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# SUMMARY

## OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

1. The key overall conclusion from this study is quite simple the way in which most Scottish local authorities approach the planning of open space is fundamentally flawed. This is manifest in five main ways:

- first, there is an over-reliance on a limited range of simple quantitative standards which largely ignore key issues relating to quality, accessibility, resources and sustainability
- second, where quantitative standards are used, they tend to be applied throughout a local plan area rather than adjusted to reflect the particular nature or needs of different neighbourhoods. There is therefore a lack of acknowledgement of the way in which different forms of public and private open space can interact to affect the appropriate level of local provision
- third, the application of planning policies through the development control process tends to focus on individual sites or developments, sometimes ignoring the wider context within which they are set. This can therefore result in a fairly inflexible approach to forms and levels of provision
- fourth, different local authority departments sometimes find it difficult to work closely together, or with their local communities, over open space issues
- fifth, councils appear to make very little use of Section 75 Agreements to deliver improvements and enhancements to the green networks in their areas.

2. This leads to two important conclusions, that there is a need for:

- a better methodology for the preparation and implementation of planning policies
- local authorities to focus on delivering clearly stated outcomes, agreed with local communities, possibly through the Community Plan process, and in partnership with them. One way of doing this will be to prepare open space strategies which link the work of different departments with the views of local communities and other stakeholders and relate to the planning, design, management and both capital and revenue funding of open space.

3. As far as the planning system is concerned, NPPG11 contains much sound advice. However, it confuses the specific role of planning authorities with the wider role of local authorities; is too even-handed; concentrates too much on sport and physical recreation to the exclusion of other issues; hides its key messages in unnecessary background information and passive language; and largely ignores the resource constraints on local authorities.

4. There is also one further underlying issue relating to the role of different types of open space: the lack of a widely agreed typology. In particular, the definition of “open space” in planning legislation serves little real purpose and is largely ignored. As a consequence, different councils use different terms and often implicit definitions for different types of open space. A standardised typology, relevant to today’s needs, would help to bring greater clarity to development plans and should assist in the recording of data on open spaces.

## OPEN SPACE TYPOLOGY

5. The typology of open space recommended in this report is a mixture of civic spaces and greenspaces. Civic spaces are predominantly paved areas, mainly in town and city centres. The proposed typology of normally or predominantly vegetated greenspaces is:

- **parks and gardens**, whose primary function is for informal relaxation, social and community purposes such as events and festivals, or horticultural/arboricultural displays
- **outdoor sports facilities**, whose primary function is to accommodate practice, training and competition demand for recognised outdoor sports such as athletics, bowls, football, hockey, lacrosse, rugby, shinty and tennis. Their key characteristic is that they must comply with the dimensions and other specifications laid down by the appropriate national governing body of sport
- **natural greenspaces**, whose primary functions are to promote bio-diversity and nature conservation
- **green corridors**, whose primary function is to allow safe, environment-friendly movement within urban areas. There is a widely held assumption that they also support wildlife movement and colonisation and therefore habitat creation
- **amenity greenspace** which provides visual amenity or separates different buildings or land uses for environmental, visual or safety reasons (for example, road verges). Many amenity greenspaces are also used, incidentally, as wildlife habitats. In housing areas, amenity greenspace is the main setting for informal children's play
- **children's play areas**, whose primary function is to provide safe play equipment for children, usually close to home and under informal supervision from nearby houses
- **other functional greenspaces**, such as cemeteries and allotments.

6. All of these greenspaces can be either privately or publicly owned and have varying degrees of public access.

## DESIRABLE OPEN SPACE OUTCOMES

7. In a nutshell, the outcomes local authorities and their partners should be seeking to deliver are:

- comprehensive networks of accessible, high quality and sustainable green and civic spaces...
- which contribute positively to the image and overall strategic framework for development of their area...and
- promote both economic development and social inclusion...
- with each individual open space planned, designed and managed to serve a clearly defined primary purpose...
- while also delivering important secondary benefits, where appropriate, for local people, bio-diversity and wildlife.



## **The Secondary Benefits of Greenspace**

8. Well designed and managed greenspaces can also deliver a range of important secondary benefits, including:

- **ecological benefits** – helping to reduce the effects of pollution, for example by converting carbon dioxide into oxygen and cleaning up waste water
- **environmental benefits** – helping to promote sustainability, for example by reducing noise pollution, controlling or storing ground water, or reducing energy consumption in nearby buildings by providing shelter from prevailing winds
- **educational benefits** – providing an “outdoor classroom” for schools, educational institutions and special interest groups.

## **PLANNING METHODOLOGIES**

### **Development Plans**

9. Most Development Plans adopt a simple, population-based standards approach to the provision of open space in new developments, supplemented in some areas by distance thresholds. As a direct consequence, these standards are used almost exclusively in relation to new housing developments. This means they largely ignore both urban and country parks and the desirability of having well located and designed pedestrian and other open spaces, rather than simply landscaping, as part of educational, industrial, business, leisure, retail and other developments. They sometimes also ignore some important aspects of the design of housing areas, such as the need for safe, child-friendly residential environments.

### **Open Space Strategies**

10. While there is a clear need for better open space policies in development plans, ultimately the long term value and quality of open space depends more on effective management and maintenance, coupled with strong community support, than the planning system. At the same time, however, the planning system has a vital role to play in protecting existing open spaces from development and ensuring that new developments either include appropriate open spaces or contribute to the development and enhancement of a green network – or both.

11. Ideally, therefore, the different local authority departments involved in providing and managing open space should work in partnership with their local communities to prepare comprehensive Open Space Strategies for their areas, linked to both the Best Value process and local plan reviews. Local plans, Best Value Reviews and Open Space Strategies should reinforce each other. Unfortunately, the resource constraints faced by local authorities can make this difficult to achieve and therefore there is a good case to be made for external funding for some aspects of the strategy preparation process.

## STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

12. Against this background, **Chapter 1** summarises the purposes of this research and the intended audience for the report. **Chapter 2** summarises how national planning policy guidelines relating to open spaces are used in practice. It concludes that some of the main outcomes recommended in NPPG11, *Sport, Physical Recreation and Open Space*, are reasonably well reflected in planning policies but that the process or methodological recommendations are only rarely followed. **Chapter 3** summarises four emerging issues which can be classed as “opportunities” to improve open space planning and management:

- open space as a cross-cutting issue
- Community Planning and Best Value
- community involvement and participation
- new sources of capital funding.

13. Unfortunately there are also some challenges to the future of high quality open spaces in villages, towns and cities. **Chapter 4** summarises three which are particularly important:

- declining resources
- the statistical vacuum
- the decline of urban parks.

14. **Chapter 5** then brings these opportunities and threats together to suggest how open space should be planned (and, by extension, managed) in future, based on:

- an appropriate terminology and typology
- open space provision standards
- the need for networks of open space
- the need for open space hierarchies
- the importance of urban design.

15. **Chapter 6** develops these issues to suggest a new set of methodologies for open space planning, based around four key issues:

- whether open space planning should be supply-led, demand-led or rely on standards
- how to determine the appropriate level of access and accessibility to local open spaces
- how to ensure appropriate long term quality, sustainability and multi-functionality in open space provision at affordable cost
- how to achieve maximum benefit from minimum resources.

16. **Chapter 7** describes how the planning methodologies proposed in Chapter 6 can be extended to cover management and maintenance issues. This chapter therefore provides guidance for those councils wishing to prepare an open space strategy for their area. As part of this process, it suggests that the key to the effective involvement of local communities is to give them some say over how resources are used in their area.

17. Finally, **Chapter 8** highlights the areas in which planning authorities will find it most helpful to have further advice from the Scottish Executive, possibly in the form of a Planning Advice Note (PAN), and **Chapter 9** provides a brief, positive conclusion.

18. The main body of this report is complemented by a series of annexes which provide background information on a range of relevant topics. In addition, there are two Background Reports, available on request from the Scottish Executive, Planning Services, providing additional information for those particularly interested in either the role of the planning system in relation to open space or wishing to prepare an open space strategy:

- Background Paper 1: National Planning Policy Guidelines and Open Space Planning
- Background Paper 2: Approaches to Open Space Strategies.

## **SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

19. This report makes a number of recommendations, the most important of which are summarised below. For the sake of clarity, the presentation of these recommendations does not match the order in which they appear in the main body of the report.

### **Main Recommendations Relating to the Importance of Open Space**

20. The Transport and Environment Committee of the Scottish Parliament should debate the importance and funding of parks and other open spaces, with special emphasis given to those areas in which it will not normally be possible to obtain commuted sums for maintenance, in order to give open space issues a higher public profile and emphasise their importance to the quality of life. **(Recommendation 4.6)**

21. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities should gather and analyse information on the state of and key problems facing Scotland's urban parks and other greenspaces and present the results to the Scottish Parliament and Ministers. **(Recommendation 4.7)**

### **Main Recommendations for the Planning System**

22. In order to bring greater clarity to the discussion of open space issues, the Scottish Executive Planning Services, national agencies, local authorities and others should adopt and promote the use of the open space typology in paragraph 5.16 (also given in paragraph 5 above), for example through a Planning Advice Note. **(Recommendation 5.1)**

23. The development of a network of high quality, sustainable greenspaces at both the strategic and local level should be a general aim of national planning policy. The main elements of this network should be identified and protected in Development Plans. **(Recommendation 5.2)**

24. Open space planning policies should be set within the context of a broad landscape strategy and linked to Local Biodiversity Action Plans. **(Recommendation 6.13)**

25. Planning authorities should follow the advice in NPPG11 and derive their own local standards for open space in new developments, including non-housing ones. Those councils

which have adopted the NPFA Six Acre Standard for “playing space” should continue to use it only as an interim measure for a limited period, for example until the next revision of the local plan. **(Recommendation 5.5)**

26. Planning policies should give a high priority to ensuring that new greenspaces are of high quality, if necessary at the expense of quantity. **(Recommendation 6.8)**

27. While the various types of greenspace should initially be planned separately, draft policies and Supplementary Planning Guidance in relation to each of them should be brought together to create holistic policies which will be effective in delivering and protecting a sustainable network of greenspaces and civic spaces. **(Recommendation 6.21)**

28. Planning authorities should seek to make the optimum use of planning conditions and Section 75 agreements to help deliver and enhance those individual high quality open spaces which together constitute a sustainable green network. **(Recommendation 6.22)**

29. Commuted sums (that is, capitalised sums which, if invested, will fund a stream of annual revenue payments for open space maintenance) should be held in a ring-fenced account and used only for the maintenance of the open spaces to which they relate. In addition, in the interests of transparency and accountability, councils should publish an annual report clearly setting out how they have used commuted sums. **(Recommendation 4.2)**

30. If planning consent is given for the development of publicly-owned open spaces, any proceeds accruing to councils should be ring-fenced and used only for replacement open space, the enhancement of more important open spaces in the same area or invested to create an additional revenue stream for the maintenance of other areas of open space. Where this latter approach is adopted, councils should not take the opportunity to reduce funding from their existing revenue budget. **(Recommendation 4.3)**

31. Councils should prepare urban design briefs incorporating clear requirements for high quality open spaces for most sizeable new developments and all brownfield developments. **(Recommendation 5.4)**

### **Main Recommendations Relating to Open Space Strategies**

32. Local authorities should prepare comprehensive open space strategies involving cross-department thinking and working with local communities and appropriate external partners as a framework for their open space planning policies. **(Recommendation 6.12)**

33. Strategy preparation must:

- seek to involve local people at appropriate points in the process
- take account of other relevant pre-existing plans and strategies
- involve a wide range of agencies in the public, private and voluntary sectors
- result in a useful corporate database
- be based on facts and data on open space
- include clear and realistic objectives
- be designed to deliver agreed outcomes. **(Recommendation 7.2)**

34. National agencies such as SNH and **sportscotland** should consider providing funding for open space audits by councils. These audits should be subject to the following conditions:

- councils should agree to use the results as a corporate and not a departmental resources
- councils should use a computer-based geographical information system to record the results of the audit
- councils should give a clear commitment to using the audit and analysis of it to prepare local standards for all types of open space for inclusion in their development plans and an open space strategy
- councils should give a clear commitment that they will update and maintain the database of open spaces resulting from the initial audit on an ongoing basis. (**Recommendation 2.1**)

35. The Scottish Executive should consider taking account of the amount and cost of maintaining open space when determining financial allocations to those councils which can provide accurate and up to date information on the size, nature and maintenance costs of those open spaces for which they are responsible. This will be particularly important in social inclusion partnership and other priority areas where land values are low and therefore there is little or no potential for councils to obtain commuted sums for the future maintenance of new open spaces. (**Recommendation 4.1**)

### **Main Recommendations Relating to Open Space Management**

36. Those councils which do not already support the Britain in Bloom campaign should consider doing so as part of their work to involve their local community and businesses in setting environmental policies and enhancing the local environment. (**Recommendation 4.4**)

### **Main General Recommendations**

37. Local authorities and their partners should reflect in Community Plans the importance of open space as a cross-cutting issue capable of supporting and assisting the renaissance of urban areas. (**Recommendation 3.2**)

38. Councils should develop an appropriate hierarchy of open spaces for their area as suggested in paragraphs 5.26-5.28 and use it as a basic tool in connection with open space planning and management. (**Recommendation 5.3**)

39. Local authorities should seek to ensure that their local plan(s), Open Space Management Best Value Review, Best Value Performance Plan and Open Space Strategy reinforce one another. This will often best be achieved by dovetailing the programme for their preparation. (**Recommendation 7.1**)

40. Local authorities should prepare pitch strategies, using the methodology to be published by **sportscotland**, as an input to their local plan and Open Space Strategy. The most appropriate department to take the lead in preparing the strategy will normally be the one responsible for sport and recreation. (**Recommendation 6.16**)

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

1.1 The provision, design, management and protection of a network of public open spaces in our cities, towns and villages is an issue right at the heart of sustainability. Quality open space is a key factor in making our towns and cities attractive and viable places in which to live, work and play. It is a vital resource which supports and underpins many aspects of urban living, including formal and informal sport and recreation, play, nature conservation, moderating climate, conserving energy, improving health, combating pollution, facilitating urban renewal and attracting economic development. In addition, it provides opportunities for local people to become actively involved in the management and enhancement of their local environment. It is a public resource from which everyone can benefit, irrespective of the type of life they lead, where they live and any disabilities they may have. Unfortunately, it is also something which we tend to take for granted but requires careful planning, good design and effective management and maintenance.

1.2 NPPG11 *Sport, Physical Recreation and Open Space*, published in June 1996, provides guidance to planning authorities and others on the government's views on many of the issues relating to the planning of open space. Its policy recommendations have been reflected in structure and local plans prepared since then. The *Review of National Planning Policy Guidelines* conducted by Land Use Consultants for the Scottish Office (Central Research Unit, 1999) identified that there was at least a 50% take up of the key issues highlighted in the Guidelines in a sample of local plans prepared in the two years following its issue. Bearing in mind the length of time required to prepare a local plan, this is clear evidence that it provides valuable guidance for planning authorities.

1.3 However, the "process" or "methodological" recommendations in NPPG11 have not been adopted nearly as widely as the "policy" or "outcome" recommendations. By the middle of 2000 only three Scottish local authorities – Dundee, Glasgow and South Ayrshire – had prepared open space strategies for their areas which sought to bring together planning, design and management in a holistic way, reflecting the principles and advice set out in NPPG11. Moreover, of these three, the Glasgow Parks and Open Spaces Strategy originated in 1993-4, long before NPPG11 was issued.

1.4 This suggests that local authorities have failed to grasp the fundamental importance of basing their open space planning policies on local considerations and, instead, have tended to rely on easily applied quantitative standards and guidelines which are sometimes of unknown justification or origin. For example, one of the planning officials interviewed for this research identified that the open space standard used by his council had been traced back to a committee report in 1981, although this report gave no detail of how it had been determined. Such standards are unlikely fully to reflect changing local needs arising from changes to the nature of work and leisure, emerging approaches to spatial planning and urban design and the need to promote urban regeneration, social inclusion and sustainability.

1.5 Against this background, the Scottish Executive, in collaboration with Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Enterprise, **sportscotland** and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA), commissioned Kit Campbell Associates to research the planning,

design and management of urban open space over the period from April 2000 to January 2001.

## STUDY AIMS AND AUDIENCE

1.6 The primary focus of the study has been on the production of detailed guidelines for local authorities and others on an appropriate methodology to use for the preparation of open space policies in development plans. A secondary issue has been to produce guidance on the content and form of local open space strategies for possible inclusion in a Planning Advice Note to complement NPPG11. The need for such strategies for the efficient creation, protection and management of open space is implicit in NPPG11. Throughout the study, the emphasis has been on identifying methodologies and procedures which will help planning authorities to deliver:

- **effective planning and implementation** through the planning and development control process, for example, new spaces developed by the local authority, or achieved as part of a private development proposal
- **quality design** of open spaces which are appropriate to their location, accessible, well used, accommodate low maintenance, and display elements of multi-functionality
- **good management**, including innovative forms of maintenance, for example, involvement of the community or trusts acting on behalf of local people.

1.7 The study has also had a number of secondary objectives:

- to review the guidance in NPPG11
- to review a sample of development plans and existing open space and related strategies in order to prepare best practice guidance in terms of:
  - the classification of different types of open space
  - standardisation of nomenclature
  - methodologies for determining open space provision
  - the provision and maintenance of open space through the development plan process
  - the development of green networks and good linkages between open spaces
  - integration with other local authority strategies
  - an analysis of what constitutes good planning, design and management of open space and how the local planning and development control process can help to promote and facilitate them.

## METHODOLOGY

1.8 The methodology for the study was based on four identifiable pieces of work.

### Stage 1: Scoping workshop

1.9 The scoping workshop at the start of the study involved approximately twenty invited representatives from the Scottish Executive, Scottish Natural Heritage, **sportscotland**,

Scottish Homes, the Paths for All Partnership, local authorities, the Scottish Greenbelt Company, the Scottish Greenbelt Foundation, the Scottish Federation of House Builders, the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations and planning consultancies. The purpose of the workshop was to identify current trends in open space planning, design and management; what we mean by “quality open space”; and key planning issues. A short paper summarising the results of the workshop is given in Annex A.

## **Stage 2: Literature Review**

1.10 There is no single agency which “champions” urban open space comparable, for example, with Scottish Natural Heritage’s remit for advising on all aspects of Scotland’s natural heritage or **sportscotland**’s focus on sport and physical recreation. This means that there is a lack of basic information which looks at all the different types and purposes of open space in a comprehensive and integrated manner. The literature review therefore entailed a trawl of a wide range of relatively recent references which can be grouped under five main heads:

- statements of UK government/Scottish Office/Scottish Executive policy. These references include White Papers, NPPGs, Planning Advice Notes and other government publications from the past decade and therefore both Conservative and Labour administrations
- the Twentieth Report of the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Select Committee of the House of Commons, *Park Life* (1999)
- academic and other independent research publications, including “think tank” and “task force” reports commissioned by various agencies
- development plans and open space strategies prepared by local authorities in both Scotland and England
- decision letters relating to planning appeals.

## **Stage 3: In Depth Interviews**

1.11 These interviews were of three main kinds:

- with planners involved in the preparation or use of open space policies in development plans in Scottish local authorities. These interviews were based around a standard set of questions designed to elicit the extent to which local authorities had followed the “process” recommendations of NPPG11 when drawing up and implementing their development plan policies
- with other agencies concerned with different aspects of the planning, design and management of open space; the content of these interviews varied with the role and priorities of each agency
- with Scottish Executive Planning Reporters. While Reporters do not set Scottish Office/Executive planning policies, they play an important part in implementing them.



## Stage 4: Case studies

1.12 The case studies are of two main kinds:

- **examples of the planning system in action**, ranging from the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Joint Structure Plan Committee's proposal for a strategic green network to the St Augustine's School planning appeal, where Glasgow City Council's failure to follow the process advice in NPPG11 led to the Scottish Ministers overturning the Council's decision to grant planning permission for development on sports pitches
- **examples of good planning, design or management**, and in some cases pump priming funding from the local authority, which had led to the creation of high quality and potentially sustainable open spaces, sometimes through innovative approaches.

## 2 NPPGS AND OPEN SPACE PLANNING

*Between the idea  
And the reality  
Between the notion  
And the act  
Falls the shadow*

*TS Eliot, The Hollow Men*

### INTRODUCTION

2.1 National Planning Policy Guideline 1: *The Planning System* (Scottish Executive, Revised November 2000) makes a number of policy statements which impinge on open space planning. The main guidance of direct relevance to open space issues, however, is NPPG11, *Sport, Physical Recreation and Open Space* (Scottish Office, June 1996). In addition, other NPPGs – specifically NPPG3, *Land for Housing* (Scottish Office, November 1996); NPPG14, *Natural Heritage* (Scottish Office, January 1999); and NPPG17, *Transport and Planning* (Scottish Office, April 1999) – are also relevant.

### NPPG1: THE PLANNING SYSTEM

2.2 The recently issued revision of NPPG1 sets out the Executive's priorities for the planning system to guide policy formulation and decision making towards the goal of sustainable development. It has four key implications for open space planning:

- councils should seek to *involve* their local communities in the preparation of planning policies, rather than simply *consult* them over draft policies
- planning policies should reflect *local* needs and circumstances and therefore planning authorities should not simply copy provision standards from elsewhere
- detailed policies relating to open space are best included in supplementary planning guidance
- the planning system is the main means of delivering those aspects of Community Plans which impact on the development and use of land.

### NPPG11: SPORT, PHYSICAL RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

2.3 NPPG11, *Sport, Physical Recreation and Open Space*:

*“describes the role of the planning system in making provision for sports and physical recreation and protecting and enhancing open space. It also defines the factors which the Secretary of State will take into account in his consideration of development plans, planning appeals and other cases, and sets out the action required for councils.”* (NPPG11, paragraph 2)

2.4 As with other NPPGs, the advice in NPPG11 can be considered as relating either to desired land use **policy outcomes**, set by the Scottish Executive, or the **processes** which planning authorities should use to determine their own locally-derived land use policies.

### **The Reflection of NPPG11 Policy Outcomes**

2.5 Our conclusions in relation to how Scottish planning authorities have responded to the policy outcome recommendations in NPPG11 can best be grouped under a number of broad heads:

- the definition of open space
- open space provision standards
- implicit assumptions underlying open space planning policies
- the promotion of quality
- long term maintenance issues
- playing field and sport pitch issues
- the role of structure plans
- the role of local plans.

#### *The Definition of Open Space*

2.6 The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act, 1972, defines open space as “*land laid out as a public garden, or used for the purposes of public recreation, or land which is a disused burial ground*”. This definition is almost completely ignored in development plans – as indeed it is in NPPG11 and its approximate equivalent in England and Wales, PPG17, *Sport and Recreation* (Department of the Environment/Welsh Office, 1991). Instead, open space is generally classified as being of four main types: urban parks, children’s play areas, amenity open space and pitches or playing fields, although some plans include variations of these terms. In addition, open space is almost always regarded as vegetated, with little or no consideration given to hard surfaced urban squares, pedestrian streets and other civic spaces.

#### *Open Space Provision Standards*

2.7 Standards for open space in different local plans vary little from one part of the country to another, suggesting that many councils have simply copied what others are doing – something confirmed in the interviews with planning officers. Clearly, once there is an apparent standard, councils will latch on to it rather than undertake the open space survey and analysis recommended in NPPG11.

2.8 The most commonly used approach is the National Playing Fields Association’s population-based for “playing space” standard of 2.43 hectares per 1,000 population. This Standard (NPFA, 1992) comprises:

## ***Youth and Adult Use***

*Facilities such as pitches, greens, courts and miscellaneous items such as athletics tracks, putting greens and training areas in the ownership of local government, whether at county, district or parish level; facilities as described above within the educational sector which are as a matter of practice and policy available for public use; facilities as described above within the voluntary, private and commercial sectors which serve the leisure time needs for outdoor recreation of their members or the public: 1.6-1.8 hectares (4.0-4.5 acres) per 1,000 population*

## ***Children's Use***

- 1 Outdoor equipped playgrounds for children of whatever age; other play facilities for children which offer specific opportunities for outdoor play, such as adventure playgrounds: 0.2-0.3 hectares (0.50-0.75 acres) per 1,000 population;*
- 2 Casual or informal play space within housing areas: 0.4-0.5 hectares (1.00-1.25 acres) per 1,000 population. (NPFA, 1992)*

2.9 Some councils have simply adopted the NPFA Standard and apply it in the context of new housing developments. As the development industry has accepted it, albeit often reluctantly, the industry's general attitude can be summed up as "if it ain't broke, why fix it?" Others have adjusted it upwards or downwards slightly, usually on the basis of a broad assessment of the amount of existing open space in their urban area divided by the population. Those which have adopted a slightly higher standard have often been criticised by the development industry.

2.10 As well as playing space, some councils have also adopted a similar population-based standard for "amenity open space", usually of around 0.5-0.8 hectares per 1,000 people, in new housing developments. This is roughly the same as the NPFA's standard for equipped children's play areas **plus** its standard for casual or informal play, or one third of its overall standard. There does not appear to be any empirical or other basis for this and its origin is unclear; instead, councils seem simply to have taken the view that if it is good enough for other local authorities it is also good enough for them.

2.11 Two other approaches are also in fairly common use: a **minimum proportion** of (usually brownfield) site area and a series of **distance thresholds**, specifying the maximum distance or walk time from any house to the nearest open spaces of different types and (sometimes) stated minimum sizes. Typical thresholds are:

- |  |        |
|--|--------|
| • play areas for toddlers and young children   | 90m    |
| • play areas for toddlers to young teenagers   | 300m   |
| • play areas for young children to teenagers   | 1,000m |
| • sports pitches                               | 1,000m |
| • kickabout and other casual sports facilities | 500m   |
| • parkland                                     | 400m   |
| • amenity open space                           | 400m   |

2.12 Very few plans contain either provision standards for urban or country parks, possibly reflecting the difficulty (and cost) of assembling sufficient land in most urban areas, or proposals for the enhancement of existing ones. This may be because planning authorities perceive parks and the enhancement of existing open spaces as a management, maintenance and funding rather than a land use issue.

### *Implicit Assumptions Underlying Planning Policies*

2.13 There appears to be an implicit assumption underlying the policies in most development plans that the need for open space is primarily demand-led and therefore a function of population. This raises three issues set out below.

- **First**, if this is indeed the case, it would be logical for provision standards to be comprehensive. However, the standards used by most councils relate almost exclusively to “playing space” (for both children and adults) and amenity open space.
- **Second**, it would be logical for standards to vary from one area to another in accordance with the type of housing and the amount of private open space linked with them as garden ground. By and large, however, this does not happen.
- **Third**, it seems fairly obvious that it is often the **quality** of particular open spaces which creates demand. Ensuring long-term quality, however, depends on effective management and maintenance and cannot be delivered by the planning system. Some planning department interviewees specifically highlighted the difficulty of getting different departments in their council to work together effectively.

2.14 There also appears to be a second implicit assumption underlying many planning policies that all areas of open space are broadly equal in value. One hectare of urban park may be regarded as being of the same benefit to local people as one hectare of woodland, for example. A poor quality or unplayable pitch is assumed to have the same value as one in excellent condition, presumably on the grounds that the injection of capital could convert the former to the latter – irrespective of whether such an upgrading is affordable. Simple, quantitatively based planning policies, therefore, ignore the critical importance of both quality and resources.

### *The Promotion of Quality*

2.15 Where developers are required to pay a commuted sum towards long term maintenance (see below), it will be to their advantage to design new open spaces in such a way as to minimise future maintenance costs as this will also minimise the commuted sum required. As there will normally be only a limited number of ways of achieving this in any area, there is an obvious danger that open spaces will lack real quality and, especially, variety. There are two main ways in which councils seek to ensure this problem does not arise:

- through the preparation of planning briefs for major developments or some form of Design Guide, often with the status of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) in the local plan or as separately published guidelines for developers

- by requiring that developers agree the extent and nature of open space provision with the local authority before planning consent is granted or any houses are occupied.

