of open space, as set out below. For each type of open space or recreation provision the following factors should be taken into account:

- a. the size and character of the proposed development;
- b. townscape considerations;
- c. its location in relation to adjacent housing and existing open space; and
- d. opportunities for creating or improving open space and recreation provision nearby.

Consideration will be given to using planning conditions or Section 106 Agreements to secure unrestricted public access to any open space areas not to be adopted by the Council or in the case of smaller developments to ensure the retention and maintenance of the open space.

Any shortfall in on site provision should be met through a commuted payment as set out in Section 7 below.

Outdoor Sports Facilities

This covers grass pitches for football, cricket and rugby, artificial turf pitches, tennis courts/Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs) and Bowling Greens. Most housing development sites are too small to be able to make any contribution to the provision on site. Accordingly, it is likely that provision will be in the form of a commuted sum. The sum will be used on a city wide basis to provide or improve pitches, courts and other appropriate facilities to benefit residents across the city. Larger housing sites should include tennis courts/MUGAs.

Provision for Children and Teenagers

This is a combination of equipped children's play areas and outdoor youth provision such as kickabout areas, basketball 'half courts', skateboard parks and youth shelters. The facilities should normally be located within a larger area of open space which would provide the necessary buffer zone. The land required under the standard does not include this buffer zone. This could count towards meeting the standard for informal open space, provided it is suitably laid out and could be used for passive recreation.

For equipped play areas consideration should be given to the type of play area and its catchment area given in table 4 (adapted from the NPFA Standard, 2001), both when considering if an existing play area is suitably located and to guide the type of play area to be included on site. Schemes over 25 units should normally include a Toddler Play Area. Larger schemes over 100 units should normally include a Local Play Area. Consideration will be given to the relationship with other potential development sites nearby.

Table 4: Types of Children’s Play Areas

Type of Play Area	Content	Catchment area (straight line distance)	Minimum activity area	Buffer zone (minimum depth from edge of activity area to boundary of nearest residential property)
Toddler Play Area	Minimum of 4 pieces of equipment with seating	60 metres	80 - 100 sq metres	5 metres
Local Play Area	At least 5 items of equipment for younger children with seating plus youth shelter	240 metres	400 sq metres	10 metres
Neighbourhood Play Area	At least 8 items of Equipment for children between 8 and 14 as well as for younger children plus youth shelter	600 metres	1,000 sq metres	30 metres

The activity area will need to have safety surfacing, protective fencing, seating and an adequate buffer to protect residential amenity.

The exact content and location of play areas will be subject to detailed negotiations to achieve the highest quality. Youth shelters should be included on developments where a local or neighbourhood play area is included, although it may be appropriate for them to be provided elsewhere on the site.

Provision should also be made to meet the needs of older children who can travel independently to use facilities, and whose aspirations will be very different from those of younger children. This would include kick around areas, games walls, basketball ‘half courts’ with hoops, roller-skating, skateboard and bmx parks etc. Associated areas for sitting, watching and talking with friends can also be an important element. These should be included within larger housing developments. They should often be provided in association with Tennis Courts/ Multi Use Games Areas. Although a site area of 0.3 hectares is required for a full suite of facilities, where this is not possible consideration should be given to including facilities on smaller areas.

Informal Open Space

This is open space that is not formally laid out for sports, children's play or youth provision. It can be used for passive and active informal recreation. Types which should be included within housing developments include:

- **Informal Activity Areas:** These should be suitable for informal play and socializing. It could include a sandpit, barbeque area, seating, boulders, green tunnel, and play art. Such areas should be included in housing sites of 10 or more units.
- **Informal Play Space:** This includes such as kick about areas and casual play space within residential areas. They should be provided within housing sites over 25 units.
- **Natural greenspaces:** This covers areas suitable for passive recreation such as woodlands and grasslands. They should provide wildlife habitats and opportunities for walking, jogging and sitting out. Opportunities should be sought to provide small areas of natural greenspace within most housing sites, including those under 10 units, where this can satisfactorily be achieved.
- **Access corridors:** These should provide links to other open spaces and the open countryside where appropriate. They should be wide enough to allow wildlife to flourish, linking small and large habitats as well as providing cycleways and opportunities for walking and jogging as above. Opportunities should be sought to provide these within most housing sites.

6. MAINTENANCE OF OPEN SPACE PROVIDED ON SITE

Arrangements will need to be made for the maintenance and management of any public open space provided on site for 12 years. In the case of larger developments this will normally involve the payment of a commuted sum to the City Council. This will be based on a formula for annual maintenance costs for different elements of the open space. Open space within smaller developments will not necessarily be adopted by the City Council and maintenance will need to be secured by the developer.

7. THE CALCULATION OF THE COMMUTED SUM

A commuted sum will be worked out for each type of open space where full provision is not made on site. Commuted sums will be based on the amount of land required under the standard, deducting any open space provided on site.

Contributions have to be sought in line with the adopted Planning Obligations Strategy. This is currently being updated to bring it in line with the 2006 Local Plan. Meanwhile there is a mismatch between the standards and the commuted payments. The table below relates to the Planning Obligation Strategy adopted in April 2004.

The amount is based on the capital cost per square metre of creating that type of open space and maintaining it for 12 years. This includes 10% for feasibility studies and project management. That cost is shown in table 5, as is the cost per person. Using this, the commuted sum is £999 for a one bedroom unit (excluding payment for children's play area), £2130 for a two bedroom unit and £3195 for a three bedroom unit. Table 5 also gives the cost for 20 dwellings as in table 3 if no public open space is provided on site.

Table 5: Calculation of the Commuted Sum

Cost	Formal Open Space	Informal Open Space	Children's play area	Total
Cost per m ²	£20	£17	£133	N/A
Cost per person	18 m ² x £20 = £360	18 m ² x £17 = £306	3 m ² x £133 = £399	£1,065
Cost for 20 2 bedroom houses	720 m ² x 20 = £14,400	720 m ² x 17 = £12,240	120 m ² x 133 = £15,960	£42,600

Commuted sums are not currently being collected for Indoor Sports Facilities and Allotments. This will be incorporated through the review of the Planning Obligation Strategy.

Commuted sums will normally be required to be paid to the City Council upon the commencement of development. Commuted sums will be spent on open space provision or improvements that have been identified by the Council as set out in the Planning Obligation Strategy. Some works to provide major facilities may require payments from more than one scheme, and in this case a fund will be set up. A ten year limit on retention of commuted sums may be appropriate to allow sufficient funds to build up for larger projects.

In addition to the commuted sum, applicants will be required to pay legal costs for drawing up the planning obligation.

WHO TO CONTACT

For further advice about the open space standards please phone the Environment and Planning Reception on (01223) 457200 and ask for Sarah Dyer or Peter Carter.

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