2.16 Whatever approach councils adopt, there is no guarantee it will be effective in terms of giving each new development a unique “sense of place” – a requirement which is slowly coming to the fore and will be more and more important as the density of housing developments increases.

### *Long Term Maintenance Issues*

2.17 There is a clear recognition in planning policies that the long term maintenance of open spaces created as part of new developments is an important issue. Councils generally require developers to tackle it in one of four main ways:

- by undertaking maintenance themselves
- by setting up a residents’ association, which then appoints a factor to co-ordinate the necessary works, with house owners sharing the cost
- by handing over the title to areas of open space to the local authority, usually with a commuted sum which the local authority can use to fund future maintenance
- by making arrangements with a suitable third party, such as the Scottish Greenbelt Company, for long term maintenance.

2.18 Where planning policies require developers to hand over ownership of open space to the local authority or some other agency with a commuted sum to fund its long term maintenance, it is obviously desirable that the interest on the sum paid, if invested, should be enough to fund a reasonable level of maintenance in perpetuity. Commuted sums are not always achievable, however. In the first place, councils do not always ask for them, even when their planning policies state that they will be required. Secondly, commuted sums do not normally come from the developer’s profit but off the price paid for the land by the developer to its owner.

2.19 This means that generating worthwhile commuted sums in economically buoyant areas is normally fairly easy, but can be impossible where land values are low. Ultimately, therefore, the rich are likely to get well maintained open space while new open spaces in poorer areas are likely to deteriorate through lack of maintenance – yet it is in disadvantaged areas that investment in new areas of open space can probably pay the greatest dividends in terms of health and social inclusion.

2.20 Commuted sums are generally calculated as a simple multiple of the annual maintenance cost and can vary quite widely. The multiple currently used by local authorities ranges from 10 up to 30, although those at the upper end of this range are designed primarily to encourage developers to make arrangements which do not involve the local authority.

### *Playing Field and Sports Pitch Issues*

2.21 Most planning authorities have not sought to identify the needs of their local areas for playing fields and sports pitches. As a result, they do not really know whether their present level of provision is adequate, inadequate or about right. In spite of this, they generally adopt policies designed to protect existing playing fields – although this can result in poor or even

unplayable pitches being protected, sometimes on amenity grounds. This may be an example of the precautionary principle in action. It is more likely, however, simply to reflect the presumption in NPPG11 against the development of playing fields and sports pitches and the fact that most councils lack the information they would need to make a considered judgement. Any decision as to whether to allow the development of sports facilities should be made, in the first instance, on sporting grounds alone. If development is acceptable in sports terms, but local considerations require the provision of amenity open space, it should be provided either by the community as a whole, through the local authority, or the developer. The unthinking retention of large areas of flat grassland offers relatively little by way of amenity.

2.22 Because pitch sports are played mainly in winter, typical grass sports pitches can be used a maximum of only two or three times each week if they are not to deteriorate. Where there is inadequate pitch capacity in an area, and little or no land which could be developed as additional pitches at reasonable cost, a policy of enhancing the quality of existing pitches can be a viable alternative to the provision of more pitches. In some circumstances, it may be sensible to allow the development of some of the worst pitches in order to generate funds for the upgrading of others – even if this conflicts with the presumption against the redevelopment of playing fields.

#### *The Role of Structure Plans*

2.23 There is something of a gulf between the recommendations of NPPG11 and the approach to open space issues adopted by planning authorities for Structure Plan purposes. The approved Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan (January 2000), for example, does not include any open space policies at all. Rather than setting out how local plans should approach the issue of defining the appropriate level of open space provision as recommended in NPPG11, Structure Plans tend instead to concentrate on strategically important land uses such as regional or country parks.

2.24 In this, councils are perhaps more in tune with NPPG1 than NPPG11. For example, paragraph 30 of NPPG1 states that for Structure Plans, “*Brevity, clarity and precision are key requirements*”. In spite of this, the planning officers interviewed generally supported the NPPG11 recommendations relating to Structure Plans.

#### *The Role of Local Plans*

2.25 Some of the NPPG11-recommended outcomes are also largely ignored in most local plans where they are more effectively dealt with through other established mechanisms. For example, the requirement to have regard to the needs of people with disabilities in paragraph 94 of NPPG11 is covered perfectly adequately by legislation and implemented largely through the Building Control system. There appear to be two main thrusts to the policies in most local plans:

- the protection of existing areas of open space – best summed up as an instruction to developers along the lines of the traditional and thankfully long-gone signs seen in many parks and gardens: “Keep Off the Grass”
- a requirement for additional areas of open space as part of new housing developments, with acceptable arrangements for their long term maintenance.

2.26 Overall, councils seem generally to rely on NPPG11 as a “material consideration” when determining planning applications, rather than adopt policies designed to deliver all of the outcomes recommended in NPPG11.

2.27 Local plans can also sometimes fail to reflect Structure Plan requirements. An interesting example is the Dumfries and Galloway Structure Plan, which states that local plans should identify areas of open space deficiency. Dumfries and Galloway Council, which prepared both the Structure and the local plan, however, has not attempted to do this in its local plans as it does not know of an established methodology which will suit its area’s particular characteristics.

### **The Reflection of NPPG11 Process Recommendations**

2.28 NPPG11 also recommends a number of processes or methodologies which planning authorities should use both when preparing development plans and in connection with the development control process. Our conclusions in relation to how Scottish planning authorities have responded to the process recommendations in NPPG11 can also be grouped under a number of broad heads:

- the need for local open space audits
- the need for additional resources
- the need for better corporate working in local authorities
- playing field and sports pitch issues
- improvements to existing open spaces
- the use of NPPG11 in planning appeals
- other uses of NPPG11.

#### *The Need for Local Open Space Audits*

2.29 Very few councils have undertaken the comprehensive open space survey recommended in NPPG11 and, among those which have, the main input has often come from the department responsible for grounds maintenance. There are three key drawbacks to the results of many of these surveys. First, they have been driven by the need to obtain quantitative data for use in maintenance specifications in connection with Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT). As a result, they have concentrated mainly on quantitative rather than qualitative data, and, more often than not, exclusively on council-maintained land. In addition, some are now around a decade old and have not been updated. Second, some data has been lost as a result of local government re-organisation or made invalid by boundary changes. Third, the need to cut revenue costs has often led to the progressive simplification of landscaping and therefore maintenance regimes, with the result that any qualitative data which does exist may no longer be accurate.

2.30 None of the planning officers interviewed in connection with this research indicated that their council had sought to formulate a local standard for open space using the methodology outlined in NPPG11, although some are beginning to think of doing so. Only a very few councils – for example, Aberdeen, Dundee and South Ayrshire - have undertaken a comprehensive local survey and analysis of existing open spaces for planning purposes. Amongst most other councils, there has been little progress.



### *The Need for Additional Resources*

2.31 Several of the planning officers interviewed were critical of the way in which many of the process recommendations in NPPGs largely ignore resource implications. While there is obvious good sense in councils undertaking the detailed open space analysis recommended by NPPG11, they are probably unlikely to do so unless they receive external funding. A number of councils have considered undertaking a local open space audit but have been unable to allocate the necessary resources; others have not progressed a planned audit because key staff had left. This implies that an audit may have been something which specific officials regarded as desirable, rather than the result of a corporate or management decision that such an audit was needed. The availability of external funding could obviously change this.

### *The Need for Better Corporate Working in Local Authorities*

2.32 There is a key split in priorities between those council departments responsible for the statutory planning function and those responsible for managing assets such as open space. Planning departments are concerned primarily with long term policy issues relating to land use and therefore give a high priority to the provision of additional open space as part of *new* developments. Service departments, on the other hand, are concerned primarily with the management and revenue funding of *existing* open spaces. Where commuted sums are not ring-fenced to pay for open space maintenance, an increasing number are refusing to become involved in managing any new open spaces in their areas. They also tend to work to a much shorter time horizon than planning departments. As a result of growing pressures on their already constrained budgets, they are forced to determine their priorities by reference to their statutory responsibilities and the availability of external resources, rather than careful consideration of local needs or any long term vision.

### *Playing Field and Sports Pitch Issues*

2.33 Only rarely have councils sought to review the pitch and playing field needs of their areas from first principles. Furthermore, in most areas, the departments responsible for sport and recreation have had only a very limited impact on the pitches and playing fields element of local plans. From the interviews with Scottish planning officers, only Argyll and Bute Council had undertaken a comprehensive assessment of local pitch needs. This concluded that there was little need for additional provision but a need to increase the capacity of some facilities, for example through the provision of artificial surfaces. This is an issue which the NPFA Six Acre Standard completely ignores. It is also the case that using existing participation levels to establish the need for pitches often leads to a circular argument, unless there is clear over-provision. Where there is not, demand will be constrained by the lack of pitches and therefore there may be little apparent evidence of any need for more.

2.34 In dealing with applications for the development of sports pitches, councils maintain that they normally follow the NPPG11 process guidance. **Sportscotland**, however, believes that they often do so in an inconsistent manner. Where the development of playing fields is proposed, it may support the provision of replacement playing fields or the upgrading of existing, poor quality playing fields where this would lead to a comparable or better level of provision for pitch sports. It has sought, often successfully, to persuade councils to reach such compensation agreements. These agreements have frequently given a higher priority to the quality of pitches than the number of them, with the most common relating to either the

provision of a synthetic pitch or conversion of one or more blaes pitches to grass. In several cases, the compensation agreement has also required the provision of changing accommodation.

#### **CASE STUDY: ST AUGUSTINE'S SCHOOL, GLASGOW**

The need for Glasgow City Council to reduce over-capacity in secondary schools in the city has been widely reported. One of the schools it decided to close, and subsequently demolish, was St Augustine's in the Milton area in the north-west of the city. It decided to sell the site, including the former school's playing fields, for development and took the view that it would be easier to sell if outline planning consent for housing had been granted. The application attracted a number of objections, including one from **sportscotland**.

The Council subsequently gave outline planning permission for the proposed development, subject to two conditions. These required the provision of a grass playing field adjacent to a nearby primary school, for the use of both the school and local community, and compensatory playing field provision, with changing, in the same locality as the pitches lost for development.

As is normal when **sportscotland** objects to a planning application for the development of playing fields, the Council referred the application and its decision to the Scottish Executive, which decided to "call in" the application and hold an inquiry.

The evidence led by Council representatives stated that there had been only limited formal use of the St Augustine's three grass and four blaes pitches for many years and in recent times only one pitch had been maintained for use. In the whole of school year 1997-8, there were only 18 community lets. Moreover, when the school was demolished, so were the changing rooms. The Council was planning to convert three existing blaes pitches at nearby schools to grass and would make them available for community use. This would more than offset the loss of seven poor quality ones with little community use. A higher level of provision would be unaffordable and not viable and the redevelopment of secondary schools throughout the city should result over time in the provision of a synthetic pitch on the site of each new school. However, the Council had not undertaken a formal open space analysis but took a pragmatic view that enhanced facilities in the area, funded from the capital receipt, would generate significantly greater benefits for the local community than the existing poor quality pitches.

### **Case Study: St Augustine's School, Glasgow (continued)**

**Sportscotland's** evidence acknowledged the shortage of pitches in the city and suggested it would be necessary to make alternative local provision to replace the pitches which would be lost. It proposed that an appropriate compensatory package, on various sites in the vicinity, might consist of a total of four grass pitches, a synthetic cricket wicket and a full size floodlit artificial turf pitch, all with changing accommodation.

Local community representatives argued that the area, which is in the North Glasgow Social Inclusion Partnership, had already lost a range of other sporting facilities, and residents with low incomes could not easily travel to sports facilities outside their home area. While it was true that there had been only a low level of formal recreational use of the St Augustine's pitches, they were frequently used informally. Some of the sites identified by **sportscotland** were unlikely to be suitable for pitches because of ground conditions and therefore, even if there were no funds currently available to upgrade the St Augustine's pitches, it was important that they should be retained for improvement later.

The Reporter concluded that, as the Council had not undertaken the open space analysis suggested in NPPG11, it had no evidence to prove that the St Augustine's site was "surplus to requirements, taking account of both its recreation and amenity value" (NPPG11 paragraph 45) or would "not be required in future by the ... community" (NPPG11 paragraph 46). Indeed, it was clear that there was a local shortage of pitches and therefore the application should be refused unless a material consideration of greater importance indicated otherwise. The determining issue was therefore whether the criteria in paragraph 47 of NPPG11 could be satisfied: whether the retention or enhancement of the pitches would best be achieved by the redevelopment of part of the site; and whether there would be no loss of amenity and alternative provision of equal community benefit would be made available.

In relation to these criteria, the Reporter concluded that the development of the whole of the site would result in the loss of amenity and none of the compensation packages on offer from the Council were of equal community benefit. He therefore recommended that while the application was for the development of the whole of the site, allowing the development of part of it (essentially the "brownfield" area which had previously been occupied by the school buildings) would allow some development to take place, generate a capital receipt and retain the area of playing fields.

The Scottish Ministers agreed with the Reporter's conclusions and granted planning permission for the redevelopment of that part of the site which had previously been occupied by the school buildings but not the playing fields. The Ministers' decision was well received in the local community and the local press and endorsed by the local MP. In conclusion, the City Council's failure to follow the recommendations of NPPG11, and undertake an open space survey and analysis, meant that it did not have the facts either to defend its original decision to grant planning permission or determine the appropriate level of local provision.

### *Improvements to Existing Open Spaces*

2.35 In general, as councils have not undertaken an open space audit they have very little hard information to use in order to determine priorities for the improvement of parks or other areas of open space. In practice, therefore, they use local knowledge, often informally or subjectively, to determine which open spaces it is most desirable to protect.

2.36 Where improvements to existing open spaces are proposed, this is usually done in one of two ways:

- as part of comprehensive initiatives to regenerate defined areas of deprivation. Accordingly, these initiatives usually concentrate on areas of derelict or near-derelict land, rather than the amenity open spaces of value referred to in NPPG11; or
- through enhanced management and maintenance procedures, often with no involvement of the planning service.

2.37 Councils have not generally followed the process recommendations of NPPG11 and adopted policies relating to the enhancement of public parks and other amenity open spaces. In addition, where particular open spaces are improved, this is usually done through the service department responsible for maintenance as a result of public pressure rather than planning policies. Planning policies often refer to the desirability of general area regeneration schemes, but cannot enforce implementation. The availability of external funding is, very often, the most important driver of what actually happens on the ground.

2.38 A possible long term consequence of the approach adopted by many councils is that the quality of all open spaces in an area will slowly converge towards an average and possibly fairly poor standard. This will happen if derelict or other poor quality open spaces are enhanced while the maintenance of others, initially of higher quality, is cut back in order to reduce maintenance costs and allow the diversion of resources to those which were formerly derelict or near derelict.

#### *The Use of NPPG11 in Planning Appeals*

2.39 At our request, the Planning Reporters' Unit undertook a trawl of delegated appeal decisions over a twelve month period to the end of September 2000. It found only six cases related to open space issues. All demonstrated that Reporters consistently refer to the policy guidelines in NPPG11. Of the six cases, three involved the change of use of small areas of largely neglected open space in housing areas to garden ground. While these cases were individually relatively unimportant, they illustrated the need for developers and planning authorities to consider carefully the way in which the unbuilt parts of new housing developments are divided between public and private open space. Developers will normally seek to dispose of all their interests in land on the completion of their developments and this can sometimes lead to "space left over".

#### **Other Uses of NPPG11**

2.40 NPPGs are intended for a wider audience than planners. There is however a fairly patchy and often very limited awareness of and interest in NPPG11's recommendations amongst officials in those council departments concerned with asset management rather than planning. Awareness of NPPG11, and its recommendations, seems highest in those environment, leisure and recreation, outdoor services, land services or other council departments which work closely with their colleagues in planning; and probably lowest where the converse is true. This was well summed up by one of the planning officers interviewed:

*“The general issue is that the planning function and operational control are divided between several departments. The fine words in NPPG11 don’t cut much ice with non-planners.”*

2.41 The main ways in which council departments other than planning use NPPG11 are largely opportunistic rather than policy-driven and include:

- as a means of raising the political profile of open space, especially during the budget process
- as support when arguing for resources
- as a means of defending specific open spaces when there are proposals to sell them to generate a capital receipt; in this sense, NPPG11 can be seen as providing a fallback when other arguments look as though they may fail.

2.42 Sportscotland also makes extensive use of NPPG11 in this way when responding to applications for planning permission for the development of playing fields and sports pitches.

## OTHER NPPGS

2.43 The *Review of National Planning Policy Guidelines* (Land Use Consultants, 1999) identified that there is a high degree of internal consistency within the NPPG series. This more detailed review confirms those issues most relevant to open space planning which appear in several NPPGs.

- The concept of **sustainable development**. Urban open space can clearly contribute to sustainability, and other Executive objectives such as economic development and social justice, in various ways such as enhancing the urban environment, helping to protect and enhance wildlife habitats and offering an accessible local alternative to the need to travel to more distant countryside for recreation.
- There is a growing assertion that environmental quality is, or can be, a key factor in **economic development** and **urban regeneration**. The condition of open space is obviously a key indicator of environmental quality; indeed, it is a key factor in the overall character of an area, exemplified by Glasgow’s sobriquet as the “Dear Green Place”.
- There is a growing recognition that carefully designed landscape features, such as areas of woodland, can help to modify micro-climates and therefore create **economic benefits** for individuals and organisations, for example by sheltering buildings and therefore reducing their energy consumption.
- There is an evolving view that while many desirable outcomes can be identified nationally, the means of delivering them must be determined locally – an alternative version of “think globally, act locally”. This need for local thinking is reflected further in the instruction to local authorities to consult and work in **partnership** with an ever-wider range of groups and individuals. There is, however, little or no recognition of the resource implications of this for local authorities.
- There is growing emphasis on the importance of the **quality** and **accessibility** of open space in towns and cities

- There is a recognition that **management** and **maintenance** issues are important, and of the need to consider a range of management options, although they are not statutory planning matters.
- There is growing emphasis on the important contribution which different types of open space can make to **wildlife and habitat conservation** in urban areas. The promotion of biodiversity is becoming a general aim.
- There is progressively greater emphasis on the development of **green networks** within urban areas. The term is not mentioned in NPPG11 but is repeated several times in both NPPG14, *Natural Heritage* and NPPG17, *Transport and Planning*. It is also used in paragraphs 48 and 49 of PAN 60, *Planning for Natural Heritage* (Scottish Executive, 2000), while paragraph 18 of PAN 57, *Transport and Planning* (Scottish Executive, 1999), refers to “*networks of paths, trails and green spaces*”.
- There is growing emphasis on the inter-relationship between the various topics in NPPGs and the need to adopt a **more integrated approach** to planning. At the same time, local authorities are being urged to prepare or contribute to an ever-increasing number of non-statutory strategies and other plans. For example, apart from development plans, NPPG14 and NPPG17 refer to Local Biodiversity Action Plans (paragraph 18 of NPPG14), Indicative Forestry Strategies (paragraph 54 of NPPG14 and paragraph 40 of NPPG17), Nature Conservation Strategies (paragraph 72 of NPPG14), Local Transport Strategies (paragraph 2 of NPPG17), Road Traffic Reduction Reports (paragraph 74 of NPPG17), Air Quality Management Area Action Plans (paragraph 9 of NPPG17) and Walking Strategies (paragraph 46 of NPPG17). This may make achieving an integrated approach more and more complex if different local authority departments pursue their own agendas and priorities against a background of dwindling resources. This problem is being exacerbated by the trend for the government/Executive to allocate funds to local authorities which are ring-fenced for specific, centrally-determined purposes while tightly controlling their existing budgets.

## CONCLUSIONS

2.44 The key conclusion from this review is that councils will not be able fully to reflect the comprehensive policy advice in NPPG11 until they undertake comprehensive open space audits. Without such audits, they lack the information they will need to make informed judgements on a wide range of open space issues, such as appropriate local provision standards; whether particular playing fields or sports pitches can be redeveloped for some other purpose; and the true value of existing open spaces such as urban and country parks.

### **Recommendation 2.1**

National bodies such as SNH and **sport**scotland should consider providing funding for open space audits by councils. These audits should be subject to the following conditions:

- 1 councils should agree to use the results as a corporate and not a departmental resource
- 2 councils should use a computer-based geographical information system to record the results of the audit
- 3 councils should give a clear commitment to using the audit and analysis of it to prepare local standards for all forms of open space for inclusion in their development plans and an open space strategy
- 4 councils should give a clear commitment that they will update and maintain the database of open spaces resulting from the initial audit on an ongoing basis.

## CHAPTER 3      EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES

### INTRODUCTION

3.1      NPPGs, Circulars and Planning Advice Notes (PANs) set out the Executive's views on the national policy framework within which local authorities should prepare their development plans. But effective planning is not only a matter of reflecting Executive policy; if it was, at worst, policy would stand still and, at best, change could come only from the centre.

3.2      Instead, feedback from the implementation of policy, coupled with new thinking from individuals and organisations pushing at the boundaries of good practice, should help to drive the development of national policy. It is vitally important that the views and experience of those responsible for the design, management and maintenance of open space, and especially the local communities for whom open space is provided, are brought into this feedback loop. The long term quality and use of open space depends on them much more than on the planning system. The continued use of the NPFA Standard, however, suggests that feedback is rarely used in the preparation of open spaces planning policies.

3.3      This section therefore summarises a number of important emerging opportunities related to the planning, design and management of open space. Local authorities, and their partners, will need to take all of them into account when framing both development plan policies and proposals and open space management plans. They are:

- growing recognition of the cross-cutting importance of open space in urban renaissance
- new sources of capital funding;
- Community Planning and Best Value
- community involvement and participation.

### OPEN SPACE AS A CROSS-CUTTING ISSUE

3.4      Open space can be seen as a key cross-cutting issue within the general framework of sustainability. It is able to make wide-ranging contributions to the promotion of individual and community health and social inclusion in ways which are not only free from environmental disbenefits, but can actually absorb various forms of pollution created by other sources. Lakes and ponds as part of open space can also be planned to hold water run-off and therefore help to prevent flooding or minimise its impact.

### Climate Change

3.5      Climate change is, according to the government's Urban White Paper (DETR, 2000), "*one of the greatest environmental threats facing the world today*". Following the international Kyoto Agreement of December 1997, the Government committed the UK to reducing carbon dioxide production to 20% below the 1990 level by 2010. Every second, over 200 tonnes of carbon dioxide are released to the atmosphere (Audit Commission, 1997). Transport currently accounts for some 23% of carbon dioxide emissions in the UK and is also the fastest growing source of these emissions (Scottish Executive, February 2000). No other



forms of everyday transport produce less pollution than walking and cycling. Accordingly, the Executive encourages councils to promote them as the most appropriate forms of travel for short journeys, especially as it is over short distances that vehicle engines produce the highest levels of emissions per mile. The most attractive walking and cycling routes are likely to be those which pass through well designed and managed open spaces rather than beside busy, potentially dangerous and polluted roads. Large employers are already working with planning authorities and their workforce to prepare Green Travel Plans based on initiatives such as car sharing, the use of public transport and walking and cycling to work. For example, supermarket giant Asda announced in October 2000 that it is to offer all its 100,000 employees the opportunity of buying a bicycle at cost price “to promote fitness and reduce pollution” (*The Scotsman*, 9 October 2000).

### **Improvements in local air quality**

3.6 Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 requires local authorities to review and assess air quality in their areas. Where the air quality objectives set in the UK National Air Quality Strategy (Cmnd 3587) and Air Quality Regulations 1997 (SI No 3043) are unlikely to be met by 2005, they must declare an “Air Quality Management Area” and develop an action plan. As vegetated open space is a carbon sink it can help to reduce the impact of some forms of air pollution. For example, one hectare of urban park can remove 600 kg of carbon dioxide from the air and convert it into 600 kg of oxygen in a 12 hour period (evidence to the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee, 1999). Alternatively, twenty trees can absorb the pollution an average family car creates while travelling 60 miles (Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, 1999).

### **The Promotion of Biodiversity**

3.7 The UK’s Bio-diversity Action Plan (Cmnd 2428) depends upon both the countryside and vegetated open space in urban areas for its success.

### **Economic Development**

3.8 Attractive open spaces help to improve the appearance of urban areas and have long been seen as an important component of economic development. For example:

*“While other cities are expending fabulous amounts in the improvement of parks, squares, gardens and promenades, what should we do? To be behind in these matters would not only be discreditable to our city, but positively injurious to our commercial prosperity and in direct opposition to the wishes of our citizens .... The area of our city is too small to allow the laying out of large tracts of land for public parks and it behooves us to improve the small portions that are left to us for such purposes.”* (Boston City Council, 1859, quoted in Greenhalgh and Walpole, 1996)

### **Urban Regeneration**

3.9 Urban parks have been instrumental in the regeneration of many towns and cities including New York, Barcelona and Paris (Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee, 1999) as well as Hamburg, Atlanta and Boston (EDAW, 1994). In Scotland, many areas, but especially Glasgow, have a proud heritage of high quality, high profile and

highly popular urban parks. Scottish Enterprise's "Competitive Places" programme emphasises the importance of environmental quality as an essential component of economic development. In addition:

*"To achieve urban integration means thinking of urban open space not as an isolated unit – be it a street, park or a square – but as a vital part of the urban landscape with its own specific set of functions. Public space should be conceived of as an outdoor room within a neighbourhood, somewhere to relax and enjoy the urban experience, a venue for a range of different activities, from outdoor eating to street entertainment; from sport and play areas to a venue for civic or political functions; and most important of all as a place for walking or sitting-out. Public spaces work best when they establish a direct relationship between the space and the people who live and work around it."*  
(Urban Task Force, 1999)

## **Social Inclusion**

3.10 Urban parks and other public open spaces are one of the few publicly-provided leisure facilities for which there is no admission charge and using them requires no special skills, clothing, equipment or knowledge. Moreover, most houses are within a fairly short distance of a local park or other open space. It follows that parks and open space can offer an attractive means of assisting social inclusion. However, this will not happen without effective management. Parks and other open spaces used for drinking or sleeping rough rapidly become *"places where local social breakdown may be most displayed"* and *"too much open space, in the wrong place, can destroy the necessary densities and social mixes of urban life that make it socially sustainable"* (Comedia with Demos, 1995). Dilapidated open space can therefore actually contribute to social exclusion. The answer is careful management and in particular the maintenance of attractive landscaping and the promotion of events with wide local appeal to make parks and other open spaces "busy". For example, Tollcross Park, in the East End of Glasgow, hosts over 150 community events each year. The *Glasgow and Clyde Valley Joint Structure Plan* (Glasgow and Clyde Valley Joint Structure Plan Committee, 2000) identifies the variation in environmental standards as a major factor reinforcing patterns of social inequality and therefore highlights environmental renewal as an important part of the social inclusion programme. It also highlights the role played by the quality of the environment in the choice of location by business investors and industrialists.

## **Land Remediation**

3.11 The demise of much of Scotland's heavy industry has left a legacy of derelict land, some of which is so contaminated that it cannot economically be reclaimed for development. Where the cost of rehabilitating land to make it developable is unacceptably high, a much better solution than allowing it to remain derelict will be to convert it to open space. Some long established and highly valued urban parks, such as Bellahouston Park in Glasgow, were created at least in part because land was considered unsuitable for development. In some circumstances, it may also be possible to allow an existing area of open space to be developed and do a "land swap", without any significant change in the total amount of open space or green belt in an area, as done by the Scottish Greenbelt Company in the case study below. Further details of the role of the Scottish Greenbelt Company are given in paragraph 7.49.

## **CASE STUDY: HALLSIDE RENEWABLE ENERGY PARK, LANARKSHIRE**

Hallside Steelworks closed in 1979 after almost 100 years of steel-making, leaving a derelict site of some 33 hectares covered with concrete foundations, open basements and contaminated slag heaps. In addition, the surface and sub-surface material were contaminated with heavy metals such as arsenic, lead and zinc. Initial estimates of the cost of reclamation were anything up to about £30 million.

In response to the need for additional greenfield housing in the area, the then strategic planning authority, Strathclyde Regional Council, agreed to the release of greenbelt land to the south of Hallside on condition that the steelworks site would be restored to a greenbelt use. As the proposed housing site contained two large colliery waste heaps, this provided material which could be spread on the Hallside site to create a cap and then greened. As well as the reclamation of derelict land and provision of much needed new housing, therefore, the development also resulted in the removal of a local eyesore.

The Scottish Greenbelt Company's basic concept for Hallside is as a renewable energy park with public access. It fertilised newly created fields and peripheral woodland by the application of some 10,000 tonnes of treated sewage sludge and planted them with "fuel crops" – mainly willow and alder. The company will farm these crops on a four-year rotation and convert them into electricity of sufficient commercial value to fund the management of the area. In addition, the 250,000 trees planted on the site will extract many of the contaminants from the soil by a process known as phytoremediation.

## **Health and Relaxation**

3.12 Transport and health strategies both advocate walking and cycling as healthy activities. In addition, agencies such as **sportscotland** promote the health benefits of taking part in sport, although sport probably does not contribute as much to social inclusion as is often assumed (Centre for Leisure Research, 1999). There is also a general consensus that relaxation, contemplation and passive recreation are effective relievers of stress (Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee, 1999). In addition, the White Paper *Towards a Healthier Scotland* (Scottish Executive, 1999) identifies a clear link between poor health standards and degraded environmental conditions – a concept which would be very familiar to those pioneering Victorians who viewed the need to reduce urban overcrowding and disease as a large part of the justification for public parks. It also "*reflects the growing convergence between leisure, health and urban policy*" (Comedia with Demos, 1995).

## **Environmental Education**

3.13 Many young people display a keen interest in environmental issues and environmental education is high on the agenda of most schools. Many adults also demonstrate their interest in a wide range of environmental issues in various ways. For example, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has around 70,000 Scottish members and interpretation centres in country parks and gardens such as Inverewe in the western Highlands, managed by the National Trust for Scotland, attract many visitors. Urban open space has a key role to play in providing an accessible "outdoor classroom".

## Protection of the Countryside

3.14 Ready access to parks and other forms of local open space can reduce travel by motorised vehicle from urban to adjacent countryside areas: “*A better environment in our towns and cities not only enhances the quality of life for those of us who live there but also helps to relieve pressure on the countryside*” (DoE, 1995)

3.15 As open space is so important, it should be relevant to both a variety of departments within local authorities and a potentially wide variety of other agencies, organisations and individuals. Dundee’s Public Open Space Strategy, for example, involved eleven different Council departments as well as outside agencies.

### Recommendation 3.1

Councils should give greater priority to adequate revenue funding for open space in recognition of the contribution it can make to the achievement of wide-ranging strategic aims at both national and the local level.

## NEW SOURCES OF CAPITAL FUNDING

3.16 Ironically, at the same time as the revenue funding of open space from local authority budgets is becoming critical (see Chapter Four), new capital funding for parks and other areas of open space is becoming available. The most important sources of new funding are the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme and three of the Lottery Funds: the New Opportunities Fund (NOF); the **sportscotland** Lottery Fund (SSLF); and the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

### Lottery Funds

3.17 The NOF ([www.nof.org.uk](http://www.nof.org.uk)) is providing a total of **£14.3m** for grants to “greenspaces and sustainable communities” in Scotland over the period to the end of 2002. Full details of the scheme are due to be announced in Spring 2001, but the Fund will be working through Scottish Natural Heritage ([www.snh.org.uk](http://www.snh.org.uk)), Forward Scotland ([www.transformscotland.org.uk](http://www.transformscotland.org.uk)) and Highlands and Islands Enterprise ([www.hie.co.uk](http://www.hie.co.uk)). These grants, for which local authorities, community-based groups and other not-for-profit organisations can apply, can be used for the creation, acquisition and improvement of green spaces, especially in disadvantaged areas. In addition, the Fund has allocated **£34.5m** to Scotland for “Healthy Living Centres”. These are not defined, but will consist of projects which promote good health in its broadest sense, helping people of all ages improve their well-being and get the most out of life. Finally, at the end of 2000, the NOF announced that it will be allocating **£86m** for grants to schools, over a three year period from September 2001, which can be used to provide or improve sports facilities such as playing fields.

3.18 The **sportscotland** Lottery Fund ([www.sportscotland.org.uk](http://www.sportscotland.org.uk)), has an annual budget of approximately **£7.6m** for capital grants in its Sports Facilities - School and Community Focus - Programme, occasionally with time-limited revenue support. It gives particular priority to projects which will enable and promote community use of school sports facilities or are located in deprived urban or rural communities and aimed at those with limited opportunities to participate in sport. Local authorities, schools and local clubs can apply for grants under the programme.

3.19 The HLF ([www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk)) provides grants, mainly to local authorities although other bodies such as educational institutions, charities and voluntary bodies can also apply for funding, for the improvement and restoration of historic parks and gardens, including town squares and garden cemeteries. To date, most of these grants have been through its **Urban Parks Programme** (UPP). In this context, “historic” means over 30 years old. It launched the UPP in 1996 as a three year scheme with a UK-wide budget of **£50m**. In response to the demand from local authorities, however, and a certain amount of prodding from the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee of the House of Commons, the scheme has been extended indefinitely (but see paragraph 3.20 below). By mid-2000 grants of over **£230m** had been awarded to help restore over 150 historic parks, an average of around **£1.4m** per park. Most of this funding has been used for repairs to parks infrastructure, such as walls, railings, paths, drives, drains and buildings, or the replacement of worn-out or missing features and facilities, such as cafes, playgrounds and toilets (ILAM, 2000). Details of a sample of grants to Scottish parks is given in Annex B.

3.20 The UPP has now been subsumed within a “Historic Landscapes” banner and can provide capital grants to restore, regenerate, or enhance public access to urban parks and other historic landscapes. Historic townscapes are also eligible for funding, providing a possible source of funding for hard surfaced civic spaces and historic streets. The HLF will not fund the creation of entirely new parks or greenspaces which are mainly playing fields or sports grounds. Where a project meets its criteria, however, the HLF will consider funding part of the cost of:

- landscape restoration;
- repair of historic structures and buildings such as fountains or bandstands;
- repair of boundary features such as gates and railings;
- repair and renewal of paths;
- refurbishment of park furniture, such as seats, lighting and signage;
- long-term planting schemes such as trees and shrubberies and restoration of historic garden designs;
- reinstatement of vanished features or structures;
- refurbishment of playgrounds;
- visitor facilities, where these are strictly appropriate to the conservation of the site and its identity and the volume and nature of visitor use; the Fund gives priority to the re-use of existing buildings over new ones; and
- costs of employing new park managers for up to five years, where the post will become permanent.

## CASE STUDY: TOLLCROSS PARK, GLASGOW

The former Glasgow Corporation purchased the land which now makes up Tollcross Park in 1897 for the sum of £29,000. Over the latter part of the twentieth century, however, both the landscape and the various buildings within the park deteriorated and use declined.



The Children's Farm allows city children to interact with farm animals



The restored Winter Gardens



There are over 150 community events each year in the Park

The first step towards the regeneration of the park came with Glasgow's Parks and Open Spaces Strategy in 1997. This designated Tollcross as a District Park, defined in the strategy as *"providing quality open spaces, but will have an attraction, resource or potential resource which attracts visitors from other parts of the city."* The second was an application by the City Council to the HLF for a grant of some £1.8m towards the cost of restoring the park, estimated at a little over £3m. Historic Scotland also part funded the restoration of historic features, with the balance coming from the Council.

The keys to the successful HLF application were the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy, which provided the context within which the application was set and clearly defined the role of the park within the city; and a comprehensive plan for the regeneration drawn up by the Council's Land Services Department following an historic landscape survey.

The plan is based on the restoration of much of the original design and zones the park into a number of distinct areas: the Winter Garden and Ornamental Parkland; the Glen; the Mansion House and Deer Park; the bowling greens area; a sports area; an estate area; and the East Lodge and Animal Centre.

Within these zones, the regeneration includes: the creation of new formal garden areas in front of the restored and extended Winter Gardens (which had at one time been within days of demolition, but now extended to provide a café and multi-purpose space); the provision of a small bandstand; the replanting of avenues of trees; the thinning of other areas to restore vistas as originally designed; the upgrading of children's play areas and the Children's Farm; and the creation of an Environment Centre.



### Case Study: Tollcross Park (continued)



The restored East Lodge

To improve users' perception of safety, the Council is also resurfacing paths and installing new path lighting, repairing bridges and providing new park furniture.

In summer, the park hosts International Rose Trials, which attract visitors from all over the world. In addition, Glasgow City Council has provided the Tollcross Park Leisure Centre, with its 50m pool, on the edge of it. The works will be complete in spring 2002.

In parallel with the regeneration of the physical features of the park, the Council has appointed a Park Development Officer, partly funded for a 5-year period by the HLF, and based a team of five Countryside Rangers there. The Development Officer has worked with the local community to develop an expanded range of community events and children's activities, as a result of which there will be around 150 community events in the Park during 2001. In addition, the Development Officer has taken the initiative to form a "Friends of Tollcross Park", composed mainly of representatives of organised groups which use it, to help with planning park activities and events.

### The Landfill Tax Credit Scheme

3.21 The government introduced a tax on waste disposal at landfill sites in October 1996 with the intention of encouraging businesses and consumers to produce less waste, to dispose of less in landfill sites, and to recover value from waste, for example by recycling. To support the environmental aims of the tax, landfill operators can gain a credit of 90% of any funding they give to certain organisations for environmental projects, up to a maximum of 20% of their total tax liability in any year. Broadly speaking, these organisations must be independent of both local authorities and the landfill site operator and registered with Entrust ([www.entrust.org.uk](http://www.entrust.org.uk)). The other 10% can be paid by the landfill operator (although this comes off their profits, a surprising number have provided this funding) or by third parties such as local businesses, local authorities, voluntary bodies and charities. This gives local environmental bodies the opportunity to lever significant funding from what may appear to be relatively small amounts of private sector sponsorship. Overall, environmental bodies throughout the UK are receiving total funding of around **£7m** each month from the tax. Projects eligible to receive funding relate to:

- the reclamation, remediation or restoration of old landfill sites;
- action to reduce pollution or remedy the effects of previous pollution;
- education, research and development to encourage more sustainable waste management;
- remediation, restoration and amenity improvement of past waste management sites or other industrial activities which, in their present state, are not able to support economic or social activity;
- improvements to public parks and other amenities in the vicinity of landfill sites (loosely interpreted as within about 10 miles);

- maintenance or restoration of buildings with religious, historic or architectural interest, provided this helps to protect the environment; and
- the creation of wildlife habitats or conservation areas in the vicinity of a landfill site.

3.22 While this new capital funding is obviously much needed, there is an obvious danger that it will allow local authorities and community-based organisations to create new or enhance existing greenspaces without having the resources subsequently to manage and maintain them. The result is that capital funding could become a unsustainable substitute for revenue, with a cycle of slow decline brought about by inadequate revenue funding followed by a capital “blitz” and then more slow decline. While the Funds require applicants to demonstrate that they will provide adequate revenue support for capital projects, they also acknowledge that there is no realistic way of ensuring that this will be delivered.

## COMMUNITY PLANNING AND BEST VALUE

3.23 Community Planning has its origins in the Labour Party’s policy statement for local government, *Renewing Democracy, Rebuilding Communities* (Labour Party, 1995). In Scotland, five local authorities - Edinburgh, Highland, Perth and Kinross, South Lanarkshire and Stirling - took part in “Pathfinder Projects” which were originally intended to focus on developing new approaches to consulting local communities about their local authority’s strategies and service planning and delivery. Community Planning has been defined (Rogers and others, 1999) as:

*“A multi-organisational, community-based process, led by the Council, for creating a shared vision of community-identified priorities expressed in an action plan which demonstrates the commitment and support of the organisations and groups involved.”*

3.24 The thinking behind Community Plans is that their vision and priorities should be set not by the Council itself, but by the Council **and its many partners** in the public, private and voluntary sectors, so that **all** local resources are used to best effect. This obviously has major implications for the way in which councils operate and the work of elected councillors – and potentially the Scottish Executive and Parliament as well. Some planners will argue that Structure Plans already set the vision for local authority areas and have a statutory role in terms of land use which Community Plans do not. Others will argue that their Council’s Corporate Plan fulfils this role. However, paragraph 72 of NPPG1 (Scottish Executive, 2000) states explicitly that one of the roles of the development plan is to deliver the land use elements of the Community Plan, indicating that in this respect, at least, the Community Plan will drive the Development Plan.

3.25 The emphasis being given by government to Community Planning means, in effect, that the strategic vision in the Community Plan should become the “glue” which binds all other plans and strategies together. Ultimately – although it is too early to be sure – it could affect the role and content of the Structure Plan.

3.26 Each of the five Scottish Community Planning Pathfinder Projects included community well-being in some form in their strategic vision; four included social inclusion;



and three sustainability or sustainable development. They also agreed (Rogers and others, 2000):

*“that realising the vision was likely to be more difficult than agreeing and expressing it. In that sense there was an acceptance the Community Plan was only a first step in the process and that a great deal of work lay ahead in comparing and rationalising the multitude of plans within the Councils and within their partner organisations.”*

3.27 Although the Community Planning process will demand rigour in constructing arguments in favour of the allocation of scarce resources to open space provision and management, it also brings a great opportunity. This is because the Community Planning process will involve not just the local authority itself but also its partners in the private and voluntary sectors and local communities. The more that these other agencies can be persuaded of the value of open space, and how it can contribute to the achievement of the strategic vision, the greater the potential to overcome the threats identified in Chapter 4.

3.28 Accordingly, those responsible for open space planning, design, management and maintenance in local authorities and their partners will have to find effective ways of maximising the impact of open space in terms of delivering the Community Plan’s strategic vision.

### **Recommendation 3.2**

Local authorities and their partners should reflect in Community Plan the importance of open space as a cross-cutting issue capable of supporting and assisting the renaissance of urban areas.

3.29 As discussed in Chapter 2, this is likely particularly to raise the importance of **quality** issues and, conversely, reduce the importance of the **quantity** of open space in any area. Indeed, there may be significantly increased pressures to put areas of poor quality, unwanted or unloved open space to better use, especially if this will free resources which can be used to enhance other, more important areas.

3.30 Measuring quality is a lot less easy than measuring quantity and local authorities and their partners will need to find ways of defining the required characteristics of particular open spaces and therefore setting qualitative benchmarks against which specific areas of local open space can be tested. These qualities and characteristics can come only from a clear definition of the primary and secondary purposes of each and every single area of open space in an area. Further information on how this can be done is given later in this report.

## **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION**

3.31 In spite of the obvious decline of many greenspaces in towns and cities, little arouses as much local hostility as proposals to develop areas of open space, even if they are neglected or not particularly well used. At a public meeting in summer 2000 at which the prospective developers of Edinburgh University’s Cramond Campus explained their proposals for a major housing development, every resident who spoke was opposed to them, although they had been the subject of considerable prior discussion between the developers and local planners.

Arguably one of the problems was that the developers had insisted their proposals remain confidential until shortly before they intended to submit a planning application, with the result that they were interpreted as *a fait accompli*. A much better approach would have been for the developers to consult and involve the local community long *before* they prepared their proposals.

3.32 Local authorities are currently trying to find effective ways of involving their communities more in issues ranging from their Community Plan to the delivery of services, although the move to cabinet government may actually make this more difficult. In terms of open space, the most important challenge they face is to find ways of promoting and enabling long term community involvement and participation in planning, design, management and maintenance. There are usually two critical benefits from this. First, local community groups may be able to access sources of funding not available to local authorities – Landfill Tax Credits, for example (see paragraph 3.21 above). Second, when councils involve beforehand rather than consult afterwards, local people come to realise there are no easy answers to their problems; eventually, they may move from thinking that “they should do something” to “we should do something”.

### **Recommendation 3.3**

Councils should give priority to finding new and effective ways of assisting and enabling community groups to access and use funding which they cannot themselves obtain.

3.33 Already, however, there are clear signs of success. For example:

- Glasgow City Council, the National Trust for Scotland and many local amenity or heritage societies have trained local volunteers so that they can conduct guided walks around historic parks and gardens;
- The City of Edinburgh Council is considering creating “Friends” organisations for at least some of its 104 parks; and
- The Castlemilk Partnership, as in the case study below.

### **CASE STUDY: CASTLEMILK**



The traditional image of Castlemilk

Castlemilk has long been known as a major area of Council housing, and very little else, on the southern periphery of Glasgow which suffers from severe social and economic deprivation. What is much less well known is that it was built on the site of a historic designed landscape which had been developed over several centuries around the fifteenth century Cassiltoun tower house. This was taken over in the seventeenth century by the Stewart family, which moved from the Water of Milk a few miles from Dumfries – hence Castlemilk.

### Case Study: Castlemilk (continued)



One of the restored paths through the estate



The landscape around the loch



New private housing, provided since the environmental improvements

At one time during the seventies, Castlemilk housed a population of approximately 45,000 people in an area of around two square miles, with the housing blocks located in such a way as to avoid building in the wooded valley running through the estate. Vandalism, illicit drinkers, fly-tipping, burnt-out cars, storm damage and neglect - and a high profile murder - subsequently led to most of the local community turning its back on the landscape. Perhaps because of this, large numbers of trees survived, although rhododendron bushes and other invasive species largely took over at ground level. Progressively, the original designed landscape disappeared from view.

Over the past decade or so, the Castlemilk Partnership has sought to tackle the area's most urgent problems. Starting from an assumption that the key need was to renovate the existing fifties housing, it quickly concluded that demolition and redevelopment were a much better option which also created the opportunity to change the whole nature of the area. The main emphasis in the past decade has been on attracting community-based housing associations and private developers in order to enhance the quality of housing in the area.

A critical element in achieving this objective has been to upgrade the local environment. The need for this was recognised by the former Strathclyde Regional Council, Glasgow District Council, Scottish Homes and the Glasgow Development Agency and they commissioned an Environmental Action Plan in 1993-4. Subsequently, the Castlemilk Partnership, Glasgow City Council and Scottish Homes formed the Castlemilk Environment Trust to implement this plan, initially seen as requiring expenditure of around £660,000 on approximately twenty sites over a three year period.

In the main, the work of the Trust has concentrated on improving the "legibility" and "permeability" of the area by tidying up the neglected landscape, creating paths, gateways and landmarks and reinforcing its basic structure. Increasingly, the Trust is also involved in enhancing the area through public art and is preparing a public art strategy with support from the Scottish Arts Council.

### **Case Study: Castlemilk (continued)**

Increasingly, the Trust is also seeking to involve local schools and school age children in order to teach children to grow things and respect their local environment. This has been greatly helped by the work of two local teachers, who have produced a resource pack for schools. The Castlemilk Partnership has also diverted resources previously paid to maintenance contractors for litter picking and similar work to local schools - if they get their pupils to undertake the work. This has helped local people to make the connection between their own actions and the availability of resources in local schools. It has also had the important by-product of helping to reduce vandalism and fly-tipping.

The Trust's work is funded from a variety of sources, including the Heritage Lottery Fund, Landfill Tax Credits, the Forestry Commission and Scottish Homes.

3.34 While there can be significant benefits from doing so, involving and working closely with local communities is time consuming and rarely easy, at least in the early stages. Many local people have unrealistic expectations and, after finding out the facts, may be less willing to become involved. For example, some councils have sought to transfer responsibility for some of their heavily subsidised pitches, tennis courts or bowling greens to the voluntary clubs which use them. Against this, research for **sportscotland** in the former Tayside region (Kit Campbell Associates, 1990), found that the maintenance costs of a sample of grass pitches ranged from £12 to £92 per hour of use. At the time, the price charged by the then City of Dundee District Council, including access to changing and showers, was under £4 per hour. Unless the subsidy is also transferred – in which case there is no real saving to the local authority – it may be difficult to persuade clubs to take over responsibility for facilities. A number of established clubs using Council-owned facilities in Dundee have refused, on financial grounds, to take over responsibility for bowling greens.

3.35 There are also two other issues:

- Unions representing grounds maintenance staff may oppose the transfer of land to local groups on the basis that the local authority is trying simply to save money by cutting jobs
- The leasing of publicly-owned assets or transfer of services to the voluntary or charitable sector reduces the role of local politicians, some of whom may be concerned over loss of democratic control as those involved may not have to stand for election at intervals. It can also make it more difficult to prepare a local open space strategy and subsequently implement it.

3.36 This said, involving the local community in the management and maintenance of areas of open space is essential; the key is not to expect more than local people can realistically deliver and to provide real help and support. For example, Dundee City Council and local residents have created a “Friends of Barnhill Rock Garden” organisation which undertakes part of the maintenance of the Garden and has supporters in many parts of the world. It is described in the case study below.

### **CASE STUDY: BARNHILL ROCK GARDEN, BROUGHTY FERRY**



Barnhill Rock Garden occupies an area of some two hectares on the south-facing shore of the Firth of Tay at Broughty Ferry. It is sited on part of a former 9-hole golf course laid out over a century ago by Tom Morris at a total cost of around £80. The last remnant of the course, the clubhouse of the Broughty Ferry Ladies Golf Club, was demolished in 1993 following a fire started by vandals.

The creation of the Garden began in 1955 when the Council cleared an area of volcanic rock which had at one time been the shore line – the high water mark is slowly receding as the Scottish land mass tilts.



Unfortunately, the cost of maintaining the Garden became unsustainable and the Council announced its closure. Local protests culminated in residents forming the “Friends of Barnhill Rock Garden” to take over some of the maintenance responsibilities. As many of them are elderly, they are best able to do fairly light tasks such as weeding so the Council provides a full time gardener and trainees to help them with heavier jobs such as digging. The work of the volunteers has reduced the costs met by the Council and allowed the Garden to remain intact. The Friends have also helped to enhance the Garden and it now has a number of beds containing selections of plants from countries such as New Zealand, Thailand, Spain and the Netherlands. Friends bring seeds back from holidays abroad and the Scottish Rock Garden Club and Dundee Botanic Garden have donated other plants.

The garden has become so popular that it is now marked by a “white on brown” sign – allowed only for facilities which attract at least 75,000 visitors each year - on the main Dundee-Monifieth road. The Friends have around 300 members, with a number from countries such as the USA and New Zealand who have visited it as tourists.

3.37 *Quality Greenspaces in Residential Areas* (Ironside Farrar, 1999) highlights a number of other ways in which councils can seek to involve their local communities in open space planning, design and management, including:

- Representative groups
- Public meetings
- Workshops and special interest group sessions
- Market research
- Facilitators.

3.38 The Scottish Executive Central Research Unit published research entitled 'Assessment of Innovative Approaches to Testing Community Opinion' in 2000, which reviews the effectiveness and appropriateness of new techniques for community consultation.

## 4 CHALLENGES TO THE FUTURE OF HIGH QUALITY OPEN SPACES

### INTRODUCTION

4.1 As well as the opportunities summarised in the last chapter, there are also a number of significant challenges to be overcome. This chapter therefore reviews the most significant of them and suggests how they can be tackled.

### DECLINING RESOURCES

4.2 The first and most obvious challenge is the decline in the revenue funding available to local authorities for open space management and maintenance. This has arisen in two main ways:

- cutbacks in revenue expenditure, leading to reduced maintenance, staff cut-backs and de-skilling
- councils taking on responsibility for additional areas of open space without a commensurate increase in resources.

#### Cutbacks in Revenue Expenditure

4.3 It is not easy to obtain valid trend information on the revenue spending by Scottish local authorities on the maintenance of parks and open spaces over time. Different types of open space are often held on different committee accounts, so that there is a lack of both corporate data for individual councils and comparative data for different councils. In addition, the re-organisation of Scottish local government in 1996 resulted in sufficient change to the way in which councils record their expenditure that pre-1996 and post-1996 figures are not always comparable. This said, summary figures from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) for 1987/8, 1990/1 and 1996/7 to 1998/9 show a significant reduction in the total Scottish local authority expenditure on the maintenance of parks and open spaces through Leisure and Recreation budgets:

**Table 4.1: Recent Changes in Open Space Maintenance Spending by Scottish Local Authorities**

	<b>Actual</b>	<b>At 1998-9 Values</b>	<b>Year/year change</b>
1987-8	£104.5m	£165m	-
1990-1	£134.7m	£168m	+1.8%
1996-7	£142.2m	£155m	-7.7%
1997-8	£124.0m	£127m	-18.1%
1998-9	£124.5m	£125m	-1.6%
<b>Total change</b>		<b>-£40m</b>	<b>-23.8%</b>

Source: CIPFA Rating Reviews. The pre and post 1996-7 figure may not be directly comparable because of the re-organisation of Scottish local government. The conversion to 1998-9 values has been done using the index of retail prices.

4.4 It is therefore clear that the financial resources available to councils for open space have reduced significantly. As a result, councils are being forced to make increasingly difficult decisions as the extent of their responsibilities extends ever wider in response to legislation and the needs of their local communities. The maintenance of open space cannot easily be cut back by almost 25% in real terms in a decade, and even less easily by nearly 20% in three years, without significant changes to maintenance regimes. However:

*“Savings made in maintenance costs in many areas – often by greatly simplifying maintenance regimes, de-skilling and employing maintenance contractors rather than gardeners – have not generally been re-invested in parks and other open spaces” (Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee, 1999).*

### **Additional Maintenance Responsibilities**

4.5 While there do not appear to be any hard facts, it is clear that some councils have taken on considerable additional responsibilities in relation to open space maintenance over the past two decades or so which have not been matched by any increase in resources. This has arisen in two main ways:

- **As a result of new housing development.** Until recently, many councils had a policy of adopting and maintaining newly created areas of open space in housing developments. Some, but by no means all, also sought a commuted sum from developers to fund future maintenance. In some areas, these sums have been sufficient to fund maintenance for only a few years, at the end of which the Council has had to meet the costs of maintenance from its normal revenue budget. In others, the commuted sums have simply become a part of wider council budgets and used for other purposes, unrelated to open space maintenance. In either case, councils have ended up responsible for additional areas of open space without a commensurate increase in resources.
- **Through the rehabilitation of derelict land.** The former Scottish Development Agency spent large capital sums improving the appearance of areas of derelict land, especially in the East End of Glasgow. These areas were subsequently transferred to local authorities, which took on responsibility for long term maintenance but received no extra resources to pay for it. While the improvement of the quality of the urban environment is greatly to be welcomed, in Glasgow and Dundee there has been a significant loss of population and therefore a decline in the local tax base, creating an serious additional problem.

4.6 This increase in local authority responsibilities for the maintenance of open space is not taken into account when the Executive determines the allocation of financial resources to councils. As the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management has pointed out:

*“The result is that a formula claimed to achieve a standard level of service between local authorities in practice produces wide variation ...It leaves the low spending authorities incapable of rising to the average, whilst higher spending authorities may, in some cases, make a lower demand on local taxpayers.” (ILAM, 1999)*



4.7 Until such time as councils are able to provide accurate information to the Executive on the amount of open space they have to maintain in their area, however, it will have no basis on which to make an objective judgement on their needs. A commitment by the Executive to take account of such information could be a powerful argument in terms of persuading councils to undertake a comprehensive open space audit as recommended in NPPG11.

#### **Recommendation 4.1**

The Scottish Executive should consider taking account of the amount and cost of maintaining open space when determining financial allocations to those councils which can provide accurate and up to date information on the size, nature and maintenance costs of those open spaces for which they are responsible. This will be particularly important in social inclusion partnership and other priority areas where land values are low and therefore there is little or no potential for councils to obtain commuted sums for the future maintenance of new open spaces.

#### **The Implications of Declining Resources**

4.8 This decline in resources for the management and maintenance of open space has a number of implications. The first is that there are growing signs that local authority budgets for the maintenance of open space are getting close to critical levels. For example, Perth and Kinross Council has closed a large number of children's play areas because it cannot afford to maintain them; elsewhere other local authorities are "rationalising" children's play areas to make the best use of available funds and there are growing signs of decline in the quality of urban parks and sports pitches.

4.9 Second, there is a growing unwillingness amongst local authorities to take on responsibility for the maintenance of any more open space, even when it comes with a commuted sum. This view is driven primarily by the departments responsible for grounds maintenance which perceive themselves as being less and less able to maintain those areas of open space for which they are already responsible. Even if commuted sums are invested and the interest used exclusively for open space maintenance, changes in interest rates can result in considerable variation in the amount of money available.

4.10 There is also anecdotal evidence that, in some councils, Directors of Finance require that commuted sums are included within general council capital receipts. This clearly undermines the principle of commuted sums and could be challenged by developers.

#### **Recommendation 4.2**

Committed sums (that is, capitalised sums which, if invested, will fund a stream of annual revenue payments for open space maintenance) should be held in a ring-fenced account and used only for the maintenance of the open spaces to which they relate. In addition, in the interests of transparency and accountability, councils should publish an annual report clearly setting out how they have used committed sums.

## Possible Solutions

4.11 There are a number of possible solutions to the problem of declining local authority resources for grounds maintenance, including:

- the disposal of some open spaces to generate a capital receipt which in theory at least can then be invested to generate annual revenue funding
- public-private partnerships, involving the transfer of areas of open space to the voluntary sector and/or local businesses
- greater recognition by the Scottish Executive of the importance of open space and therefore changes to the funding arrangements for local authorities.

4.12 **The disposal of assets** to create a capital receipt – memorably described by the Earl of Stockton as selling the family silver – is the first obvious solution, but one which is unlikely to be a sustainable long term solution unless the capital receipt is large enough to fund maintenance in perpetuity. One way round this problem might be for a council instead to create a grounds maintenance trust and transfer assets to it which can then be used to generate income. Milton Keynes Development Corporation took this approach by transferring several commercial properties to a trust shortly before it was wound up.

4.13 Before an asset can be sold, the council owning it should be absolutely certain that it will have no long term need for it. If the asset is an existing area of open space, a significant capital receipt will be possible only if it can be developed for some other purpose and therefore lost for ever as an open space. Determining whether there is any long term need for the land as open space will require very careful consideration and cannot be determined only through the application of broad provision standards such as those contained in most local plans.

### Recommendation 4.3

If planning consent is given for the development of publicly-owned open spaces, any proceeds accruing to councils should be ring-fenced and used only for replacement open space, the enhancement of more important open spaces in the same area or invested to create an additional revenue stream for the maintenance of other areas of open space. Where this latter approach is adopted, councils should not take the opportunity to reduce funding from their existing revenue budget.

4.14 But public assets do not necessarily have to be sold; they can also be shared. Public-private partnerships are being used more and more in other areas and there is no reason why the concept should not be extended to parks and open spaces. Sponsored litter bins in town centres and hanging baskets on commercial premises are becoming quite common and increasingly substituting for municipal horticultural displays. This is obviously easiest to achieve in town and city centres as attractive shopping environments are likely to generate tangible benefits for traders.

4.15 A good example of this is Perth and Kinross Council, which has successfully harnessed the “Britain in Bloom” campaign to substitute for cut-backs in its horticultural work and the consequential loss of plant displays over the past fifteen or so years. It is summarised in the Case Study below and provides a model for other councils.

## **CASE STUDY: BRITAIN IN BLOOM IN PERTH AND KINROSS**

The involvement of Perth and Kinross Council in the Britain in Bloom campaign goes back to 1989 and was suggested initially by the Chamber of Commerce. In spite of the fact that the Council won the Scottish part of the competition soon after entering, the expenditure of around £50,000 was heavily criticised by opposition councillors. However, local people were delighted by the improvements made to the appearance of the town and the residents of other parts of the then District began to clamour for inclusion in the campaign.

In the decade or so since then, the Council has fostered the creation of around 30 local “Bloom” committees throughout its area. These various committees – which involve local volunteers and people from local businesses, but not councillors as they do not wish to be seen to be in any way “political” – have now come together to form an Association with charitable status and appoint a Project Officer as the extent of their activities has become too onerous for volunteers alone. It also helps to attract new forms of funding, such as Landfill Tax. Meanwhile, the total annual investment by the Council has reduced to about £20,000 per year, nearly all of which is devolved to local committees, plus some staff time. The Common Good Fund also provides a few small grants – usually of only £200 or so – to get local committees started. Against this, the Council estimates that the activities of the various local committees have a value of about £300,000 each year, not counting the enormous benefits there have been to the area from the national and international publicity the area’s repeated wins in the Britain in Bloom competition have generated.

As the committees have grown in confidence and attracted wider and wider local support, they have also expanded their remit beyond the Britain in Bloom campaign to other ways of improving their local environment. For example, local schools arrange local litter-picking parties while the 2,500 or so residents in Pitlochry have raised about £170,000 in order to fund improvements to a local park which the local committee will subsequently manage. One important side-effect of the work of the committees has been a clear reduction in the amount of local vandalism and graffiti as a result of the development of local pride. A particular success was the creation of a “best garden” competition in what was perceived to be a disadvantaged and unattractive area of Perth itself.

### **Recommendation 4.4**

Those councils which do not already support the Britain in Bloom campaign should consider doing so as part of their work to involve their local community and businesses in setting environmental policies and enhancing the local environment. Perth and Kinross provides an excellent model of one way in which this can be achieved.

4.16 The third possible solution would be for the Scottish Executive to change the funding regime for local authorities. However, this is likely to require prior consideration by the Scottish Parliament.

## THE STATISTICAL VACUUM

4.17 The second major challenge is the relative absence of information on the use of open spaces compared with, say leisure centres or libraries. Urban parks have been described as “*leisure centres without a roof*” (Woudstra and Fieldhouse, 2000) but few if any councils have the same level of management information on open spaces under their control as for their indoor leisure centres.

4.18 There are three key aspects to this, which, in relation to urban parks, the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee of the House of Commons summarised as:

- a lack of **supply information** on how many urban parks there are in the UK – a problem which derives from the fact that there is no agreed definition of an urban park, so that different local authorities and other agencies use different implicit definitions
- a lack of **demand information** on the use of urban parks – for example, the number of visits made to them and what people do, or would like to be able to do, in parks and the improvements they would like to see made to them
- a lack of information on the minimum amount of parkland needed in towns and cities – the link between supply and demand. The Committee noted that the absence of provision standards “*which should also encompass attributes including ease of access, landscape quality and diversity, helps pre-empt meaningful discussion of issues such as park provision and maintenance.*” (ETRAC, 1999)

4.19 The same criticisms can be made of other types of open space. Most councils have very little information on open space generally, other than that required to prepare and monitor maintenance contracts. Some councils, such as Dundee, have undertaken a comprehensive, on the ground supply audit, while South Ayrshire used an aerial survey, as in the case study below.

### CASE STUDY: SOUTH AYRSHIRE OPEN SPACE STRATEGY

Like many local authorities, South Ayrshire Council’s local plans generally safeguarded areas of open space. However, the Council was aware that it lacked adequate resources for all of its various services and therefore took the view that it would have to consider disposing of some assets in order to generate additional funds. Inevitably it began to consider whether some of the open spaces it owned could be sold for development, but had no real basis for making the necessary strategic decisions although it was well aware that a number of open spaces had declined in quality over the previous decade, largely as a result of CCT, and were fairly sterile and unattractive.

As the Council’s Corporate Plan gives a high priority to environmental issues, it decided to institute an open space audit as a first step towards an open space strategy. It decided to progress this by commissioning a comprehensive aerial photographic survey of the whole of its area which its in-house technicians then digitised for entry onto the Council’s Geographical Information System (GIS). If specific areas of open space were included within its grounds maintenance contract they concluded that these were “public open spaces”; if not, that they were “private open spaces”. Overall this process took two people approximately two and half years, working part-time, to identify a total of some 1,000 ha of

### **Case Study: South Ayrshire Open Space Strategy (continued)**

open space. Where necessary, they checked details of particular open spaces on the ground. However, the Council then had a comprehensive database which it will use with its computer-aided drafting software for those open spaces it wishes to redesign and upgrade.

More recently, it has arranged a number of community workshops with two broad aims: to determine a typology of open spaces which is relevant to local people; and to engage with the community over how particular open spaces should be managed and maintained. The typology is based on civic spaces, seafronts, town parks and estates, local parks, community gardens and greens, residential green space, playgrounds, active play areas, formal sports fields and courts, golf courses, school grounds, beaches, dunes and coastline, car parks, cemeteries and allotments.

It has developed an open spaces hierarchy incorporating this typology (for example, town parks and estates, local parks, community gardens and greens, and residential green space) and is using this in association with its GIS to plot “areas of open space deficiency” using various distance thresholds for open spaces at different levels of the hierarchy. The results of this analysis will then inform the policies in the local plan.

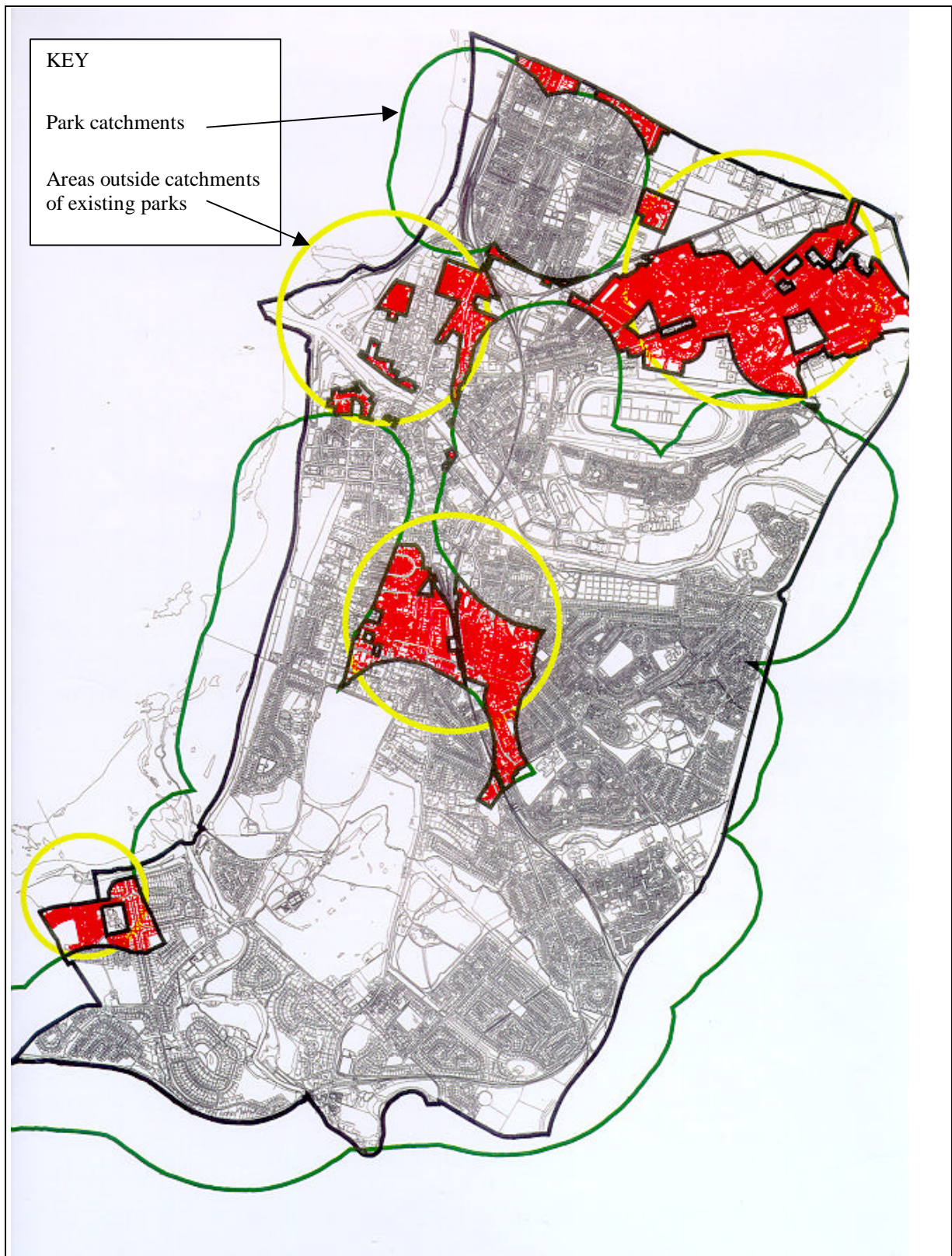
In the longer term, the Council is planning to redesign a number of open spaces in partnership with local community representatives to reduce maintenance costs, improve sustainability and promote wildlife habitats.

The map below plots 400m catchments around local or town parks in Ayr and by doing so identifies areas in which additional open space provision is a priority.

4.20 Many councils have very little information on levels and types of use of open spaces and the improvements which local residents would like to see. Apart from issues relating to obtaining planning permission for the possible development of areas of open space, this can make it difficult to undertake a Best Value review and present a well argued case for resources. Alan Barber, a past president of the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management, has commented that public open space management is:

*“... the only billion pound industry I know where the managers don’t know who their customers are, what their markets are, or show much interest in finding out.”*

**Map 1: 400m Catchments Around Town or Local Parks in Ayr**  
(Courtesy of South Ayrshire Council)



## Possible Solutions

4.21 In order to argue effectively for resources, the council departments responsible for open space management need hard facts. The essential information they will require includes the points set out below.

- The location, size, characteristics, quality and purpose of all areas of open spaces in their area, together with details of wildlife habitats. This will normally require an open space audit.
- Types and levels of use of open space. This can be done on a continuous or “snapshot” basis. For example, Dundee City Council is installing automatic counters in its parks and on its “green circular” cycleway to gather quantitative data on their use throughout the year. Alternatively, a snapshot picture can be obtained in the same manner as a traffic survey - by stationing staff to count the number of people entering a park on one or two days through the summer or winter. The results can then be compared with, say, the number of people using local leisure centres or libraries on the same days. For example, on a Saturday in July 1883, the old Glasgow Corporation took a census of park use and recorded no less than 100,000 people entering Glasgow Green and 48,000 entering Kelvingrove Park (Woudstra and Fieldhouse, 2000).
- Open spaces with local, national and international natural heritage designations, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- Local community views, for example on the improvements required to specific open spaces or local concerns. This may require user or non-user surveys, focus groups or “planning for real” workshops.

4.22 Where it is necessary to gather basic factual information on existing open spaces for the first time, this will probably require a significant amount of work which may be fairly expensive. However, there may be ways of reducing the cost to the local authority. For example, the Heritage Lottery Fund may be able to part fund this work through its Urban Parks Programme; **sportscotland** might part fund an audit of pitches; and local amenity societies, schools or youth groups may be willing to help. Thereafter, it should be relatively simple to keep a local open space database up to date, for example by monitoring planning permissions, provided the database is treated as a corporate resource and not a departmental one. The use of a computer-based geographical information system is obviously the best way to achieve this.

### Recommendation 4.5

Councils should review the information they hold on the extent, nature and use of open spaces in their area and determine whether it is sufficient for their local plan and Best Value reviews and preparation of effective management and maintenance plans. If not, they should determine the range of information they will need and put in place appropriate mechanisms for obtaining it and subsequently keeping it up to date in a cost-effective way. These mechanisms might include, for example, a local open space audit, a natural heritage assessment, regular surveys of the views of local residents or changes to how management information is gathered, held and analysed.



## THE DECLINE OF URBAN PARKS

4.23 Urban parks are one of the most enduring and best loved legacies of the Victorian era. They were a response to the appalling conditions created by the industrial revolution and rapid urban population growth. Originally often located on the edge of towns and cities where land was cheaper or on land which was perceived to be unbuildable for some reason, they first received official recognition in a report presented to Parliament by the Select Committee on Public Walks in 1833. This report (Cmnd 448) identified the physical, moral, spiritual and political benefits of parks in terms every bit as relevant today as they were then. They would:

- be lungs for the city and refresh the air
- improve people's health and provide places for exercise
- be an alternative form of recreation to the tavern
- provide beneficial contact with nature, so refreshing the spirit
- be used by all members of society, so reducing social tensions and allowing the classes to learn from each other.

4.24 One hundred and fifty or so years later, parks engendered gloom rather than optimism. Organisations as different as the Garden History Society and Victorian Society (Conway and Lambert, 1993) and General and Municipal Boilermakers' Union (GMB, 1993) published reports highlighting their decline. One response was the launch of the Heritage Lottery Fund's Urban Parks Programme in 1996 to assist the restoration of historic parks (see paragraphs 3.31 and 3.22 above). Another was an investigation by the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee of the House of Commons (ETRAC).

4.25 During 1998 and early 1999, in the context of the ETRAC discussions on sustainability and urban regeneration, a number of witnesses suggested that urban parks were facing serious problems. As a result, it decided to try to establish whether urban parks had declined and, if so, how serious the decline was and how it might be remedied. It also included country parks in its inquiry, on the basis that there was some anecdotal evidence their creation had diverted resources from urban parks and therefore contributed to their decline. Although no Scottish local authorities gave evidence, the Sub-committee's conclusions are undoubtedly relevant to urban park planning, management and maintenance in Scotland.

4.26 ETRAC found that urban parks generate considerable benefits, especially in terms of wildlife, health and relaxation, play, entertainment and recreation, community spirit, education and the urban economy – in other words, pretty much the original Victorian agenda. At the same time, it was *“shocked at the weight of evidence ... about the extent of the problems parks have faced in the last 30 years”*.

4.27 It identified the most important factors in the decline of urban parks as including:

- cultural change
- the growing preference for natural over formal landscaped areas
- the shift from the Victorian and Edwardian focus on adults and self-improvement to child-friendly educational opportunities and entertainment
- under-funding, exacerbated by cost cutting driven by Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT)



- growing concerns over personal safety in parks
- the de-skilling of park maintenance staff
- the demise of the park keeper, leading to perceptions of the rising potential for crime in parks.

4.28 Although the evidence presented to the Committee was overwhelmingly anecdotal, it provided a consistent message of decline. In Scotland, there is also evidence of reduced maintenance of local authority owned pitches and playing fields which is beginning to hamper the development of pitch sports (Kit Campbell Associates, 2000).

4.29 The Sub-committee's conclusion that there is a growing public perception that parks may be becoming unsafe is particularly serious as this could ultimately lead to calls for their closure. This is not an isolated concern; the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management (ILAM) made substantially the same point in its Policy Position Statement on Urban Parks:

*"The major savings from compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) are rarely invested in parks and the contracting out of grounds maintenance has accelerated the withdrawal of site-based staff in many parks to the dismay of visitors. For many users, parks have become places of fear due to a perceived increase in levels of vandalism and anti-social behaviour. Public parks are probably more dependent on the good stewardship of local authorities than any other leisure facility and their apparent neglect is, therefore, a matter of concern to professional managers."* (ILAM, August 1995)

4.30 The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children has also expressed similar concerns:

*"The NSPCC is calling for the return of park-keepers after research showed that two thirds of parents believe their local park is no longer safe for children. Reports of teenage gangs indulging in alcohol and drug abuse was a common complaint according to the charity's survey of more than 4,000 Britons. There were also reports of encounters with adults who posed 'actual or potential' danger, such as attacks on females and men engaged in sexual behaviour."* (The Daily Mail, 18 May 2000, quoted in Leisure Management, June 2000)

4.31 More objective evidence of the decline of urban parks is provided by the results of a survey undertaken by ILAM for the Heritage Lottery Fund (ILAM, 2000). In order to provide background information for the Fund's Urban Parks Programme, this sought to draw up a national picture of the state of the UK's parks. Of the UK's 474 local authorities (37%), 174 responded to the survey, nine of them from Scotland, and overall their responses related to a total of some 765 parks. Although the survey did not set out any criteria which respondents should use to assess the condition of parks and the results are therefore at least debatable:

- 89 were considered to be in poor condition, with 82 in a state of continuing decline
- 409 were considered to be in fair condition, with 155 declining in quality, 198 stable and 56 improving

- 257 were considered to be in good condition, with 5 declining in quality, 114 stable and 138 improving. None of the parks classed as being in good condition were in Scotland.

4.32 The survey also asked for details of park features and their condition, but without setting a time frame within which any losses had occurred. Accordingly some of the losses may have been many years ago. The most common features, together with the number lost, abandoned or otherwise not used and needing repair, are summarised in Table 4.2:

**Table 4.2: Facilities in 765 Urban Parks**

	In use	Lost or not used for some reason	Needing repair
• Tennis courts	• 869	• 347	• 121
• Grass pitches	• 685	• 55	• 66
• Bowling greens	• 514	• 86	• 20
• Toilets	• 479	• 221	• 113
• Shelters/pavilions	• 470	• 226	• 102
• Playgrounds	• 462	• 35	• 81
• Memorials/statues	• 349	• 61	• 93
• Bridges	• 331	• 34	• 83
• Ornamental gates	• 327	• 212	• 117

Source: Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management (2000), *Local Authority Owned Parks Needs Assessment Phase 1*, Reading: ILAM

4.33 This presents a picture in which sports facilities are a key element in many urban parks, although the figures in the ILAM survey relate to numbers of pitches, tennis courts and so on, and not the number of parks with them. Nonetheless, it seems clear that parks do not have the same range or quality of features and facilities as in the past. Sadly, a lack of investment in existing facilities creates a downward spiral of decline: deterioration in quality leads to lower levels of use, less income and community support and eventually pressures for closure.

4.34 The Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee recommended a number of policy objectives for local parks, thus:

*“Historic parks should retain their integrity and historic character and larger parks should seek to regain their function as places for entertainment and formal and informal games ...Making parks safe, and making them feel safe, must be a priority for local authorities ... In implementing Best Value, all local authorities should have a Performance Plan for the network of parks and greenspaces and ensure that it reflects the wishes and priorities of local people and businesses, as well as members of the Council and the Council’s funding partners. Any nationally set Government service indicators should also take this into account...The Government ought to help local authorities find ways to reverse cutbacks in park maintenance.” (ETRAC, 1999)*

4.35 Its most significant conclusion, however, was that:

*“... if nothing is done many [urban parks] will become albatrosses around the necks of local authorities. Un-used, derelict havens for crime and vandalism, it would be better to close them and re-use the land than to leave them to decay further.” (ETRAC, 1999)*

4.36 This is a clear warning that no-one can take the continued existence of parks for granted. More positively, the Urban White Paper, *Our Towns and Cities: the Future – Delivering an Urban Renaissance* gives a clear indication that open spaces have risen up the political agenda in England:

*“The challenge for us all is to find ways of improving the quality of parks, play areas and open spaces and making them cleaner, safer and better-maintained places. We need to think more imaginatively about the kind of open spaces that can make a difference to the quality of people’s lives in urban settings. We will take action in three key areas:*

- we must lead and develop a shared vision for the future of our parks, play areas and open spaces;*
- we must improve information on the quality and quantity of parks and open spaces, and the way in which they are used and maintained; and*
- we must also improve the way we plan and design new parks, play areas and public spaces, the way we manage and maintain existing ones.” (DETR 2000)*

#### **Recommendation 4.6**

The Transport and Environment Committee of the Scottish Parliament should debate the importance and funding of parks and other open spaces, with special emphasis given to those areas in which it will not normally be possible to obtain commuted sums for maintenance, in order to give open space issues a higher public profile and emphasise their importance to the quality of life.

#### **Possible Solutions**

4.37 The first step towards a solution will be to determine the scale and extent of the problem, possibly as a key input to the Scottish Parliament debate suggested above. CoSLA will probably be the agency best placed to co-ordinate this information.

#### **Recommendation 4.7**

The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities should gather and analyse information on the state of and key problems facing Scotland’s urban parks and other greenspaces and present the results to the Scottish Parliament and Ministers.

## 5. THE NEED FOR A NEW APPROACH TO OPEN SPACE PLANNING

### INTRODUCTION

5.1 The combination of the way in which local authorities are actually using the guidance in NPPG11, coupled with the opportunities and challenges identified in Chapters 3 and 4, points clearly to the need for a new approach to the planning and, by extension, the management of open space. In terms of planning, this must encompass:

- an appropriate terminology and typology
- the use of appropriate hierarchies of open space
- high quality urban design
- a new approach to provision standards.

### TERMINOLOGY AND TYPOLOGY

#### The Definition of “Open Space”

5.2 Section 277 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act, 1997 defines open space as:

*“land laid out as a public garden, or used for the purposes of public recreation, or land which is a disused burial ground.”*

5.3 This long-standing definition – also used in planning legislation in England and Wales – is not particularly helpful, as is explicitly admitted in paragraph 35 of NPPG11:

*“there are also other kinds of public and private open space, including woodland and linear open spaces such as canals and former railway lines.”*

5.4 Generally speaking, open space splits into “public” and “private” areas, although this definition arguably relates to reasonably open public access at least as much as public ownership. The London Planning Advisory Committee, for example, defined public open space as *“public parks, commons, heaths and woodlands all with established and unrestricted public access...though not necessarily publicly owned.”* (LDPETA, 1992)

5.5 There is therefore also a fairly widespread assumption that open space is normally vegetated. This ignores the importance of city squares such as George Square in Glasgow, the market squares in burghs such as Kelso and many other civic spaces. Clearly these open spaces serve an important function in terms of the character and image of a place. Indeed, it is civic squares which immediately come to mind when many of the world’s great cities are mentioned: for example, London (Trafalgar Square), Barcelona (Playa de Catalunya), Venice (St Mark’s Square), Moscow (Red Square), Beijing (Tiananmen Square) and Brussels (Grand Place). Others have a major park in or close to their centre: for example Edinburgh (Princes Street Gardens and Arthur’s Seat); Sydney (the Domain) and of course New York (Central Park). The protection and ideally the continuing enhancement of all these major open spaces, paved or vegetated, together with other more local open spaces, is a key strategic planning issue.

5.6 The definition of open space was explored at some length in *The Planning and Management of Urban Open Space in Scotland* (Waters and Smith, 1999) and research for SNH on *The State of Scottish Greenspace* by the Scottish Wildlife Trust (McCall and Doar, 1997). Waters and Smith concluded that “open space” should be used as an all-encompassing term, with “greenspace” used as a sub-set for vegetated land of actual or potential natural heritage value in urban areas. It defined these as:

- **open space:** any open (unbuilt) land which provides, or has the potential to provide, environmental, social and/or economic benefits to communities, whether direct or indirect, within an urban area
- **greenspace:** any vegetated land or structure, water or geological feature within an urban area.

## Terminology

5.7 There are a surprising number of terms in fairly common use for different kinds of open space in planning policy documents in addition to formal natural heritage designations such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and specific areas such as golf courses. This indicates that planning authorities have found it necessary to differentiate between the many kinds of open space. Among these various types of open space, there is a clear functional definition of only a few, such as children's play areas, sports pitches and playing fields, allotments, cemeteries/burial grounds and churchyards.

5.8 Arguably, the past planning of urban open space has been bedevilled by the lack of an appropriate typology and attempts to use a "one size fits all" planning methodology. This has led both to a reliance on often simplistic quantitative standards, and, possibly leading on from this, a lack of clarity in relation to the use and value of some types or areas of open space:

*"In planning terms, problems of typology clearly continue to thwart the development of strategic park policies in many places. Hitherto so much thinking about open space has concentrated on quantity - so many hectares, so much open space per head of population ... questions of quality are now the order of the day, and it is important to shift the strategic arguments about parks and open spaces from crude statistical approaches to more specialist, needs-based approaches."* (Comedia with Demos, 1995)

5.9 Anecdotally, there appears to be a growing view that the term "public open space" is planning jargon which has a faintly pejorative ring to it. Some local authorities have largely abandoned the term "open space" in their development plans and other strategy documents. Glasgow City Council, for example, in its forthcoming city plan, is using the term "recreational green space" for those areas of open space used for either recreation or sport.

5.10 "Green space" (or "greenspace") is being used more and more often and evokes much more positive connotations of attractiveness and sustainability than "open space", a term which conjures up images of SLOAP (usually Space Left Over After Planning, but sometimes Planting). For example, the Select Committee report on *Town and Country Parks* highlighted the need for an Urban Parks and Green Spaces Agency (ETRAC, 1999). Planning Advice Note 60, *Planning for Natural Heritage*, uses the term "greenspace" (Scottish Executive, 2000). Elsewhere, agencies such as ILAM and the local authority departments responsible for open space management and maintenance tend to use terms such as "parks and open space", implying that parks are not the same thing as open space. Glasgow City Council, for example, has a Parks and Open Spaces Strategy which sits alongside its local plans. The City of Edinburgh Council is preparing a "Sport and Greenspace Strategy" because it perceives open space interests as splitting into those concerned with sport and those concerned with other forms of greenspace, but wants to bring them together beneath a single policy umbrella.

## A Proposed Typology

5.11 There is no sense in Scotland's planning authorities using many different terms for the various types of urban open space and desirable that there should be an agreed typology. This should also reflect and summarise the primary function of each of the main types of open space as this will aid effective planning by bringing some much-needed clarity to the evaluation of existing open spaces. The first need is to differentiate vegetated from non-vegetated areas. This leads to the following typology, building on the one suggested by Dundee City Council.

- **Open space:** any unbuilt land within the boundary or designated envelope of a village, town or city which provides, or has the potential to provide, environmental, social and/or economic benefits to communities, whether direct or indirect.
- **Greenspace:** a sub-set of open space, consisting of any vegetated land or structure, water or geological feature within urban areas.
- **Civic space** (sometimes referred to as greyspace): a sub-set of open space, consisting of urban squares, market places and other paved or hard landscaped areas with a civic function.

5.12 Greenspace can be public or privately owned, and have or not have public access. Civic space, on the other hand, will always have public access.

5.13 Reflecting the approach to open space planning actually used by councils, there are probably seven distinct sub-sets of publicly accessible greenspace, each with a specific and distinct primary function:

- **Parks and gardens:** surprisingly, there does not appear to be an agreed definition of an urban park (ETRAC, 1999), although there is a widespread assumption that urban parks are enclosed; the verb “to impark” means to enclose as a park. Even this, however, is an over-simplification: Irvine Beach Park, for example, is not enclosed at all. Parks can therefore be considered as being areas of land, normally enclosed, designed, constructed, managed and maintained as a public park or garden. They can be either urban parks or country parks depending primarily on their location, although urban parks will tend to be more “manicured” and country parks more “natural”. Parks and gardens often incorporate other types of greenspace, such as children’s play areas and sports facilities, but their primary function is for informal activity or relaxation, social and community purposes, such as kicking a ball about, jogging, events and festivals, and horticultural or arboricultural displays. Some parks and gardens may also be designed landscapes of historical importance and, where they are of national significance, included in the *Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes in Scotland* prepared in 1987 by the former Countryside Commission for Scotland and the Historic Buildings and Monuments Directorate of the Scottish Development Department.
- **Amenity greenspace:** managed and maintained landscaped areas with no designated specific use by people, but providing visual amenity or separating different buildings or land uses for environmental, visual or safety reasons (for example, road verges). Amenity greenspaces may also be used, incidentally, as wildlife habitats.
- **Children’s play areas:** designated and maintained areas providing safe and accessible opportunities for children’s play, usually linked to housing areas and therefore normally set within a wider green environment of amenity open space. The primary function of these areas is to provide safe facilities for children to play, usually close to home and under informal supervision from nearby houses. Many play areas may have equipment such as slides, swings and climbing frames; all should have some form of surfacing which absorbs impact.
- **Sports facilities:** designed, constructed, managed and maintained large and generally (although not always) flat areas of grassland or specially-designed artificial surfaces, used primarily for designated sports; if in public ownership they are generally bookable. The primary function of these areas is to accommodate practice, training and competition for

recognised outdoor sports such as athletics, bowls, football, hockey, lacrosse, rugby, shinty and tennis. Their key characteristic is that they should comply with the dimensions and other specifications laid down by the appropriate national governing body of sport, although there are many examples of facilities which do not but are nonetheless well used. If required, sports facilities can be sub-divided into various categories according to either ownership, for example public (local authority), institutional (schools and higher education institutions) or voluntary sector; or by the degree of public access.

- **Green corridors:** routes linking different areas within a town or city as part of a designated and managed network and used for walking, cycling or horse riding or linking towns and cities to their surrounding countryside or country parks. The primary function of green corridors is to allow safe, environment-friendly movement within urban areas. There is also a widely held but possibly inaccurate assumption that they support wildlife colonisation and therefore habitat creation.
- **Natural/semi-natural greenspaces,** which have been defined in academic research (quoted in Harrison and others, 1995) as “land, water and geological features which have been naturally colonised by plants and animals and which are accessible on foot to large numbers of residents.” This definition is not ideal as “natural greenspaces” might well be sown with wild flowers rather than colonised and it is far from clear why they should be accessible to large numbers of people on foot. It will be better for natural greenspace to be defined more simply as areas of undeveloped land with little or only limited maintenance which have been planted with wild flowers or colonised by vegetation and wildlife. Natural greenspace therefore also includes woodland, railway embankments, river and canal banks and derelict land, which may in some cases be thought of as temporary natural greenspace. The primary function of natural greenspaces is to promote bio-diversity and nature conservation.
- **Other functional green spaces:** essentially allotments, churchyards and cemeteries.

5.14 Some councils may wish to add an eighth type of greenspace – school grounds. However, there is no reason why they cannot be included within the above typology, even if they normally include more than one type of greenspace.

5.15 There are also various types of civic space, including:

- **Civic squares** and plazas, often containing statues or fountains and primarily paved, sometimes providing a setting for important public buildings
- **Market places,** usually with historic connotations
- **Pedestrian streets,** usually former roads which have been paved over and provided with seats and planters
- **Promenades and sea fronts.**

5.16 This typology can be summarised diagrammatically as:

### **Recommendation 5.1**

In order to bring greater clarity to the discussion of open space issues, Scottish Executive Planning Services, national agencies, local authorities and others should adopt and promote the use of the open space typology in paragraph 5.16, for example through a Planning Advice Note (PAN).

5.17 For the sake of clarity, these terms are used throughout the remainder of this report.

5.18 Each of the different types of greenspace may also be subject to a national or international nature conservation designation, for example as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). These designations are summarised in NPPG14, *Natural Heritage*, although they change from time to time.

### *Secondary Functions*

5.19 The above definitions are based on the primary functions of the most important types of greenspace. Ideally, these primary functions should not be compromised, although parks, in particular, can successfully include both sports facilities such as tennis courts and bowling greens (and occasionally pitches) and facilities for children's play. In particular, they should not be "overlaid", with a single area of greenspace expected to serve two or more different primary functions. If they are, the result may be inappropriate assumptions about the value and benefits of some types of greenspace. For example:

*"... is it really true, as the Sports Council, NPFA (National Playing Fields Association) & CCPR (Central Council for Physical Recreation) argued in 1991 in respect of an alleged loss of urban playing fields, that 'Public pitches also cater for informal sports, informal play, fairs and other occasional attractions, and a whole range of passive recreational uses such as sitting and picnicking. They have too an amenity and environmental value in providing physical, visual and aesthetic breaks in the urban form.' This assertion of the rich contribution made to urban living by playing fields and recreation grounds might well be doubted. The evidence from many of those now managing urban open space is that there are too many sports pitches and recreation grounds in some places, which are under-used, bleak and offer no ecological, aesthetic or social benefits other than to a very tiny section of the male population on a seasonal basis." (Comedia with Demos, 1995)*

5.20 There is nothing wrong in certain types of open space serving only a small proportion of local people; if there was, children's play areas would not exist. However, the criticism that sports pitches sometimes offer little by way of amenity is certainly true. From the perspective of sport this can be a good thing. For example, leaf fall on pitches increases maintenance costs and can damage grass; overshadowing can make playing conditions difficult; and local residents should be discouraged from using pitches for dog walking because of the health dangers to players from fouling. The case for the existence of any pitch should always be based on the need for it for sport, although it will obviously be desirable to improve the environment around sports pitches wherever possible.

5.21 Each type of greenspace, however, can also serve one or more secondary purposes as well as its primary one. These include:

- **structural** – aiding the identity or definition of an area or neighbourhood and helping to establish a "sense of place" or ownership
- **ecological** – helping to reduce the effects of pollution, for example by converting carbon dioxide into oxygen, recycling waste water and reducing noise pollution
- **environmental** – helping to promote sustainability, for example by controlling ground water or reducing energy consumption in nearby buildings by providing shelter from prevailing winds
- **educational** – providing an "outdoor classroom" for schools, educational institutions and special interest groups. (LDPETA, 1992)



## THE NEED FOR NETWORKS OF OPEN SPACE

5.22 If one of the foundations of effective open space planning is to be clear about the purpose of each and every area of open space, another is the need for open space networks. The definition of green networks in development plans should have several incidental benefits. It will clarify the importance and role of specific areas of greenspace; it should provide greater variety than might easily be achieved with fewer but larger areas of open space; it can provide the essential policy justification for financial contributions from developers through Section 75 agreements; and it should reduce the importance of the amount of local open space at any specific point in the network, because of the potential to access other areas nearby, but raise the importance of quality issues:

*“Well-designed urban districts and neighbourhoods succeed because they recognise the primary importance of the public realm – the network of spaces between buildings that determine the layout, form and connectivity of the city. The shape of public spaces and the way they link together are essential to the cohesion of urban neighbourhoods and communities ... Cities and towns should be designed as networks that link together residential areas to public open spaces and natural green corridors with direct access to the countryside.”* (Urban Task Force, 1999)

5.23 Open space networks should consist of both greenspace and civic spaces, linked together in such a way as to provide enjoyable and varied routes through urban areas for pedestrians and, where appropriate, cyclists. Key “nodes” on these networks, where two or more different routes join, will be appropriate locations for public buildings and facilities such as schools, leisure centres and neighbourhood shops.

5.24 Against this background, the role of the Structure Plan is to identify the strategic importance and main elements of the network; to identify strategic “gaps” in it; and to set the overall framework within which local plans can define the boundaries of the components of the network, protect them from development and, where appropriate, promote their enhancement.

5.25 The Glasgow and Clyde Valley Joint Structure Plan 2000 promotes the concept of a green network at the strategic level and is described in the case study below. A broadly similar concept is equally valid at the local level.

### CASE STUDY: GLASGOW AND CLYDE VALLEY JOINT STRUCTURE PLAN

The Glasgow and Clyde Valley Structure Plan (2000) is based on a vision of contributing “*to the renaissance of Scotland by providing the framework for growth and renewal based upon care for the environment*”. This vision is:

- 1 the area will be amongst the most attractive business locations in Europe because of the improved quality of the transport system, the labour force and the physical environment
- 2 the quality of life in all settlements will be valued because of the improved quality of access to jobs, town centre facilities and residential environment, reinforced by a well defined high quality green belt (note: green belt boundaries are actually defined in Local and not Structure Plans)
- 3 the image of the area as a place to live, work and visit will be transformed by the greening of urban and rural areas
- 4 public transport, walking and cycling will be as attractive modes of transport as the car for most trips, because of their improved quality and integration.

The Plan promotes the creation of a green network to enhance the quality of urban areas, the urban fringe and rural areas, to help integrate town and country and reinforce the positive role of the green belt. It will extend from the heart of Glasgow and other town centres through to the remoter communities of the area. The Plan therefore identifies the strategic components of the network, both to emphasise its importance in promoting the redevelopment of key locations and safeguard it from conflicting development.

These strategic components are:

**Existing**

The Central Scotland Forest  
Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park  
Clyde Valley Woodlands  
Countryside Around Towns Projects  
Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park  
Millennium Link Corridor

**Proposed**

Campsies Regional Park  
Clyde Gateway  
Clyde Valley Community Forest  
Clyde Waterfront  
Ravenscraig

### Case Study: Glasgow and Clyde Valley Joint Structure Plan (cont'd)

Within the overall framework of the Green Network, the Plan highlights the importance of enhancing the quality of life through improved access to local jobs and services, improved housing and enhanced environmental quality. As part of this, it identifies:

- 1 The need to safeguard existing sports facilities and make provision for the development of additional ones
- 2 The need to promote the recreational use of the region's natural environment for both residents and tourists
- 3 The need to improve the management of areas of green belt close to parts of the conurbation where a high proportion of local residents do not own a car
- 4 The opportunity to use the Green Network to provide opportunities for open-air recreation
- 5 The need to protect and enhance the natural and built heritage and environmental resources
- 6 The need to promote the principles of sustainable development.

### Recommendation 5.2

The development of a network of high quality, sustainable greenspaces at both the strategic and local level should be a general aim of national planning policy. The key elements of this network should be identified and protected in Development Plans.

## THE NEED FOR OPEN SPACE HIERARCHIES

5.26 Strategic thinking should seek to bring together planning, design, management and resources. As not all open spaces are of equal benefit to their local community, one simple tool which helps with this process is to use the concept of an open space hierarchy. Suitable hierarchies can encompass open spaces at different scales, with different catchment areas, serving different purposes, with different types of greenspace, different ranges of facilities and different management and maintenance regimes.

5.27 The main benefit of an hierarchical approach for planning purposes is that once a suitable open space hierarchy is agreed, it provides a consistent framework for identifying "areas of deficiency" – a phrase which appears many times in development plans but is rarely properly defined. It is entirely consistent with and complementary to the concept of a network of open spaces, provided it is designed for a specific local situation. It also provides a clear differentiation between those open spaces of strategic importance and those of only local or neighbourhood importance and emphasises that they are complementary to one another:

*"Once a view or policy has been established areas of deficiency can be identified and improvements targeted to the areas where there is most need. Without a rationale for determining provision, based on empirical evidence, the planning and management of open space would need to be on an ad hoc basis."* (Waters and Smith, 1999)

5.28 There is no such thing as a "universal" hierarchy of open spaces which can be applied to all Structure or local plan or smaller areas. Instead, hierarchies must always be purpose-designed to suit particular local circumstances. Three examples of hierarchies which have been used effectively for open space planning purposes are described in Annex C:

- Dundee's *Public Open Space Strategy* (Dundee City Council, 1999), based on a hierarchy of country parks, city recreation parks and city heritage parks (which together make up city-wide provision), complemented by neighbourhood parks and local parks and open spaces (local provision)

- Glasgow's *Parks and Open Spaces Strategy* (Glasgow City Council, 1997), based on a hierarchy of city, district and local parks
- research on open space planning for London undertaken by Llewellyn Davies Planning for the London Planning Advisory Committee (LDPETA, 1992). This proposed a hierarchy of parks and other greenspaces consisting of regional parks and open spaces, metropolitan parks, district parks, local parks, small local parks and open spaces and linear open spaces.

### **Recommendation 5.3**

Councils should develop an appropriate hierarchy of open spaces for their area as suggested in paragraphs 5.26-5.28 and use it as a basic tool in connection with open space planning and management.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF URBAN DESIGN**

5.29 Once the required level of provision of open space in an area is determined, and, where appropriate, a hierarchy of provision defined, the next step is to determine what should actually happen on the ground. This is an urban design issue at least as much as a planning one. As the Scottish Executive Minister for Environment, Sport and Culture, Sam Galbraith said in his speech to the RTPI Conference in November 2000:

*"I see one of the great challenges for the planning system to deliver not just individual buildings but to deliver places where people will want to be. And this is not just a challenge for planners...Improved urban design is not just an end in itself. It also supports other key objectives and policies of the Executive – economic competitiveness, sustainable development and social justice where everyone has a right to a good quality environment."*

5.30 The pressure to increase urban densities, and locate a significant proportion of housing and other new developments on brownfield sites, is likely to make good urban design more and more important and challenging. Housing developers will not be able simply to shuffle their standard house types closer together but, instead, need to evolve new forms of housing, preferably purpose-designed for their location and related to their surroundings, with built-in public accessibility and appropriately designed and maintained open space. The same principles apply to other forms of development. Good urban design can be the peg on which to hang more variety and choice and a higher quality and more vibrant urban form. Groups of buildings, with high quality, attractive and well maintained open spaces between them, will be critical in forming the character of these areas.

5.31 Urban design should also be cost effective from the point of view of developers. The more that new developments are attractive and convenient places in which to live, work and play, the easier they should be to sell. In spite of this, at present, *"urban design, which combines architecture, planning and landscape design, is a core skill which is almost totally ignored"* (Urban Task Force, 1999). The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment has recognised this and its first publication, *By Design - Urban design in the planning system: towards best practice*, is intended:

*"...to stimulate thinking about urban design, not to tell the reader how to design. The central message is that careful assessments of places, well-drafted policies, well-designed proposals, robust decision-making and a collaborative approach are needed throughout the country if better places are to be created...[it] looks at the 'tools' local authorities have available within the planning system to help deliver better design. The most important is the local authority's development plan."* (CABE, 2000)

5.32 *By Design* suggests seven key objectives which could easily be adopted as guiding principles for open space design and management:

- **character** – a place with its own identity
- **continuity and enclosure** – a place where public and private spaces are clearly distinguished
- **quality of the public realm** - a place with attractive and successful outdoor areas
- **ease of movement** – a place that is easy to get to and move through
- **legibility** – a place that has a clear image and is easy to understand
- **adaptability** – a place that can change easily
- **diversity** – a place with variety and choice.

5.33 Objectives such as this are best included in planning briefs for development sites. Scottish Executive Planning Reporters generally support the use of such briefs.

#### **Recommendation 5.4**

Councils should prepare urban design briefs incorporating clear requirements for high quality open spaces for most sizeable new developments and all brownfield developments.

### **OPEN SPACE PROVISION STANDARDS**

5.34 As noted in Chapter 2, the most commonly used standard for the provision of open space in urban areas is the National Playing Fields Association's Six Acre Standard for "playing space", first put forward in the second half of the 1920s. Since then, the NPFA has stuck fairly doggedly to the Six Acres element of it (apart from a short period in the nineteen thirties, when it was increased to seven acres) but has changed its detailed definition several times.

5.35 Sport and recreation, not to mention children's play, have changed significantly since the nineteen twenties. It is therefore very doubtful whether a standard which is essentially around 75 years old is still valid - if it ever was. Moreover, it beggars belief that the same basic standard is equally appropriate in the Western Isles, Glasgow and the south of England.

5.36 The standard also has a number of other drawbacks:

- it takes no account of the nature of the local population: but a town with a high proportion of retired people will clearly not require the same level of provision of pitches, courts, athletics tracks and the like as one with a high proportion of young people
- it takes no account of the dimensions and shape of land or changes of level while the children's play component is based on a single assumed housing density
- it takes no account of geographical distribution and in theory could be met by a city with all its playing space around the periphery
- it takes no account of the development of indoor soft play centres in leisure centres, shopping centres and some private sector developments.

#### **Recommendation 5.5**

Planning authorities should follow the advice in NPPG11 and derive their own local standards for open space in new developments, including non-housing ones. Those councils which have adopted the NPFA Six Acre

Standard for “playing space” should continue to use it only as an interim measure for a limited period, for example until the next revision of the local plan.

5.37 This raises the question of what alternative approaches might be more appropriate and how they might be derived – a topic considered in the following chapter.

## 6 A NEW APPROACH TO OPEN SPACE PLANNING

*Marco Polo described a bridge, stone by stone.*

*“But which stone is supporting the bridge?” Kublai Khan asked.*

*“The bridge is not supported by one stone in particular but by the line of the arch which is formed by these stones,” Marco Polo answered.*

*Kublai Khan was silent and reflected on this matter. Finally he said, “Why do you talk about the stones, if it is only the arch that matters?”*

*Marco Polo replied, “There is no arch without stones.”*

*Italo Calvino, Le Citta Invisibili*

### INTRODUCTION

6.1 The location, size and nature of most of Scotland’s urban open spaces have been inherited from past generations and, as a result, may not be best suited to the needs of today and tomorrow. One of the key roles of the planning system is to ensure that land use is relevant to the present while retaining the flexibility to accommodate the future in terms of how we live, work and play. If it fails to do so, future generations will pay for today’s bad decisions.

6.2 As earlier chapters in this report have made clear, long term quality and accessibility are at least as important as the amount of open space in any area. NPPG11 clearly recognises the limitations of simple quantitative standards and offers some fairly “broad brush” advice on a better approach, based on three key steps:

- Determine an appropriate level of provision:

*“Every council should include in its development plan its views on the level of provision required for sporting and physical recreation facilities, including parks, open space, pitches and playing fields. These levels of provision should be determined locally on the basis of a range of factors including the quality and value of facilities and open space locally ie amenity and environmental factors as well as quantity” (paragraph 31)*

- Analyse existing open spaces and the different needs they serve:

*“Planning for open space should begin with an analysis of the existing open spaces and the different needs they serve. The role of pedestrian routes and linear open spaces ... in linking the larger spaces, and the function of open spaces in defining urban structure and providing a setting for buildings should also be covered. Issues of public safety and security, quality and, where appropriate, management options should also be addressed” (paragraph 36)*

- Use the level of provision and open space analysis to formulate policies and proposals:

*“The open space analysis and application of the council’s levels of provision will provide the basis for forward planning to cater for the needs of the population through a system of public parks, amenity open spaces, playing fields and sports pitches. If deficiencies or poor quality exist, the analysis should identify them so that policy can be determined or action taken”*  
(paragraph 37)

6.3 In principle this is sound advice, although there is overlap, in that step 2 is an essential part of step 1. It also fails to highlight the over-arching importance of the green network – Marco Polo’s bridge – made up of the individual greenspaces – Kublai Khan’s stones. It is not surprising, therefore, that the interviews with planning authorities on their use of NPPG11 identified a clear wish for more detailed guidance on an appropriate planning methodology for the various types of open space. In addition, however, they also stressed the need to recognise the resource constraints which make it difficult, and in some cases impossible, for them to give priority to a detailed analysis of the existing open spaces and the different needs they serve.

6.4 This suggests two things:

- first, a need to develop a planning methodology which does not depend on significant financial or staff resources or for there to be arrangements whereby councils can attract external funding for it. This is covered by Recommendation 2.1 and discussed further in Chapter 7
- second, a need to set clear priorities and put the greatest effort into planning those open spaces which will have the greatest impact in terms of delivering the objectives recommended in NPPG11.

6.5 These objectives are:

- to meet the sporting and recreational needs of residents, tourists and visitors while safeguarding the quality of the natural and cultural heritage
- to safeguard a system of open spaces for formal and informal recreation needs within urban areas, ranging from easily accessible small local green spaces to country parks and path networks
- to safeguard facilities and resources for sport and recreation in urban areas and the countryside which contribute to existing and predicted future needs
- to take a long term and spatially strategic perspective on provision
- to provide local facilities, including for children’s play, to meet standards within or close to residential areas.

6.6 In order to deliver these objectives, the key issues which planning authorities will need to address are:

- whether to adopt a supply-led, demand-led or standards-based approach
- how to determine and promote the appropriate level of access and accessibility to open spaces

- how to promote appropriate long term quality, sustainability and multi-functionality in open space provision at affordable cost
- how to maximise the benefits while minimising the need for staff and financial resources.

## **SUPPLY-LED, DEMAND-LED OR STANDARDS-BASED?**

### **The Supply-led Approach**

6.7 A supply-led methodology uses the location and scale of existing provision as its starting point and seeks to make the best of it, for example by management initiatives designed to stimulate or mould demand. It will nearly always be the most appropriate methodology to use for **urban parks** and **public gardens**, **natural greenspaces** and **civic spaces**.

#### *Urban Parks and Gardens*

6.8 Urban parks and gardens are the most obvious examples of large greenspaces provided by earlier generations. However, this means that their size, distribution and often their nature were determined well over a hundred years ago, since when there have been many changes to where and how people live, how they move around towns and cities and the population, size and density of those towns and cities. As a result, some parks may no longer be in the most appropriate locations in relation to where people actually live, or the facilities within them less relevant than when they were first built. A good example is bandstands, designed to allow local people to enjoy music but now superseded by radios, recorded music and pop concerts.

6.9 At the same time, it is very unlikely that there will be significant growth in either the number or area of Scottish urban parks over coming decades. The same is probably true of country parks on the urban fringe, given the significant reduction in SNH grant aid to them in the past few years and the growing need to re-invest in replacing or upgrading elements of them (Kit Campbell Associates, 1997). Given the local public and political opposition to the loss of urban parks, and a general policy presumption in NPPG11 against their development, this effectively means that local councils implicitly already know their “views on the required level of provision” of parks. However, this is essentially a post-rationalisation rather than a considered policy decision and therefore it will normally be sensible to review the extent to which parks are relevant to current needs. The attractiveness and safety of pedestrian routes to them from nearby housing areas is also an important issue which is often overlooked. Where existing parks are well located in relation to where people live, and clearly meet, or have the potential to meet, local needs, it may be desirable to enhance them. However, if these pre-conditions do not apply, a better approach may be to replace part or all of them with new, more appropriately located greenspaces. This process of “moving greenspace around” might be funded by the redevelopment of the least valuable parts of existing parks or gardens, even although this is likely to arouse public or political opposition.

6.10 Generally, however, the preparation of planning policies for urban parks should be supply-led. So too should policies relating to historically important designed landscapes.



## *Natural Greenspaces*

6.11 A supply-led methodology is also appropriate for most natural greenspaces. Such greenspaces promote bio-diversity and provide habitats for insects, birds and animals, and therefore allow individuals in urban areas to interact with nature, and can assist environmental education. As it is difficult to plan effectively for any particular flora or fauna, a demand-led approach would clearly be inappropriate. Organisations which maintain greenspace, such as the Scottish Greenbelt Company, regard its colonisation by plants or wildlife as a bonus rather than something which can be “designed in”. Accordingly, a supply-led methodology offers the best way of protecting established sites, supplemented by an opportunistic approach to promoting bio-diversity and wildlife habitats on all forms of greenspace through appropriate design and management and maintenance regimes. The development of sustainable urban drainage schemes (SUDS) will often provide such opportunities.

## *Civic Spaces*

6.12 Finally, civic spaces will nearly always be planned in a supply-led manner except when major new civic buildings are proposed, such as Glasgow’s Concert Hall, or major office developments such as the Exchange in central Edinburgh. Other civic spaces, for example, the pedestrianisation of shopping streets and formal civic spaces, depend on the pre-existing availability of the necessary spaces within the established urban grain. Glasgow’s Cathedral Precinct, as in the picture below, is a good example. While the space had existed for many years, it was enhanced significantly following an architectural competition.

### **Recommendation 6.1**

Councils should use a supply-led approach when planning urban parks and gardens, natural greenspace and civic spaces.

## **The Demand-led Approach**

6.13 A demand-led methodology seeks to identify the level and nature of local demand or need and find a way of satisfying it through the provision of appropriate facilities in appropriate locations. It will normally be appropriate for those types of open space for which it is possible clearly to identify and quantify the level of demand – essentially **sports facilities**, **green corridors** and functional greenspaces such as **cemeteries** and **allotments**.



Cathedral Precinct, Glasgow

### *Sports Facilities*

6.14 **Sportscotland** helps to fund a regular Scotland-wide omnibus survey which identifies levels of participation, and trends in them, for most forms of sport and active recreation. While participation is not the same thing as demand (because participation can only happen if there are appropriate facilities), the results of these and other surveys can be combined with demographic data to assess the demand for most types of sports facilities. **Sportscotland's** Facilities Planning Model is a tool which can help councils come to a view on the level of provision required for sporting and physical recreation facilities in their area. However, it appears that councils have only limited awareness of how to use the Model.

#### **Recommendation 6.2**

**Sportscotland** should publish guidance for local authorities and planning authorities on the uses of its Facilities Planning Model.

6.15 At the same time, they should be aware that the Model is only a tool, and an imperfect one at that – albeit better than no tool at all. If used on its own, it is little more than a fairly sophisticated set of standards. **Sportscotland** therefore recommends that councils should also take account of other relevant factors when determining the appropriate level of provision of sports facilities. This will normally require a significant local input from the local authority department concerned with the promotion of sport and recreation.

6.16 The Facilities Planning Model is less appropriate for use in relation to pitches than some other types of sports facilities such as sports halls and swimming pools. **Sportscotland** therefore intends to publish specific guidance on planning for pitch sports and the preparation of playing pitch strategies in early 2001.

6.17 It will be desirable for councils to review levels of pitch provision at fairly regular intervals. The appropriate balance between the number of pitches and the number of different pitch sports changes constantly. This may or may not affect the total land area requirement; a

rugby pitch requires more land than a football pitch, for example. More often than not, however, accommodating change in the number or proportion of pitches for different sports is a management rather than a land use issue, provided there is enough land allocated to pitches as a base resource. However, **sportscotland** and other agencies are actively pursuing policies and sports development initiatives designed to drive up levels of participation. Although these appear not to have been particularly successful, they may have staved off a decline which might otherwise have occurred. The most important initiative has almost certainly been the development of small-sided games such as Soccer Sevens and mini-rugby as they could lead to a slow but progressive increase in the need for pitches and therefore the amount of land required, although this could be offset by the provision of more artificial surfaces. NPPG11, **sportscotland** and local authorities are therefore right, for the moment at least, to adopt the precautionary principle in relation to the development of existing pitches, but this should be kept under review. What does seem certain is that there will be a growing need for floodlit pitches. Ensuring that they are sited in accessible locations, but will not create nuisance for nearby residents, whether directly (for example, light pollution and noise nuisance) or indirectly (for example, increased traffic) is obviously an important land use issue. Accordingly, planning authorities should seek to identify areas in local plans where floodlit facilities will be permitted. The priority given to the provision of sports facilities on school sites by the Lottery Funds responsible for new capital funding opportunities (see Chapter Three) suggests that it may be on school sites that there will be the greatest pressure for floodlighting.

### **Recommendation 6.3**

Rather than adopt simple population-based quantitative provision standards for pitches, local authorities should prepare pitch strategies using the methodology recommended by **sportscotland** and feed the results in to local plan policies and their open space strategy.

### *Green Corridors*

6.18 Green corridors should also be planned using a demand-led approach. In order to maximise their use, and thereby help to reduce vehicle emissions and pollution, they should link residential areas with schools, shops, employment areas and the surrounding countryside by routes which are as short, direct and level as possible. Such corridors are particularly important in areas where car ownership is low or public transport poor.

6.19 There is, however, one key exception to what should generally be a demand-led approach: existing opportunities for linear routes, such as disused railway lines, rivers and canals. Where features like this exist, and there is likely to be demand for their use as green corridors, it will be sensible to use them. For obvious reasons these routes tend to be fairly flat and separated from vehicular traffic. In addition, it is obviously prudent to maintain the line of former railways in case it ever becomes desirable to convert them back to public transport use.

### *Other Functional Greenspaces*

6.20 Finally, greenspaces such as allotments and cemeteries should also be planned using a demand-led methodology as they are provided in order to meet identifiable needs.

### **Recommendation 6.4**

The planning of green corridors and other functional greenspaces should be demand-led, with a particular emphasis on providing green corridors to link disadvantaged areas with public transport routes, employment opportunities and community facilities.

## The Standards-Based Approach

6.21 A standards-based approach makes the implicit assumption that needs are either broadly the same everywhere or cannot easily be identified. This approach is most appropriate with **children's play areas** and **amenity greenspace**, although not universally so.

6.22 Human behaviour is rarely simple and as a basic rule of thumb, the simpler a standard, the less likely it is to be suitable as a planning methodology. Applying a simple standard throughout a single local plan area is easy to do but can:

- perpetuate flawed thinking and fail to deliver “Best Value” in response to real local needs
- stifle innovation, especially in the case of higher than average density developments where new approaches to urban design are needed
- go against the wishes of local residents - house builders cite many examples where local residents have opposed the provision of play areas or amenity greenspaces required by a planning permission
- raise development costs and therefore house prices unnecessarily.

### *Children's Play Areas*

6.23 In spite of the growth in the number of children's soft play and other indoor facilities in recent years, most councils and planning authorities have simply adopted the National Playing Fields Association's published guidelines for children's outdoor play areas. These guidelines are based around the provision of a range of three designated sizes and types, as set out below.

- **Local areas of play (LAPs):** approximately 100 sq m of unequipped space for young children under the age of about 6, within one minute's accompanied walk (or about 100 m) of home. A LAP may have limited facilities such as a sand pit and therefore should include measures to prevent dog fouling.
- **Local Equipped Areas of Play (LEAPs):** approximately 400 sq m, with suitable play equipment (eg slides) and safety surfacing, and intended for 4-8 year olds. The NPFA recommends that there should be a LEAP within approximately 400 m actual walking distance of each house in a residential area.
- **Neighbourhood Equipped Areas of Play (NEAPs):** approximately 1,000 sq m with suitable play equipment (eg slides, basketball ring or ball wall) for 8-14 year olds. The NPFA believes there should be a NEAP within about 1,000 m actual walking distance of each house in a residential area.

6.24 Adopting ready-made standards such as this, without first subjecting them to critical scrutiny, could be a short-sighted policy which may not be affordable. If so, it will also be unsustainable. Moreover, while standards such as this may be useful as an ideal target, very few towns and cities will currently meet them in all their existing housing areas, although there are no obvious signs of particular problems as a result. Dundee City Council, for example, has estimated that achieving the NPFA standard for children's play areas throughout the city – the smallest local authority area in Scotland – would cost around £3-4m, but is actually planning to reduce the number of existing play areas, largely on financial grounds.

6.25 Furthermore, where play areas are provided, their equipment and surfacing should comply with European Standards BS EN 1176, *Playground equipment*, and BS EN 1177, *Impact absorbing playground surfacing – safety requirements and test methods*. If an accident occurs, the courts and Health and Safety Executive will normally use these Standards in order to determine whether play area owners have taken reasonable steps to ensure the safety of children using them. However, meeting the British Standard can be expensive. Dundee City Council has calculated that ensuring the compliance of all its existing play areas would require capital expenditure of around £2m.

6.26 It is also easy to misinterpret and therefore mis-apply simple standards if the way in which they have been determined is not clear. The NPFA's recommendation for 0.6-0.8 ha of children's play space per thousand population is actually based on a notional 4-14 years population density of around 32 children per hectare, derived from the following assumptions (NPFA, 1992):

• average number of houses per hectare	62
• average number of people per household	2.46
• average number of children 4-14 per household	0.52
• therefore, children/hectare = $62 \times 0.52 =$	32

6.27 Councils seem generally to be unaware of this calculation underpinning the NPFA Standard, as they do not adjust the amount of playing space according to the density of proposed housing areas. Where councils have adopted the NPFA guidelines, developers could argue that a lower level of play area provision is appropriate in all circumstances where the proposed density is below 62 houses per hectare, in other words almost all current developments. So is there a better approach?

6.28 Common sense suggests there is. How many planners – or, for that matter, non-planners – spent most of their time playing in designated areas when they were young? Very few, if any. Instead, they played in the street, or, if the houses in the neighbourhood in which they grew up had them, in gardens. Today's children are no different. Yet planning policies generally perpetuate the view that the best way of providing for children is to create sanitised, safe and enclosed play areas with swings, slides and similar equipment.

6.29 Research for the Department of the Environment (DoE, 1973) and the Chartered Institute of Housing and Joseph Rowntree Foundation has confirmed this common sense view. It found that:

*“What is important for children is to be able to move freely around their physical and social environment and have a variety of inter-actions at different locations...This runs contrary to much thinking by both professionals and parents who wish children to have a ‘safe place to play’. Even where there was a place that was both safe and popular, they showed no desire to stay there all the time. This finding more than any other highlights the need for developers to design for play throughout the whole of an estate, not just in a segregated (and often isolated) area.”* (Wheway and Millward, 1997)

6.30 This means that having designated and equipped play areas for children of different ages is important, but contributes only to a limited extent to effective provision for children's play in housing areas. Far more important is to ensure that housing areas, **as a whole**, provide a safe and stimulating environment for children. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation research summed this up by concluding:

*“There is a need to change our way of thinking. Our aim should be to provide a safe and interesting environment for play, not just a safe place to play ...Children's needs for safe access to a diverse outdoor environment on the front street and opportunities for extending their free range mobility along the footpath networks and traffic calmed roads, need to be incorporated in the estate design and management process.”* (Wheway and Millward, 1997)

6.31 The Rowntree research therefore proposed a set of guidelines for children's play which are both far more comprehensive and reflect reality much better than the NPFA's LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs. At the same time, the NPFA's concept of a hierarchy of play areas of different sizes, with different levels of equipment and intended for children of different ages, is obviously valid. They should be provided at nodes or junctions on the path network so that children can reach them safely, taking account of the distance that parents allow their children to "range". This distance has reduced significantly in the past twenty or thirty years as parents' concern over safety have grown; examples of typical ranging distances are given in paragraphs 2.11 and 6.23. The Rowntree guidelines are based around a series of objectives and suitable means of achieving them, set out in Annex D. The key elements of providing for children's play include:

- a footpath network linking residential areas and schools, shops and bus routes
- traffic calming measures to limit car speeds to 10 mph
- public open spaces incorporating play equipment (swings and a slide especially), trees, wild areas and flat grassy areas for ball games, linked to the footpath network
- flat surfaces for sporting activity
- places for teenagers to "hang out" without appearing threatening to passers-by.

6.32 This means that the "standards" used for children's play should be primarily urban design guidelines. A point not included in the Rowntree research is to avoid "rat-runs". Scotland's new towns offer a number of good examples of how this can be achieved. An alternative approach extends simple traffic calming to the Dutch concept of "home zones", in which the street is reclaimed for pedestrians. Dutch practice is to remove kerbs, as kerbs signal to drivers that they have the right of way, pave the surface in a "non-road" material such as setts or bricks and ensure that drivers have to pick their way carefully at low speed round street furniture and trees. Such approaches are more expensive than traditional roads and pavements, however, and may be opposed by highways engineers.

### **Recommendation 6.5**

The main emphasis in planning policies related to children's play should be on ensuring that residential environments provide a range of opportunities for children to play safely. Equipped play areas are also important, *but secondary*, and the need for them may be reduced where houses have large gardens.

### *Amenity Greenspace*

6.33 The need for **amenity greenspace** can also vary considerably with the nature of a development and therefore it is inappropriate to apply the same quantitative standard everywhere, irrespective of the actual design of houses and gardens. It is obviously much less important where houses have large gardens than in flatted developments or areas of sheltered housing where some residents may not be able to tend their gardens. However, as the Rowntree Foundation research quoted above makes clear, where a housing area is likely to contain a significant number of children, amenity greenspace also functions much of the time for children's play.

6.34 The factors which may make it appropriate to interpret an average local standard for amenity greenspace and children's play in a flexible manner include:

- The social and age structure of the population in a development or area. Specifically, will a significant proportion of local residents be children? If so, amenity greenspace and children's playspace should be considered together; if not (for example in sheltered housing), there may be no need for children's playspace.
- The spatial context for a proposed development: for example, a development which adjoins an existing urban park with a large, well equipped play area may not require either a children's playspace or amenity greenspace of its own. Conversely, an area

which does not have ready access to a park may require a higher than average level of provision.

- The average size of gardens linked to houses or flats. Argyll and Bute Council has adopted a policy of waiving its requirement for children's play space when the gardens in a new development are above a certain minimum average size. The average size is used because the Council accepts that not everyone wants a large garden.
- The nature and safety of streets and gardens within a development.
- The ready availability of existing substitutes for amenity open space; for example, in small villages, residents may have ready access to large areas of countryside and therefore do not require "urban" greenspace.

### **Recommendation 6.6**

Planning policies related to amenity greenspace should generally be standards-based, but these standards should allow flexibility according to the size of private house gardens and the availability of nearby public greenspaces such as urban parks

## **ACCESS AND ACCESSIBILITY**

6.35 Public open spaces must be accessible. Indeed, accessibility is a key analytical tool for planning purposes as areas which do not provide reasonably ready access to appropriate areas of open space can be described as having an "open space deficiency". The accessibility of open space (English Nature, 1995) has two components:

- access, or the right to approach, enter or use particular open spaces
- accessibility, or the ability to exercise a right of access.

6.36 There are two main constraints on accessibility:

- physical constraints, which may relate to distance, severance factors such as roads or railways which it is difficult to cross, locked gates (for example, the gardens in the Edinburgh's New Town are normally kept locked and can be used only by those with a key) or blocked paths and individuals' degree of personal mobility
- social and cultural constraints, such as the range constraints imposed on children by parents, fear of crime or other concerns over safety.

6.37 The maximum distance that individuals are prepared to travel to something such as a theatre, park or sports pitch, varies partly with their personal mobility but more importantly with the nature, quality and cost of whatever it is they desire to visit. Some people will happily travel hundreds of miles and pay a high price to see and hear a concert by Luciano Pavarotti but would not go next door to listen to an unknown pub entertainer.

6.38 A number of "distance/time" criteria are becoming widely used in relation to several different types of open space. For example, the criteria used for parks and gardens include:

- Regional parks and open spaces: 8 km (LPAC, 1992)
- Metropolitan parks: 3.2 km (LPAC, 1992)
- District parks: 1.2 km (LDPETA, 1992) or 2.5 km (Dundee City Council, 1999 and Glasgow City Council, 1997)

- Local or Neighbourhood Parks: accessible on foot and therefore approximately 1.2 km (LDPETA, 1992, Dundee City Council 1999, Glasgow City Council 1997)
- Small local parks and open spaces: 400 m (LDPETA, 1992 and Dundee City Council, 1999).

6.39 These distance criteria relate to actual distance walked or travelled and are not straight line radii for catchment areas. The NPFA's 400m maximum distance from home to a LEAP (see paragraph 6.23 above), for example, translates into a straight line radius of around 280 m (LDPETA, 1992).

6.40 Distance/time criteria, allied to size criteria which reflect the range of facilities likely to be found in parks of different sizes, allows the creation of a local hierarchy of open spaces. This is a key planning concept with a number of benefits, including:

- the provision of a consistent, spatially strategic methodology which can be used at both Structure and local plan level and even for masterplanning
- the ability to be purpose-designed to suit any particular area, for example in relation to topography or the age structure of the population, while taking full account of existing open space provision
- the clarification of the importance and role, and therefore the need for potentially different levels of protection through planning policies, of different open spaces
- the provision of a way of combining quantitative, qualitative and distance criteria into a single indicator which can be used quickly and easily to identify "areas of deficiency"
- the provision of a rationale for prioritising the allocation of resources
- the provision of a means of setting appropriate qualitative standards, for example in relation to pitches and other sports facilities where different levels of competition may have different requirements.

6.41 Against this, the hierarchical approach also has some important potential weaknesses, which careful planning can obviate, including the fact that:

- it can undervalue the role of small, local open spaces
- its validity cannot be "proved" if it has no sound empirical base
- it is most appropriate to parks and amenity greenspace and natural greenspaces such as woodland; but of only limited use in relation to children's play, sports facilities and green corridors; and largely irrelevant to functional greenspaces such as cemeteries and allotments.

### **Recommendation 6.7**

Local authorities should use locally-derived open space hierarchies for planning purposes.

## **QUALITY, SUSTAINABILITY AND MULTI-FUNCTIONALITY**

### **Quality**

6.42 The popular definition of quality relates mainly to something's perceived "goodness": a quality product is somehow much better than an ordinary one. But this is actually a poor way of trying to define quality. The September 2000 issue of Which?, for example, reported a survey of the reliability of cars. Based on the experience of readers, the most reliable makes included Skoda while the make most likely to break



down was Jaguar; yet Jaguars have long been regarded as “quality” cars while Skodas have been the butt of many jokes.

6.43 The quality movement in industry uses definitions which relate to conformity with agreed standards and therefore consistency. British Standard BS 4778:1979 defines quality as:

*“The totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy a given need”*

6.44 If “a product or service” is replaced with “an open space”, this gives at least part of a definition of quality for planning purposes. An alternative and simpler definition is “fit for purpose”. It follows that the potential to substitute one type of public open space for another – to use sports pitches as a substitute for a park or amenity greenspace, say – is very limited, although private open space can substitute for public open space to some extent. If every football team had its own pitch, for example, in theory at least there would be no need for public pitches.

6.45 At the same time, there is a need to take account of the everyday meaning of quality. To revert to the motoring analogy, a Jaguar and Skoda are equally fit for purpose if that purpose is simply to drive along a motorway at a steady 70 miles per hour; but given a free choice, most people would choose the Jaguar.

6.46 Open space therefore needs a “wow factor” – something which lifts it beyond being merely fit for purpose and actually inspires people to value and use it. The developers of the best business parks and the best shopping environments know that high quality landscaping helps to attract tenants and boost rental values; the same should be true of other types of open space. For example, good parks managers are developing the concept of “Friends” or similar groups so that they can interact with the users of their parks and ensure they meet their needs. This also harnesses the most effective and cheapest form of promotion there is – word of mouth.

### **Recommendation 6.8**

Planning policies should give a high priority to ensuring that new greenspaces are of high quality, if necessary at the expense of quantity.

6.47 A specific aspect of quality which is often overlooked is personal safety or concern for the apparent lack of it. This is something which is best delivered through good design and the development control process. New greenspaces should be as safe as can reasonably be achieved, for example by:

- promoting “Safe by Design” principles, including the lighting of green corridors
- ensuring that young children are kept away from water areas, such as the reed ponds in sustainable urban drainage schemes (SUDS), by fencing or other appropriate means
- ensuring that the landscaping around buildings is low enough not to be able to conceal potential attackers.

### **Recommendation 6.9**

The development control process should give a high priority to ensuring that new greenspaces are as safe as can reasonably be achieved.

## **Sustainability**

6.48 In open space terms, sustainability is a function of the inter-relationship between design and management. This is not simply a cost issue, although whole life costs are obviously extremely important, and includes (Ironsides Farrar Ltd, 1999):

- encouraging sustainable lifestyles, for example by providing paths and cycle routes
- making maximum use of existing features and assets
- strengthening the sense of place
- incorporating local or recycled materials
- encouraging community participation and involvement
- reducing inputs of non-renewable resources during construction and subsequent maintenance
- eliminating or reducing the use of herbicides and resources that affect other ecosystems
- encouraging habitat creation and native planting
- managing resources carefully – for example, cutting grass when needed and in appropriate weather conditions, not in accordance with a standard contract.

6.49 The sustainability of open spaces ultimately depends on whether it will be possible to ensure sufficient maintenance and regeneration to pass them on in good condition to future generations. This, in turn, relates to the perceived value of open spaces. If open spaces are not valued, public authorities and local businesses and other taxpayers will not allocate resources to their maintenance and local residents will not be willing to use and support them. This sometimes encourages local authorities and other land owners to invest greater amounts of capital to save revenue later, but this is much easier to achieve in relation to civic spaces than greenspaces. A good example is the refurbishment of the pedestrianised Buchanan Street in Glasgow, where the City Council has specified granite seats rather than easily damaged wooden ones.

6.50 At the same time, there is no point in designing attractive open spaces that require such high maintenance that they become unaffordable and a spiral of decline sets in. Chapter 5 also highlighted the danger of substituting occasional capital re-investment for adequate revenue funding. Quality Greenspace in Residential Areas defines sustainable residential greenspace as:

*“Greenspace fit for its purpose, responsive to evolving needs and changes over an extended period of time, not requiring an excessive input of resources.”* (Ironsides Farrar Ltd, 1999)

6.51 In more detail, for greenspace to be sustainable it should:

- meet the varied recreation and leisure needs of users
- create a pleasant environment
- improve a neighbourhood’s image
- ameliorate microclimate and pollution and increase bio-diversity
- be designed with flexibility in mind for varied contemporary usage and functions and with a view to future maturation, development and change
- be located and designed with full consideration of the practical and financial implications of future maintenance and usage
- involve local communities
- promote bio-diversity and urban wildlife habitats
- use local materials and craft skills
- reduce inputs of energy, water and chemicals in maintenance operations.

<b>Recommendation 6.10</b>
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Local authority planners should work closely with the departments or outside agencies responsible for greenspace management when negotiating with developers to ensure that any new greenspaces provided as part of developments will be sustainable for the long term.

## **Multi-functionality**

6.52 While clarity is essential in order to deliver “fit for purpose” and therefore quality, open spaces can also serve one or more secondary purposes without compromising their primary role. Examples of these secondary purposes, such as the control of pollution or noise and helping to reduce energy consumption in buildings or motorised transport, are discussed in paragraphs 5.23-5.25. Sustainability, quality and multi-functionality are therefore strongly inter-dependent.

### **Recommendation 6.11**

The development control process should seek to ensure that new greenspaces have a clear primary purpose which is not compromised unnecessarily, but also serve appropriate secondary purposes.

## **MAXIMISING BENEFITS AND MINIMISING THE USE OF RESOURCES**

6.53 The declining resources for open space management and maintenance highlighted in Chapter 4 make it more and more important that councils make the best use of the resources at their disposal and promote joint thinking between planning and those departments responsible for open space asset management. These asset management departments have considerable experience and knowledge which should inform planning policies; they are also likely to be more in touch with public opinion than planners in relation to the ongoing use of open space.

6.54 The interviews with planning officers identified that a number of councils had considered undertaking a comprehensive open space audit and regarded it as an important first step towards a local open space strategy. Unfortunately, they had been unable to allocate the necessary staff resources to allow this. It is therefore significant that the completed Dundee, Glasgow and South Ayrshire strategies, and other Scottish open space strategies being prepared in Edinburgh and Perth and Kinross, and most of those prepared in England, have been or are being driven more by asset managers than planners.

6.55 The ideal approach to open space is therefore to see planning as just one component of a wider strategic and corporate approach to open space issues. The potential for “trade-offs” in the balance between different types of open space in any area means that concentrating on only one or two types of open space at a time will rarely be sensible. In principle, therefore, there is a good case to be made for the preparation of a comprehensive open space strategy, using the experience and resources of more than one department, to tackle the cross-cutting issues outlined earlier. Advice on the preparation of a wide-ranging open space strategy is given in Chapter 7.

6.56 Where this is not possible, for whatever reason, it may be necessary for planning departments to “go it alone” – but this should be seen as a last resort and adopted only when a wider, corporate approach is not possible.

### **Recommendation 6.12**

Local authorities should prepare comprehensive open space strategies involving cross-department thinking and working with local communities and appropriate external partners as a framework for their open space planning policies.

## **THE SCOPE OF OPEN SPACE PLANNING POLICIES**

6.57 From the above discussion, it is clear that the open space content of development plans, including related supplementary planning guidance, should ideally encompass:

- the typology of open space used in the plan
- the definition of a suitable, locally-determined open space hierarchy
- the identification and protection of the key components of the green network, together with strategic gaps in it and how they will be filled
- proposals for the enhancement of existing open spaces, as appropriate
- provision standards for new open spaces, where appropriate
- accessibility standards
- guidelines on urban design and open space quality
- guidelines on future maintenance arrangements
- guidelines on implementation
- a statement of the circumstances in which the planning authority will seek Section 75 Agreements
- proposals for monitoring the success of plan policies.

6.58 The Aberdeenshire Council Local Plan Policies summarised in Annex E provide a good example of how these various elements can be incorporated into a comprehensive set of policies and guidance.

## **OPEN SPACE PLANNING METHODOLOGIES**

### **Key principles**

6.59 The fundamental principle is that there is little sense in protecting existing open spaces or requiring developers to provide new ones unless:

- they will serve a clearly identified and necessary local purpose, either now or in the foreseeable future
- they will be of an appropriate quality
- there is reasonable certainty of adequate resources for their long term maintenance and therefore sustainability.

6.60 The application of broad quantitative provision standards, derived or simply copied from elsewhere, will clearly fail the first and second of these tests, while the way in which commuted sums are currently calculated and used fails the third - and sometimes the second as well. The overall aims of open space planning policies should therefore be:

- to ensure that every area of open space serves a clearly defined purpose, is of high quality, sustainable and, for greenspaces, an integral part of the green network
- to promote the development of those publicly owned and maintained open spaces which are not needed, provided it is absolutely clear there will be no real prospect of their beneficial use in the long term
- to identify and use local needs as the basis for determining the appropriate level of open space in new developments.

6.61 The basic approach is common to each of the different types of open space:

- review relevant existing strategies in order to determine the planning context
- obtain the facts required for planning purposes, including feedback from those responsible for the management and maintenance and promoting the use of the different kinds of open space
- prepare planning policies and proposals and incorporate them in the Structure or local plan as appropriate.

6.62 In addition, there is obviously a need to involve and consult local communities at appropriate points in the planning process, even though local authorities are not generally resourced to do this effectively. Statutory development plans are subject to formal consultation procedures, but these are rarely enough to generate widespread public interest and support, especially in disadvantaged areas.

## **Development Plans in Relation to Existing Strategies**

6.63 Development plans do not exist in isolation but must relate to a wide range of other plans and strategies which affect the nature and current and future use of land by people and wildlife. These other strategies range from international conventions on issues such as global warming to purely local concerns such as funding the future maintenance of children's play equipment. Those likely to have the greatest significance for land use matters are highlighted in various NPPGs and therefore in Chapter 2. In addition, relevant national strategies should be taken into account, obvious examples being *Sport 21 – Nothing Left to Chance*, the national strategy for sport and recreation (sportscotland, 1998), and *A Natural Perspective*, SNH's corporate strategy (SNH, undated, but 2000). Finally, there may also be other local plans or strategies which could have significant land use implications, such as the vision in the Community Plan or Local Transport Strategy.

6.64 For the sake of concision, these other plans and strategies are not referred to in the step by step methodologies suggested below, but the planning system has a key role to play in helping to deliver their objectives. Some parts of strategies may even prove valuable for use as supplementary planning guidance.

## **Landscape Appraisal**

6.65 A desirable first step, for both structure and local plan purposes, is to undertake a broad landscape appraisal if one is not already available from SNH. SNH has published around 25 landscape character assessments for various parts of Scotland. Ideally, the appraisal should be complemented by a landscape strategy. This will provide a strategic overview of the plan area and help to identify potential opportunities for the creation of new regional, country or urban parks and forest or woodland and potential links to regeneration initiatives. This is likely to include such features as:

- landscape quality – if appropriate, including national designations such as Areas of Great Landscape Value
- rivers and river valleys, canals
- woodland areas
- geological features
- skylines and key views
- major greenspaces, with the definition of “major” depending on whether the appraisal relates to a structure or local plan
- designated local parks and gardens, including designed landscapes
- major barriers (eg motorways, railways)
- major roads and associated planting.

## **Recommendation 6.13**

Open space planning policies should be set within the context of a broad landscape strategy and linked to Local Biodiversity Action Plans.

## Parks and Public Gardens

6.66 The basic methodology for parks and gardens, including historic burial grounds, is to use a supply-led hierarchy. It is applicable at both structure and local plan level and can be extended for use in masterplanning. This means:

- Identify all parks and gardens in the plan area, together with their size, and prepare a broad overview of their range of features or facilities, use, condition and accessibility on foot, by public transport and by people with disabilities.
- Draw up a suitable parks/gardens hierarchy as a conceptual framework for policy formulation. This must be purpose-designed for the local situation and not simply copied from somewhere else. The best way of doing this will normally be through the analysis of a detailed open space audit and any available management information, supplemented by the results of any recent local user or non-user surveys. The extent of the hierarchy will vary according to the purposes for which it will be used, but in most cases a maximum of four or five defined levels should be adequate. For Structure Plan purposes, include only those parks and gardens of strategic significance – essentially national, regional and country parks, the largest and most important urban parks and those historic gardens listed in the *Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes in Scotland*. For local plan purposes use a hierarchy which goes down to the neighbourhood level. Various criteria can be used to define the levels in the hierarchy, including:

Historical or cultural significance

Role or purpose

Size

Maximum catchment, defined in terms of distance or travel time by - appropriate modes of travel. This can be determined either by using the information above, or, if there is existing market research data or a user survey can be afforded, local data.

Range of features or facilities

Condition

Levels and types of use.

- Define the role of each existing park in accordance with the hierarchy, using the knowledge and experience of the department responsible for management and maintenance. Plot the appropriate catchment area on a base map, using existing park entrances and actual travel distances/times and not radii, so as to take account of severance features such as railways or rivers and suitable crossing points on busy roads. It will be best to do this separately for each level of the hierarchy. Sieve mapping of the results will identify those areas least or not served by existing parks or gardens. These can then be classed as lacking access to a park or garden of different types, although each level of the hierarchy will substitute for each of the levels below (but not above) it. For example, a city park with a wide range of features can also be used as a local park for those people who live close to it, but a local park with only a limited range of features cannot substitute for a city park.
- Seek to identify ways of enhancing the accessibility and therefore extending the catchment of existing parks and gardens to those areas identified as lacking access to a park. This can

sometimes be achieved by means of relatively simple measures such as new entrances or more complex ones such as new access routes. If appropriate, re-draw park catchments and review the quality and safety of routes to the park, especially for pedestrians.

- Identify and prepare suitable planning policies related to parks for inclusion in the structure or local plan as appropriate. These might include:

An identified need for alternative forms of greenspace in those areas which are classed as lacking access to a park or garden

The protection of existing parks and gardens from development

The designation of particular parks or areas of quality greenspace as Conservation Areas (note: this designation can make it easier to attract external funding for enhancements)

The disposal of unnecessary areas of parkland for development and change of use.

- Identify those parks and gardens which are critically important elements of the green network and should be protected and shown on the Key Diagram (structure plan) or Proposals Map (local plan).

#### **Recommendation 6.14**

The basic planning methodology for urban parks and gardens should be:

- 1 Identify all parks and gardens in the plan area
- 2 Draw up a suitable parks/gardens hierarchy
- 3 Define the role of each existing park
- 4 Seek to identify ways of enhancing the accessibility and therefore extending the catchment of existing parks
- 5 Identify and prepare a draft planning policy and Supplementary Planning Guidance
- 6 Identify those parks and gardens which are critically important elements of the green network and should be protected and show them on the Key Diagram (structure plan) or Proposals Map (local plan).

## **Children's Play and Amenity Greenspace**

### *Housing Areas*

6.67 The discussion on the use of a standards-based approach to children's play areas and amenity greenspace above suggests a need for flexible planning policies which deal with them in an integrated way, with the children's play areas component waived in those developments where it will be irrelevant. One way of doing this will be to specify both an average standard and the circumstances in which it can be adjusted upwards or downwards. An appropriate methodology is therefore:

- With the department or agency responsible for open space asset management, identify a number of existing developments in which children play happily and safely. Audit them to determine why they are successful and the extent to which children also play in gardens. It may be sensible either to undertake a survey of parents or, better, to set up one or more focus groups to get their views. These should relate to how children play in their home environment (in both public areas and private gardens), the attitudes of householders to living next to designated play areas and the sorts of areas parents think would best suit their children.
- Use this review to set broad average standards for the amount and quality of amenity greenspace and designated children's play areas in new housing areas, together with broad design guidelines. The quantitative elements of this might be based, for example, on the anticipated number and ages of residents in new housing areas coupled with the size of

private gardens, while the qualitative guidelines might be based on the Rowntree research. Where innovative approaches to road design are proposed (such as the “home zones” discussed in paragraph 6.32) they must obviously be agreed with the department responsible for highways.

- Draft a local plan policy which will allow the adjustment downwards, or require the adjustment upwards, of the amount of amenity greenspace and children’s play areas in specific circumstances. For example, the amount of amenity greenspace required might be flexible according to the average size of private gardens in new residential areas, while the children’s play areas requirement could be omitted in sheltered housing. In addition, it will be desirable that there should be no small, disjointed areas of greenspace which will be a nuisance to maintain. It will often be better for such areas to be included in private gardens.

### *Amenity Greenspace in Other Developments*

6.68 There is a good case for viewing the landscaping associated with many non-housing developments, for example business parks and even some industrial estates, as amenity greenspace. The emphasis in these areas should be on quality rather than quantity, although in larger developments it may be desirable to encourage the provision of a limited range of outdoor sports facilities in much the same way that the Scottish Executive headquarters in Leith and the office development at Edinburgh Park include 5-a-side courts.

6.69 An appropriate planning methodology will be broadly similar to the one suggested above for housing developments.

### **Recommendation 6.15**

The basic planning methodology for children’s play and amenity greenspace in new developments should give greater priority to qualitative issues than quantitative requirements, be flexible to suit local circumstances and promote diversity rather than uniformity. The method should be to:

#### *Housing Developments*

1. Obtain feedback on how children actually play in different home environments and the views of parents and children, and other householders, to determine the essential and desirable features of a safe, attractive housing environment for both adults and children of different ages
2. Consider the need for equipped play areas, as suggested by the NPFA
3. Determine appropriate design guidelines and, if considered appropriate, average provision standards
4. Determine how and when the proposed average standards can or should be adjusted
5. Identify and prepare a suitable draft planning policy and Supplementary Planning Guidance.

#### *Non-housing Developments*

1. Review the way in which developers have provided open space and/or landscaping in non-housing developments and how it has been maintained by property owners
2. Determine appropriate design guidelines and, if considered appropriate, average provision standards
3. Identify and prepare a suitable draft planning policy and Supplementary Planning Guidance.



## Sports Facilities

6.70 The pitches strategy methodology which **sportscotland** will publish during 2001 will include some elements which need not necessarily be a part of the local plan process, such as a review of maintenance regimes and costs for local authority pitches. Accordingly, pitch sport strategies are best prepared by the department responsible for sport and recreation, in partnership with local sports interests, with planners' assistance. The strategy can then feed directly into planning policies.

6.71 The amenity value of playing fields or pitches is not a valid argument for their retention *as pitches* if there is no identifiable sporting need for them. If there is no clear need for any form of greenspace on a surplus pitch site, it may be possible to dispose of the land for development. However, the first step in such circumstances should always be to determine whether it should be retained as another form of greenspace. If so, it should be re-designed – for example, with appropriate planting, paths and lighting - and future maintenance costs allocated to the appropriate non-sports budget.

6.72 In order to minimise unnecessary travel, it is desirable in principle to have sports facilities close to housing areas. This is mainly relevant, however, to those relatively small local facilities which attract a high level of casual use, such as bowling greens, tennis courts, kickabout areas, outdoor basketball hoops and skateboard areas, although local school sports facilities should generally be available for community use. It is much less appropriate for organised sport, with teams playing in competitive leagues. For most teams, half of all matches are at “home” and half “away” and therefore travel is an integral part of taking part in pitch sports. In addition, many sportsmen or women choose to join a club according to the opportunities it offers to play or compete at a particular standard, or because of the quality of facilities on offer (for example, a particular golf course) not because it is the most accessible.

6.73 There is also a strong economic argument against providing some types of sports facilities, such as pitches or tennis courts, on small dispersed sites. Maintenance is best carried out by skilled and experienced groundstaff using machines and transporting them around small sites is inherently expensive and inefficient. Moreover, there are also economies of scale in larger changing pavilions.

### Recommendation 6.16

Local authorities should prepare pitch strategies, using the methodology to be published by sportscotland, as an input to their local plan and Open Space Strategy. The most appropriate department to take the lead in preparing the strategy will normally be the one responsible for sport and recreation.

## Natural Greenspace

6.74 The most important wildlife or other natural heritage sites in any area should already have a formal designation which protects them from development, for example as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) or Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Development plans should emphasise the importance of these designations and also include a broad assessment of the natural heritage in the plan area.

6.75 Local knowledge, if necessary supplemented by fairly simple surveys, can often help to identify wildlife habitats (including ponds and water courses or linear areas such as railway and canal embankments) which should be protected and if possible enhanced. Private open spaces, such as house gardens, also contribute to bio-diversity and provide habitats.

6.76 In addition, it will be sensible to take an opportunistic approach to encouraging the provision of additional natural greenspaces, whenever any form of greenspace is planned or sustainable urban drainage schemes are proposed, and to promote the temporary greening of derelict sites.

6.77 *Accessible Natural Greenspace in Towns and Cities* (English Nature, 1995) reviewed research on the contribution of different areas of natural greenspace to bio-diversity and wildlife habitats. It concluded that

while there is a positive relationship between site size and species richness, other factors, such as vegetation structure and management, are often more important. Accordingly, there is no empirical evidence to suggest that sites need to be of any minimum size to be of significant value to bio-diversity and wildlife.

6.78 Other research has questioned the view that “wildlife corridors” provide conduits along which species migrate, but concluded that the case for or against them is not yet proven (Dawson, 1994). Accordingly, where they are thought to exist, the precautionary principle suggests they should be protected; and where they do not, promoting them is not a planning priority.

### **Recommendation 6.17**

The methodology used for determining planning policies for natural greenspaces should be to:

1. Identify all areas of natural greenspace with a formal natural heritage designation. Identify them on the local plan proposals map and protect them by appropriate policies in the structure and local plan.
2. If resources permit, undertake a local survey to identify existing areas of natural greenspace which provide significant wildlife habitats and are valuable in terms of bio-diversity, including possible wildlife corridors. Identify them on the Proposals Map and protect them by an appropriate local plan policy.
3. Prepare a draft local plan policy requiring developers of large greenfield or derelict brownfield sites (of say 2 ha and over) to undertake a habitat survey, together with criteria which can be used to identify those areas of local value to wildlife or bio-diversity which should be protected, for inclusion in Supplementary Planning Guidance.
4. Prepare a draft local plan policy which promotes the provision of areas of natural greenspace as part of other forms of greenspace, for example around the periphery of sports pitches, in parks and gardens and on or close to school sites, on an opportunistic basis.
5. Prepare a draft local plan policy promoting the temporary “greening” or visual enhancement of sites awaiting development, provided a suitable delivery mechanism can be identified.

## **Green Corridors**

6.79 Green corridors for use by pedestrians and cyclists require a demand-led approach and in principle a broadly similar methodology to road planning is appropriate, although there are a number of key differences, including:

- the need to give priority to providing comprehensive networks of routes serving areas of low car ownership; this will help residents of these areas access employment opportunities
- the need to follow desire lines while avoiding steep gradients, so as to make using green corridors easy and convenient for people of all ages and people with disabilities, coupled with the desirability of routing green corridors through other types of greenspace in order to increase their use and thereby make them appear safer
- the need to promote personal safety, for example by adopting “Safer Cities” principles such as improving sightlines and the permeability of natural areas, minimising hiding and entrapment spots and providing lighting (English Nature, 1995) and undertaking a safety audit
- the need to take full account of feedback from cycling organisations and local communities, as well as those responsible for the maintenance of existing green corridors

- the desirability of using existing linear routes such as canal towpaths and disused railway lines which are already separated from traffic, while bearing in mind the possible re-opening of rail lines
- the desirability of using green corridors to link up different areas of open space within the urban area and to areas of countryside outside it, especially country parks on the periphery of towns and cities
- the need to support major employers' green travel plans for car sharing and other measures, such as the provision of secure bicycle shelters, to reduce the use of cars.

6.80 The provision of green corridors, and measures to promote their use, should also form an integral part of the local transport strategy, as suggested in NPPG17, Transport and Planning (Scottish Office, 1999). More specific guidance is available in publications such as *Guidance on Local Transport Strategies and Road Traffic Reduction Reports* (Scottish Executive, 1999).

### **Recommendation 6.18**

The basic planning methodology for green corridors should be to

1. Identify those buildings, facilities or other destinations which significant numbers of people will want to visit, such as schools, leisure facilities, community facilities such as shops and public transport nodes
2. Identify the likely origins of their journeys, which are likely mainly to be in residential and employment areas
3. Find ways of linking them by appropriate green corridors for use by pedestrians and cyclists, ideally in the form of a "spider's web" network which maximises accessibility
4. Identify existing and proposed green corridors on the local plan Proposals Map and prepare and adopt a draft local plan policy related to their provision, together with Supplementary Planning Guidance.

## Other Functional Greenspaces

6.81 Finally, other functional greenspaces should be planned using a demand-led methodology.

6.82 The demand for **allotments** can be established from local authority records. It is obviously desirable for local authorities not only to provide and rent allotments, but also to keep a waiting list as this helps to identify the level of unmet demand and its spatial distribution. CoSLA is in the course of preparing advice for councils on allotments.

6.83 As for **cemeteries**, it is possible to calculate the likely long term “demand” in any area over any given period. The basic methodology is to:

- determine the average number of local deaths likely in each year
- determine the proportion of deaths resulting in burial through feedback from the council department involved
- calculate the average area of land required for each individual lair
- multiply these three factors together to give the total area of land required
- determine the most appropriate locations for additional cemetery space, bearing in mind the need to provide a range of cemeteries in most areas in order to make it relatively easy for local people to visit them
- prepare and adopt a suitable draft local plan policy.

### Recommendation 6.19

Councils should use a simple demand-led approach to the planning of functional greenspaces.

## Civic Spaces

6.84 The central area and its civic spaces probably define the image of a town or city more than anything else as it is there that most hotel beds and visitor attractions are located. Very few Edinburgh tourists visit Pilton or Drylaw, for example, but most visit Princes Street. Where a town centre management scheme is in place, those involved in directing it should be a valuable source of feedback and advice.

6.85 It will normally be desirable to prepare policies for the provision, enhancement or protection of civic spaces following the preparation of a town centre, townscape or similar public realm strategy. The key issues to be included in this strategy may include:

- the definition of important existing civic spaces
- analysis of the use and quality of existing civic spaces
- opportunities to create more civic spaces as part of town centre developments
- urban design framework
- traffic management
- promoting pedestrian priority, including provision for people with disabilities
- townscape analysis
- the setting of key buildings
- security and personal safety
- servicing arrangements, including emergency access
- landscape
- signage and information (eg related to tourism)

- street furniture
- development briefs.

6.86 Civic spaces differ from greenspaces in one very important respect: they tend to be surrounded by business premises, whose owners can measure in financial terms the impact improving the environment can have in boosting their trade. There are many examples where the proposed pedestrianisation of a shopping streets has been opposed by local shopkeepers, for example, only for them to report increased turnover once it is complete. It is therefore more than likely to be in their direct financial interest to work in partnership with their local authority, and each other, to maintain and enhance their local environment. In addition, if new traders can be attracted into an area, they will often invest in upgrading their premises. This means that a limited amount of seedcorn funding from the local authority – which can often be recouped from the increase in Council Tax or non-domestic rates over a period – can generate considerable benefits, especially if the regenerated area can be “branded”. Birmingham is an example of one British city which has created a number of “quarters” while a limited investment by Edinburgh District Council led, over a period of several years, to the regeneration of the Grassmarket, as in the case study below.

### **CASE STUDY: EDINBURGH’S GRASSMARKET**



Edinburgh’s last public hanging was held in the Grassmarket and for a number of years, a public house, The Last Drop, has commemorated that fact. For many years, the Grassmarket was known mainly for the hostels for homeless men and women and the group of alcoholics who frequented it. By day it was run-down and seedy; by night it was deserted, dark and threatening.

The former Edinburgh Corporation Planning Department completed a study of the area in August 1971. The 1965 Development Plan had zoned both sides of the Grassmarket for cultural, university and public buildings but this had little effect as no-one really wanted to invest in the area. As a result, the buildings were generally run down and in poor structural condition and the 1971 study concluded that the area was “ripe for development”. It recommended a new zoning of residential on the north side, envisaging significant demolition and redevelopment, while concluding that the cultural, university and public building zoning of the south side should be retained.

The impetus for change came primarily from the voluntary housing association movement which was looking to develop affordable rented housing in the centre of the City. In addition, because of its strong commitment to those who are disadvantaged, it saw an opportunity to make worthwhile improvements to the lives of the alcoholics and other people living either on the street or in the homeless hostels.

Edinvar Housing Association, which had pioneered social housing on the south side of the City around the University area, promoted an architectural competition for the design of a new tenement block immediately below the Castle Esplanade on what had become a fairly large and unsightly gap site. It also undertook the rehabilitation of the largest hostel on the south side of the area.

At around the same time, the then District Council promoted a limited number of environmental improvements, including the planting of trees down the centre, which had the effect of splitting the Grassmarket longitudinally along its middle, concentrating traffic on the southern half of the roadway and creating a very much safer, traffic calmed pedestrian environment on the north side. This and the Edinvar developments proved effective catalysts which encouraged new businesses into the area, attracted by the low property prices and proximity to the city centre. Over roughly a decade the area was transformed, with many new restaurants and trendy boutiques. A Grassmarket Festival began during the period of the Edinburgh Festival and local traders promoted further environmental improvements by providing hanging baskets and open-air seats and tables during the summer with the result that it has become a lively area which is very popular with tourists.

#### **Recommendation 6.20**

Civic spaces should be planned within the context of a town centre urban design or public realm strategy agreed with town centre businesses.

### **Synthesis**

6.87 Initially, each of the various types of greenspace and civic spaces should be considered separately. In the synthesis stage, however, it is necessary to consider how they inter-relate and bring them together into a comprehensive and mutually supportive set of policies and proposals designed to deliver the aims in paragraph 6.60 above.

6.88 It is also important that the green network is balanced, with an appropriate proportion of each type of greenspace at the neighbourhood, district and, in cities, city-wide level. For example, in those areas identified as lacking access to an urban park, and where there is no realistic possibility of one being created, it may be sensible to promote higher levels of amenity greenspace within new developments. In others, it may be more sensible for developers to contribute to the wider green network than provide their own on-site greenspaces. However, in such circumstances, developers cannot be expected to make up for pre-existing deficits and therefore some council investment may also be necessary.

6.89 A particular issue arises in those council areas which are a mixture of urban and rural environments. Policy approaches which are suitable for use in urban areas may be less useful in rural areas, and vice versa. But if a council adopts different approaches to its planning and rural areas, where should the boundary between them be? In principle, however, this is no different from the situation around the periphery of Dundee, Aberdeen and parts of Edinburgh and Glasgow. Somewhere there has to be a “boundary”; and in predominantly rural areas, unless there are good reasons for a different approach, this should probably be the edge of those settlement envelopes defined in the local plan.

#### **Recommendation 6.21**

While the various types of greenspace should initially be planned separately, draft policies and Supplementary Planning Guidance in relation to each of them should be brought together to create holistic policies which will be effective in delivering and protecting a sustainable network of greenspaces and civic spaces.

## **PLANNING CONDITIONS AND SECTION 75 AGREEMENTS**

6.90 Circular 12/96 sets out the criteria which Section 75 agreements should meet. Such agreements should be:

- Relevant to planning
- Directly related to the proposed development
- Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development
- Reasonable in all other respects

6.91 Circular 4/98 and its addendum sets out the general policy on the use of conditions. In addition to the criteria for S.75 agreements, it is important for conditions to be precise and enforceable. Planning authorities should, wherever possible, rely on planning conditions, including suspensive conditions, rather than planning agreements.

6.92 The criterion “directly related to the proposed development” does not mean that any additional facilities provided or funded by the developer must necessarily be on or even immediately adjacent to the development site. Instead, it should be interpreted in terms of the identifiable consequences or impacts of the development on the local community infrastructure. These impacts may necessitate the provision of either:

- On-site facilities related to the proposed development or land use; or
- Off-site facilities needed as a result of the development in order to avoid placing an additional burden on the existing local community.

6.93 The most common uses for conditions in relation to greenspace have probably been:

- to require that housing developers make adequate arrangements for the long term maintenance of any greenspace in their developments, usually before any houses are occupied
- to require that landscaping related to other developments should be complete before they are occupied.

6.94 The use of Section 75 agreements under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 has probably been much less common. Section 75 (1) states that agreements are used *“for the purposes of restricting or regulating the development or use of the land, either permanently or during such period as may be prescribed by the agreement”*, while 75 (2) adds *“Any such agreement may contain such incidental or consequential provisions (including financial ones) as appear to the planning authority to be necessary or expedient for the purposes of the agreement.”*

6.95 Section 75 agreements therefore provide a potentially very useful mechanism to help avoid or minimise any “planning loss” which can result from a development. Although this term is not used in legislation, it is a simple and easily understood way of summing up the potential impacts of a new development. A good example of “planning loss” might be the overloading of existing community infrastructure, such as the green network, as the result of population increase arising from a new development. It will then be reasonable for the planning authority to seek a Section 75 agreement through which the developer will contribute to measures which will minimise or overcome this loss, in proportion to the extra pressures which will arise. This can be done by the developer providing either the necessary new facilities, or making improvements to existing ones to increase their capacity, or a financial contribution which the local authority will subsequently use for the purpose. Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council in Hampshire seeks to obtain financial contributions from developers using the English equivalent of Section 75 Agreements as a matter of course, and generated approximately £5m in this way between mid 1995 and mid 2000. At the local plan Inquiry, the Inspector generally endorsed its approach. Contributions arising from housing developments are used to fund:

- On-site open space

landscaping  
public art

- Off-site the Council's sustainable transport strategy
  - open space
  - play areas
  - public art
  - community facilities
  - community halls
  - swimming pools
  - education facilities
  - health clinics.

6.96 In addition, the Council also seeks contributions from commercial developments to fund:

- sustainable transport
- green commuter plans
- parking strategy implementation
- public art
- education/training programmes
- open space and landscaping.

6.97 It should be possible for more Scottish councils to introduce development plan policies requiring most developers to make a contribution to the provision and subsequent maintenance of the green network in their area. It will also often be more sensible to aggregate the contributions from a number of developments than require housing developers to provide or fund small, isolated greenspaces such as single pitches, although the contributions must be used for the purpose for which they were provided within a reasonable period, usually of five years. This gives planning authorities some room for manoeuvre in relation to developers' contributions and can help to ensure that the phasing of developments does not penalise early contributors. For example, in a neighbourhood in which a council wishes to see a higher than normal area of amenity greenspace in a new housing development, it could agree to waive the contribution to the wider green network in return for more local greenspace.

### **Recommendation 6.22**

Planning authorities should seek to make the optimum use of planning conditions and Section 75 agreements to help deliver and enhance those individual high quality open spaces which together constitute a sustainable green network.

6.98 Achieving the optimum use of conditions and Section 75 agreements, while at the same time meeting the performance target of determining planning applications within 2 months of their submission, requires that councils have:

- An agreed checklist of those elements of infrastructure for which they will seek agreements which they can use in pre-application discussion with developers
- An agreed method for calculating the contributions required from a development
- Procedures to deliver a draft agreement within a 2 month period

## **PLANNING BRIEFS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENTS**

6.99 As well as general planning policies, planning departments will often be involved in preparing planning briefs or master plans for proposed significant new developments. Both green and brownfield sites present an opportunity to consider open space issues from first principles. Where existing open spaces are of



high quality and clearly valuable as part of the wider green network it may be appropriate to protect them, but in other cases it will probably be better to wipe the slate clean and work with developers to create a very different but more appropriate network of open spaces.

## SUMMARY

6.100 Tables 6.1 and 6.2 below summarise the basic methodologies suggested for planning open space at both structure and local plan level:

**Table 6.1: Structure Plans: Strategic Issues and Policies**

Type	Includes	Planning methodologies	Primary purposes
Strategically important open spaces (ie both greenspaces and civic spaces)	Green belt and green wedges, urban forests, country parks, major urban landscape features eg river valleys, geological features, major civic spaces. Some sports facilities, such as stadia, motor or water sport facilities and airfields, may also be strategically significant. So too is the National Cycling Network promoted by Sustrans.	<p><i>Mix of supply-led and demand-led plus landscape appraisal</i></p> <p><b>Supply-led:</b> regional and country parks and historic landscapes</p> <p><b>Demand-led:</b> sports facilities of national or regional significance; golf courses; water sports areas; stadia; and green corridors</p> <p><b>Landscape appraisal:</b> new regional or country parks</p>	<p>A sense of place and image; separation of different developed areas; “strategic long term vision”; protection of areas with national landscape and wildlife designations</p> <p>The Structure Plan should promote the concept and importance of a strategic green network, linked to a landscape appraisal, and set the context for local networks in local plans</p>

**Table 6.2: Local Plans: Policies at Town, City or Council area-wide level**

Type	Includes	Planning methodologies	Primary purposes
Parks and gardens	Urban and country parks Formal gardens Designed landscapes Archaeological or historical features	<p><i>Purpose-designed, supply-led hierarchy</i></p> <p>The vast majority already exist and therefore the basis of an appropriate planning methodology is accessibility and quality. Accessibility and catchment/distance standards (which may vary according to greenspace size as well as quality and range of facilities) can be used together on a base map to define “areas of deficiency” which often have to be remedied by the provision of other types of greenspace.</p>	<p>To provide opportunities for informal recreation and relaxation eg sunbathing, watching the world go by, reading, kite-flying, picnics, baby or dog walking, “unorganised sport” (such as having a kickabout, Frisbee flying etc), community and cultural activities events, horticultural excellence</p> <p>To promote tourism and enhance the character of a city or town</p>
Sports facilities	Grass and synthetic pitches, golf courses, tennis courts, athletics tracks – although some of these are “built” rather than vegetated, it is sensible to include them in the broad sports	<p><i>Demand-led</i></p> <p>Pitches: use the <b>sportscotland</b>-recommended Playing Field Strategy methodology (to be published during 2001)</p> <p>Other facilities:</p>	To ensure there are adequate, appropriate and accessible facilities for outdoor sport and recreation

	category as they are all planned in the same way	<b>sport</b> scotland's Facilities Planing Model plus local considerations	
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**Table 6.2: Local Plans: Policies at Town, City or Council area-wide level (cont'd)**

Green corridors	Pedestrian and cycle paths, rights of way, bridleways	<i>Demand led</i>  Should link to and be part of Local Transport Strategy	To promote sustainable transport within urban areas and from urban areas to adjacent areas of countryside
Amenity greenspace	All amenity and incidental greenspaces	<i>Standards-based</i>  Urban design frameworks and design guides can also be used in development briefs and masterplanning	To enhance the appearance and character of urban areas (also to enhance land and property values)
Children's play	Opportunities for play throughout housing environments	<i>Standards-based</i>  Design standards promoting the concept of safe play throughout the residential environment, but also encompassing accessibility (ranging) and minimum size standards, adjusted as necessary for the number of children in the area	To accommodate children's informal and adventure play, and provide informal facilities for teenagers
Natural greenspace	Railway embankments, canal and river banks and all other areas managed in a way which encourages plant and wildlife colonisation	<i>Supply-led</i>  Assessment of the natural resource Local surveys Opportunism	To promote wildlife conservation and biodiversity
Functional greenspace	Allotments, churchyards, cemeteries	<i>Demand-led</i>  Analysis of take-up and waiting lists (allotments) Analysis of demographic statistics (cemeteries) Operational need (churchyards)	To ensure adequate provision
Civic spaces	Civic squares Pedestrian streets Market places	<i>Supply-led</i>	To promote an image of the town or city and tourism and accommodate civic events and protest meetings

## 7. OPEN SPACE STRATEGIES

*Heaven would contain the amenities of the town and pleasures of the country*

*Dr Johnston*

### INTRODUCTION

7.1 The previous Chapter outlined a series of methodologies for the preparation of planning policies related to the various types of open space. This Chapter extends them to the preparation of comprehensive open space strategies. Ideally, this will help planners and those responsible for open space management and maintenance to work more closely together. If they do not, there is a danger that the different local authority departments responsible for planning and open space management and grounds maintenance will pursue different agendas. The Community Plan, backed up by strong political leadership and the authority of the Chief Executive, has an important role to play in making sure this does not happen.

7.2 Against this background, local open space strategies do not replace the need for appropriate open space policies in development plans, but complement them by promoting effective links between planning and management and, especially, community involvement. Their overall purpose is to ensure that open space is well planned, well designed, well managed, well maintained and well used. These things – which extend the open space planning aims in paragraph 6.60 – can be achieved only if different agencies in the public, private and voluntary sectors work together effectively but creatively for the common good. Strategies will also provide an important background to Best Value Reviews and Performance Plans:

*“Open space is a diverse resource, often with many public, private and voluntary sector organisations involved in its ownership, management and use. This requires many stakeholders to be brought together in order to identify and address key issues and ensure commitment to delivering change. A strategic approach provides the process under which this can happen ensuring that all stakeholders are fully informed and involved in the decision making process” (Waters and Smith, 1999)*

7.3 It will therefore be desirable, whenever possible, to synchronise the preparation of a strategy with both a Best Value review and a local plan review. This will help to ensure that open space planning policies, and therefore development control, are driven by local needs rather than what may be inappropriate quantitative standards. It will also make the best use of resources and ensure they reinforce each other, as shown in the figure below.

#### **Recommendation 7.1**

Local authorities should seek to ensure that their local plan(s), Open Space Management Best Value Review, Best Value Performance Plan and Open Space Strategy reinforce one another. This will best be achieved by dovetailing the programme for their preparation.

7.4 There are two key differences between a development plan and a strategy. First, as decisions on planning applications should be made in accordance with adopted development plan policies unless material considerations dictate otherwise, it is these **policies**, rather than the process by which they are produced, which creates long term benefits for local communities. With a strategy it is normally the other way round: it is the **process** which creates the benefits as it encourages different people and organisations to work together. Second, as a strategy should drive action on the ground, it must include an action plan agreed with the local authority’s partners such as Scottish Homes and local Housing Associations, the Scottish Greenbelt Company, the Local Enterprise Company and the local community.

7.5 In Scotland, so far only South Ayrshire Council and Dundee City Council appear to have prepared open space strategies based on comprehensive open space audits, the latter only because it was largely funded by SNH. The City of Glasgow Council has also prepared a strategy, but without a comprehensive audit. Dundee identified the benefits of its strategy (Waters and Smith, 1999) as:

- developing new working relationships
- raising the profile of open spaces amongst the public, private and voluntary sectors
- creating a source of ideas and information
- raising awareness of open space issues
- stimulating projects
- identifying and sharing resources
- increased protection of open space and improvements in quality.

7.6 The other benefits which an open space strategy should generate include:

- community input to and support for council policies – an essential component of Best Value
- open space initiatives which help to deliver national and international objectives, for example relating to Agenda 21, biodiversity, social inclusion and community well-being
- better targeting and use of existing resources and the harnessing of new ones to deliver the visions in Community and Development Plans
- the identification of areas of open space which are poorly used or poorly located, together with a clear rationale, if appropriate, for either their upgrading or disposal for some other, more appropriate use, thereby possibly creating resources for the implementation of other aspects of the strategy
- an enhanced database and information relating to local open spaces
- a context for management plans for individual open spaces and Lottery and other applications for external funding, thereby raising the chances of success
- feedback on the impact of planning policies, allowing them to be tailored better to local needs and priorities and therefore result in better quality developments
- a clear rationale for the disposal of certain areas of open space in order to create additional resources for the enhancement of others
- additional information to guide development control decisions and, if necessary, support them at appeal.

7.7 There are probably five main considerations which will help councils to identify the need for an open space strategy:

- the need for a Best Value Performance Plan for open space asset management and/or grounds maintenance
- clear evidence of a need for asset managers to be able to offer objective advice to assist in the determination of planning applications for the redevelopment of open spaces, and if necessary used successfully at appeal
- clear evidence of declining quality and possibly the use of open spaces
- clear evidence of inadequate resources for open space management and maintenance

- a recognition of the need to find effective ways of promoting corporate working and involving the private and voluntary sectors in open space planning, management and maintenance.

7.8 Although NPPG11 recommends that planning authorities should undertake a comprehensive open space audit before framing policies, it is clear that many, if not most, Councils do not have the resources to allow this at present. They lack both the “people” resources needed to undertake an audit and the financial resources subsequently to progress any desirable initiatives which may result – and therefore may see little point in proceeding.

7.9 Lack of staff resources can sometimes be overcome by appointing consultants, however, provided councils can allocate or obtain the necessary resources. In some cases they may be able to attract external funding, for example from one of the Lottery Funds. When councils cannot allocate or obtain the resources to prepare a comprehensive strategy, rather than spreading resources very thinly across all types of open space, they should consider adopting a step by step approach, possibly over a 2-3 year period:

- **Step 1:** Concentrate on the demand-led types of open space – sports pitches and playing fields, green corridors and cemeteries and allotments. These must be planned on a town or city-wide basis, have the greatest impact and often require the greatest maintenance resources. Meantime, maintain the *status quo* in relation to other types of open space.
- **Step 2:** Use suitable accessibility standards or distance thresholds to map those parts of the urban area which are least well provided with access to parks and other major elements of the green network. Then concentrate on these areas, plus any other areas where there are likely to be significant development pressures within the foreseeable future. This will help to give priority to those people and local communities with the greatest local need or where changes in land use are most likely to occur.
- **Step 3:** Complete the other parts of the strategy, such as those relating to parks and the other types of open space which should be planned using a supply-led approach, as and when resources are available.

7.10 Over time, these different pieces of work can build up to a comprehensive strategy, provided that the information base is sound and kept up to date. Annex F contains a checklist of desirable outcomes against which a finished strategy can be tested.

## AN OUTLINE METHODOLOGY FOR STRATEGY PREPARATION

7.11 There is no single “correct” way to prepare an open space strategy, although a useful preliminary step will always be to collect, in one place, all the existing plans and strategies which relate in some way to open space issues. Councils should develop a methodology to suit their local situation and needs in the light of the resources available for the strategy’s preparation. For example, some councils may prefer to initiate a detailed open space audit in order to identify the key issues and then aims and objectives; others may prefer to set their aims and objectives early in the process and use the audit and analysis to establish key issues related to them.

7.12 Both of these broad approaches are equally valid. No matter the approach, however, the critically important things are:

- To include a way of allowing local people to influence what happens in their neighbourhood and, if they wish to do so, at city or town-wide level, both at an early stage, long before any objectives are drawn up or budgets allocated, and towards the end. Local people often believe they are experts on the needs of their own neighbourhoods. Strategies

should therefore promote and enable a realistic but flexible approach to open space issues at the neighbourhood or individual development level, while providing a broad framework into which neighbourhood initiatives fit. Ways of doing this are suggested below in paragraphs 7.24-7.29.

- To reflect and provide an input to other related local strategies (for example, transport, urban regeneration/economic development, sport/leisure/culture, parks, social inclusion, countryside recreation and access, Paths for All) and relate clearly and directly to development plans and planning policies.
- To involve a wide range of organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors. There are two main reasons for this. First, there will normally be a need to attract new resources for the long term maintenance of open space and re-investment in it. Second, it is desirable that there should be a Steering Group or similar body, comprising representatives of the local authority and its key partners, to oversee the preparation of the strategy. This group should be more effective than an internal working group because it is a way of promoting wide “ownership” of the strategy. It may also be able to identify potential private and voluntary resources to aid implementation. Once the strategy is adopted, the Steering Group should continue to meet at intervals to review progress as this will help to ensure that it does not lie forgotten.
- To create a corporate open space database which can be used by all parts of the local authority.
- To base policies on facts and not just opinions. However, the information base does not need to be totally comprehensive and 100% accurate. What is needed is enough information to draw sensible rather than perfect conclusions.
- To set a clear context and objectives for open space management and therefore maintenance as key inputs to the local authority’s Best Value Review and Performance Plan.
- To develop strategies which will deliver agreed outcomes against an action plan which sets out clearly who does what, why, where, how and when.

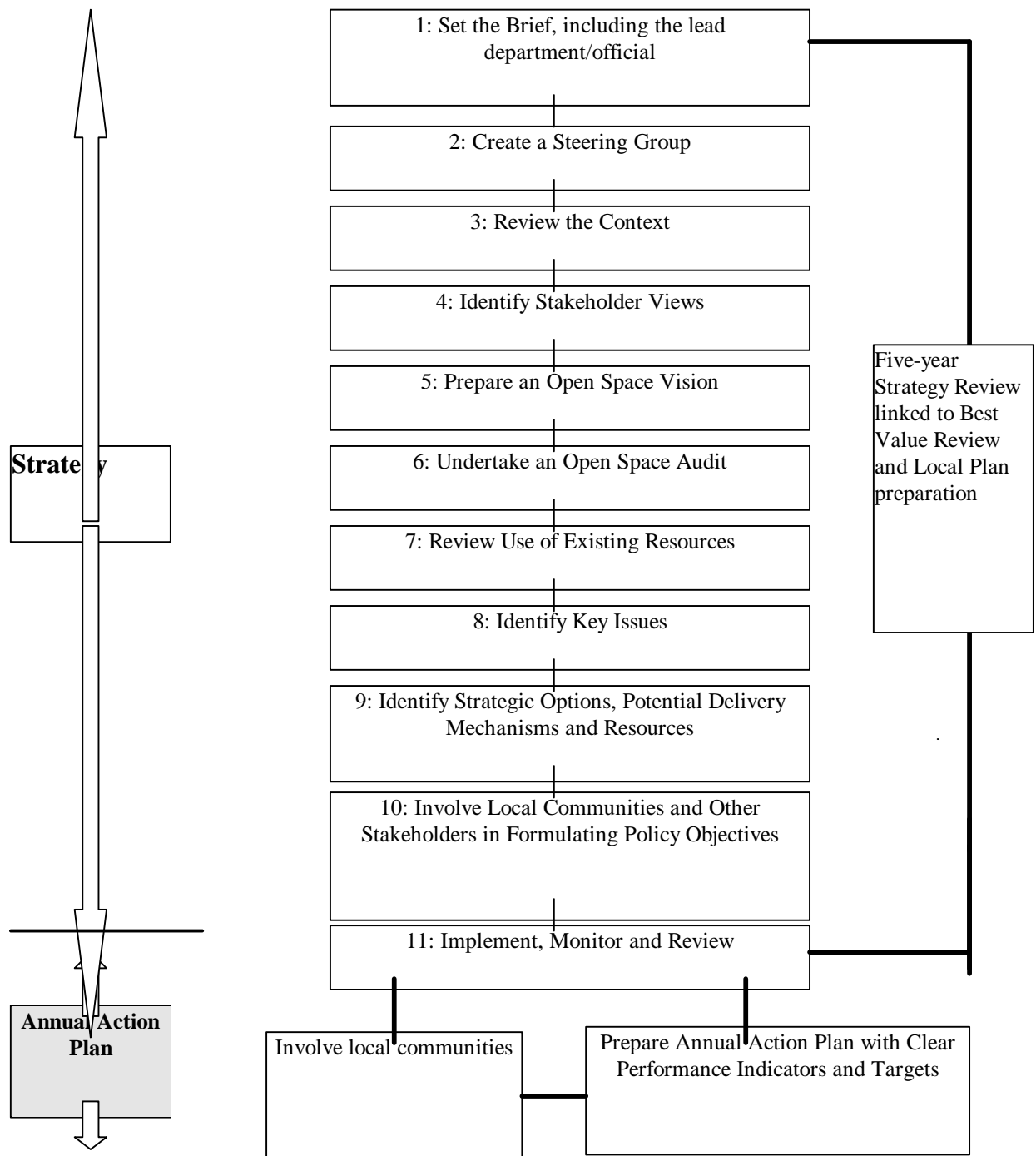
## **Recommendation 7.2**

Strategy preparation must:

1. seek to involve local people at appropriate points in the process
2. take account of other relevant pre-existing plans and strategies
3. involve a wide range of agencies in the public, private and voluntary sectors
4. result in a useful corporate database
5. be based on facts in preference to opinions
6. include clear and realistic objectives
7. be designed to deliver agreed outcomes.

7.13 The basic methodology described below can be adapted for either a single type of open space, a range of types or a fully comprehensive strategy. Moreover, it is possible to change the order of the different steps if required. First, however, the diagram below summarises the approach.

**Figure 7.1: Outline Strategy methodology**





## Step 1: Set the Brief

7.14 There are two main elements to the brief: the scope of the strategy and who should lead its preparation. Ideally, it should encompass each of the various types of open space identified in Chapter 5, but if resources are limited there may be a need to concentrate on a specific type of open space or split the work into a number of “strategy areas”. These can be either geographic areas or particular types of open space such as pitches. However, this has the obvious danger that different types of open space may be considered in a piecemeal fashion, without a holistic overview at the end. At the same time, it reflects the fact that it may be possible to attract external funding for specific elements of over-arching strategies. For example, **sportscotland** may provide some funding for the pitches element, but is unlikely to contribute to a survey of children’s play areas. SNH may be willing to fund a wildlife survey, but will have relatively little interest in paved civic spaces, although another agency, such as Scottish Enterprise, might.

7.15 In most areas, it will be sensible to adopt two different but complementary approaches. **Urban parks and gardens, green corridors** and **sports facilities** generally serve a Council-wide or even sub-regional function and are therefore best considered at the Council area level. More specifically:

- The hierarchical approach to parks and gardens recommended in the last chapter needs a town or city-wide approach as it ascribes particular functions to different parks within the urban area
- Green corridors are designed to facilitate movement throughout an area and therefore it is important that there should be a comprehensive “spider’s web” network of them. There is little point in having a green corridor in one area if it does not link up with similar corridors in other areas.
- Sports facilities often comprise a network in which changes to one part of the network can have knock-on impacts elsewhere. For example, if a large school or public pitches site is developed for some other use, remaining pitches may have to be used more and therefore reconstructed. Without a strategy, it is not easy to establish the best course of action.

7.16 The other forms of greenspace have a primarily local impact and are therefore best considered at neighbourhood level, while major civic spaces should be viewed within the context of a specific town or city centre. The main reasons for this are:

- It will be important to involve local communities in issues which will affect them. This cannot be done for the whole of a council area at once as different areas may require different approaches. Social Inclusion Partnership areas, for example, are likely to have different needs and require a very different approach from those conservation areas with an active amenity society.
- It should be possible for local authorities to get local help in some neighbourhoods, so reducing the level of staff input required, for example from local amenity societies.

7.17 Every strategy needs a “champion” – someone who will lead the team which produces it. Who this person actually is, and therefore their discipline, is less important than that they can think strategically; are given the time and staff or other resources necessary; and have the authority to bring together and work effectively with a wide range of partners from both inside and outwith the local authority. Ideally, they should also have direct access to a “political champion” who will argue for resources at the political level. In Dundee, the strategy team was led by a landscape architect in the Leisure and Parks Department; in South Ayrshire by a landscape architect in the Strategic Services Department; and in Glasgow by a planner in the former Parks and Recreation Department.

7.18 Finally in this first step, it will be sensible to prepare a written method statement to:

- summarise the purpose of the strategy
- identify the lead department and individuals
- summarise the proposed methodology
- estimate the staff time inputs required
- identify key stakeholders
- set a broad programme, related, if possible, to the programme for the preparation of the next structure or local plan review
- highlight the intended outputs – it is always useful to have a series of interim outputs, for example in the form of working papers, rather than a single, “big bang” report at the end. They make it possible to keep a wide range of people informed as to progress and allows them to have an input at appropriate points without expanding the Steering Group (see below).

7.19 This method statement will almost certainly have to be modified during the strategy process, but it is always useful to have a “road map” from the start. It can usefully provide the basis for a committee paper in order to alert councillors to the proposal to prepare a strategy and, if necessary, obtain the resources which will be needed.

## **Step 2: Create a Steering Group**

7.20 The existence of a formal Steering Group can help to ensure that different council departments and outside organisations have a forum to debate issues and review progress at intervals. The selection of members will depend on the scope of the strategy, but may include:

- local authority departments; the key ones are likely to be those responsible for corporate planning, land use planning, transportation, open space asset management, social work, education, finance and culture, sport and recreation. Where a council has set up a structure of neighbourhood units they should also be involved.
- national agencies such as SNH and **sportscotland**
- local amenity societies
- major local land owners eg universities and health boards
- Chambers of Commerce/business representatives
- the Paths for All Partnership
- sports governing bodies
- Scottish Wildlife Trust
- Scottish Greenbelt Company/Foundation
- local housebuilders
- local developers

- community groups
- councillors.

7.21 The size of the Steering Group must tread a fine line between being large enough to include all those who can usefully contribute and small enough to be able to have relatively short, effective meetings. One useful approach can be to have a fairly large Steering Group which meets only occasionally, but a number of smaller Working Groups dealing with particular interest areas, for example nature conservation, walking and cycling or sport.

7.22 At the first meeting, it will be necessary to:

- review the brief and identify the key issues which Steering Group members regard as important
- identify potential stakeholders it will be desirable to consult, such as sports clubs, local amenity societies, the Garden History Society, local cycling or children's play interests; and any of the above organisations if they are not represented on the Steering Group
- identify existing relevant information (for example, details of open spaces obtained by local authorities in preparation for CCT) and how up to date and accurate it is
- determine additional information requirements and potential sources of it
- review the available resources in relation to the brief and identify the possible need for specific pieces of work to be commissioned from external agencies eg consultants or market research agencies
- review the proposed programme for the strategy preparation against the programme for the next review of the local plan and, if appropriate, the structure plan.

### **Step 3: Review the Context**

7.23 Any strategy cannot be a stand-alone set of policies and proposals but must link to and complement other strategies, plans and policies. Accordingly it makes sense, right at the start, to identify potential overlaps and synergies between local open space issues and the policies in documents such as:

- development plans
- NPPGs and related PANs
- relevant national strategies, such as *Sport 21* (**sport**scotland, 1998) and *A Natural Perspective* (SNH, undated but 2000)
- existing local authority and other relevant strategies, such as the Community Plan, the Council's Corporate Plan, its local sport and recreation strategy, its local cultural strategy, its economic development strategy and its public art strategy
- this and other relevant research.

### **Step 4: Identify Stakeholders' Views**

7.24 Stakeholders are groups or individuals with an interest in the changes the strategy may promote or who will be affected by its outcomes. Accordingly, as an important early step, take the time and effort establish their views. This is likely to be more and more important as Best Value develops, although it can be time consuming and therefore expensive. Many people are likely to regard quality and safety as much more important than quantity. After preparing its strategy, Dundee concluded that:

*“With hindsight, a qualitative survey and assessment of open spaces would have been useful for Dundee’s strategy ... the Open Space Hierarchy ... should in future incorporate qualitative factors” (Waters and Smith, 1999)*

7.25 First, establish the broad policy objectives and views of relevant national, regional or Council-wide organisations and groups, if they are not represented on the Steering Group. Some may even be able to identify new resources which could be harnessed for implementation later in the process. These organisations and groups will vary from place to place and may include bodies such as:

- Historic Scotland, especially where parks may contain listed buildings
- local Community Councils
- citizens’ panels
- national children’s play organisations
- neighbouring councils
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- Scottish Civic Trust
- Scottish Homes
- Scottish Wildlife Trust
- Social Inclusion and Regeneration Partnerships
- the Local Enterprise Company
- the Police.

7.26 Second, consult local organised groups. This can be done by several means, including:

- postal questionnaires (but note that a typical response rate is only about 30% and a large number of questionnaires may require special software or knowledge to analyse)
- meetings with local community groups
- meetings with or questionnaires to local authority councillors and Community Councils
- discussions with disabled and women’s groups
- e-mails to schools
- Web pages
- local newspaper articles
- advertising for comments
- citizens’ panels.

7.27 Third, try to find out the views of the public in general – those who may not be involved in local groups. This must be done **before** any policies or policy options are determined and particularly before any local authority funding is committed to a specific course of action. “We’ve got a draft strategy here, what do you think of it?” at the end is easily interpreted as token consultation and much less likely to get a positive response than “We’re intending to draw up a strategy for this area: what is important to you and where do you think money should be spent?” at the beginning. The latter approach also makes it much easier to enlist the help of and involve local groups and individuals through the strategy process and, ultimately, in implementation.

7.28 Finally, depending on the level and value of information already available, there may also be a need to undertake local market research – for example, to find out more about how various kinds of open space are actually used. This can be a very important step in preparing a parks hierarchy, for example, because it can

establish the catchment area of particular parks and why local people prefer some to others. Both Glasgow and Dundee recognised this and commissioned market research as a part of the preparation of their open space strategies, while Comedia with Demos undertook similar research for local authorities in England. The results are remarkably consistent, considering the differences between the areas in which these various surveys were undertaken. The main issues revolved around dog problems, facilities for children and anti-social behaviour, which includes vandalism, litter, illegal drinking and the fear of crime (Waters and Smith, 1999; Market Research Scotland Ltd, 1993; Comedia/Demos, 1995).

7.29 If local market research cannot be afforded, or there is not the time to undertake it, research studies from elsewhere may provide useful guidance. A number of relevant research studies are summarised in Background Report 2.

## **Step 5: Prepare an “Open Space Vision”**

7.30 As one of the objectives of any open space strategy should be to ensure that all areas of open space are, and remain, of high quality, a key step in the process is to determine what “quality” should mean. The best way of doing this is to use the information already gathered to draw up a draft open space vision, setting out the characteristics it is desirable that different types of open space should have. This makes it possible for a team of different individuals to compile an open space audit. Without such a vision, each member of the team might use very different subjective criteria. For example, suitable visions for amenity greenspace and local authority sports pitch sites might be along the lines of:

- **Amenity greenspace:** public access, with a mixture of mature planted and open areas, consisting of short mown grass with indigenous trees and shrubs which occur locally and are suited to the soil type, laid out in accordance with Safe by Design principles; traversed by hard surfaced paths following desire lines and suitable for walking and cycling, with lighting; incorporating areas where maintenance is minimal so as to encourage wildlife; and with designated and suitably surfaced areas for ball or noisy games.
- **Local authority pitch sport sites:** at least three pitches, each complying with the appropriate league rules for the clubs which use them as designated home pitches; capable of sustaining at least two games and one training session per week in a normal winter; with training floodlights and a pavilion in a good state of repair, offering, as a minimum, changing and hot showers.

## **Step 6: Undertake an Open Space Audit**

7.31 Once a vision of this kind is in place, it is possible to undertake a comprehensive audit of the open spaces within a particular area. This can be done on the ground or, as in South Ayrshire, by an aerial survey backed up by on the ground checking. Whatever method is used, ideally it should be comprehensive. However, comprehensive open space audits take considerable time and effort. Dundee has the smallest land area of any local authority in Scotland, but the audit still took approximately one person-year. Glasgow has estimated that it will take a team of 3 or 4 people, working part-time, approximately 18 months simply to audit all of the pitches in the city. If resources are limited, and inadequate for a full audit, there are three broad approaches which can be used:

- Seek external funding for a short term appointment or consultants; the Dundee open space audit, for example, was part funded by SNH. If this is not available:
- Seek voluntary help, for example from local schools, amenity societies or, as appropriate, particular interest groups such as cyclists, amenity and civic societies or Community Councils. This help will probably not be available throughout a

council's area, but if it can be obtained in some areas this may make it possible to use council resources in other areas and make the difference between being able to undertake a full or only partial audit. If this also fails:

- Concentrate on carefully chosen priority areas. They may be areas where there are known to be significant development pressures; where change is likely, such as in Social Inclusion Partnership areas; where there is the chance to link into other regeneration initiatives; or where the planning service in the local authority is preparing a Master Plan or Development Brief.

7.32 The audit should encompass both quantitative and qualitative aspects of local open space. Background Report 2 contains examples of the open space audit forms used in Dundee and Basingstoke which can be adapted as required. The Dundee audit largely ignored the importance of qualitative issues and is too short; the Basingstoke example related to a “vision” of open space (also given in Background Report 2) but is far too complex. Another approach would be to use the matrix suggested in paragraph 7.37 below. Audit forms are essential but must be carefully designed – and piloted. There is no point in getting halfway through the audit only to discover that some vitally important element has been overlooked. If it is difficult to find the resources to allow an audit once it will probably be impossible to find them a second time.

7.33 By far the best way of storing the data obtained through the audit is to digitise and record it using a computer-based Geographical Information System (GIS). This will require a significant amount of work, but is justified if it results in a valuable corporate resource and there is a commitment to keeping it up to date, both through the monitoring of planning consents and by the department(s) responsible for managing and maintaining different areas of open space.

## **Step 7: Review the Existing Use of Resources**

7.34 Almost all owners of open space incur expenditure on its management and maintenance. Therefore they should review objectively the outcomes achieved by maintenance regimes and the costs involved on a regular basis. For local authorities, this is best done within the context of the Best Value review which has to be undertaken every five years. This should seek to identify areas where maintenance is inadequate or incurs abnormally high costs and benchmark these costs against similar councils elsewhere.

7.35 This review may well uncover a lot of useful information – or highlight the fact that record-keeping systems and possibly maintenance regimes are not as good as they should be. If this is the case, time spent developing better systems should pay dividends in future.

## **Step 8: Identify Key Issues**

7.36 The next step is to bring together stakeholders' views and the findings of the audit to identify the key issues the strategy must tackle. For parks, green corridors and sports facilities, some examples of typical issues include:

### *Urban Parks and Gardens*

- areas of deficiency, that is areas outwith the typical catchments of urban parks and gardens stated in the agreed open space hierarchy, where higher than average level of amenity or other greenspaces may be needed (see Chapter 8 for how to do this)
- the quality of urban parks
- the need for re-investment or opportunities for disposal and redevelopment

### *Green Corridors*

- gaps in the town or city-wide network and options for filling them
- opportunities for new routes

### *Sports Facilities*

- a statement of priority sports – most councils will not be able to give equal priority to the needs of all the sports in their area
- the need for more pitches or surfaces for different sports and options for where they might be provided
- the need for more floodlit artificial surfaces and areas where they might be acceptable
- the need to consolidate a large number of small sites into a smaller number of large sites in order to make provision and maintenance more cost-effective
- the need for better pitch surfaces or ancillary accommodation.

## **Step 9: Identify Strategic Options, Potential Delivery Mechanisms and Resources**

### *Strategic Options*

7.37 Once the key issues are clear, it should be possible to start identifying a range of strategic options for tackling them. At this stage, it is important to bring the various types of open space together as there may be opportunities to adjust the balance of different types to better meet the needs of specific areas – or dispose of particular sites for development to generate resources for the enhancement of other areas. One way of doing this is to use a matrix which categorises each greenspace or civic space above a certain size under headings such as:

- importance (eg important, potentially important or unimportant)
- accessibility by public transport and cycling or walking as well as by car (eg accessible, potentially accessible or inaccessible)
- quality (eg high, medium or low quality)
- wildlife/nature conservation qualities
- size (eg too large, about right or too small for their present intended purpose)
- ownership and maintenance responsibilities
- range of features or facilities related to intended purpose (eg good, average or poor)
- improvements required.

7.38 This matrix will help to identify the importance of individual open spaces. Such a matrix will obviously become extremely unwieldy if prepared on a council-wide basis. Accordingly, it is best to prepare council-wide matrices for urban parks, green corridors and sports facilities; and neighbourhood matrices for other types of greenspace and civic spaces. The first of these can, if resources are limited, be used to help highlight those potential priority neighbourhoods on which to concentrate in the detailed evaluation.

### *Potential Delivery Mechanisms*

7.39 A strategy which is not or cannot be implemented is a waste of time and effort. Accordingly there is a need to be clear about delivery mechanisms – in other words, who might be responsible for progressing particular initiatives, the resources they will use and where they can be obtained. As questions about responsibilities and resources will often dominate discussions with local communities and other stakeholders,

those who will conduct them should obviously know possible sources of funding beforehand. Apart from the council itself, the most important delivery mechanisms are likely to include:

- the planning system
- other public bodies
- local voluntary groups
- local businesses and Town Centre Managers
- developers
- the Scottish Greenbelt Company and similar bodies.

### *The Role of the Planning System*

7.40 Historically, the planning system has played a key role by requiring developers to provide open space as part of new housing developments and protecting existing urban greenspace from development. In future, it should also promote the provision of high quality open spaces in non-housing developments, such as business, leisure and retail parks, and the role of open space as an integral part of good urban design.

7.41 There is some evidence of growing pressures on open space from developers. For example, some companies are offering to provide schools free access to much-needed sports facilities if they are allowed to build commercial sports facilities on their playing fields. If parks and other urban greenspaces are seen to decline further, or if they are seen to constrain economic development and urban regeneration, there will be growing political and public pressure for their development for new uses. Moreover, there is little sense in promoting the creation of new areas of open space through the planning system if existing urban parks and other greenspaces are seen to be in crisis brought about by a lack of resources for management, essential maintenance and re-investment.

7.42 In some areas, therefore, it may be necessary to sacrifice some open spaces for the benefit of others; in the absence of a local open space strategy and therefore clarity over local needs, at times the planning system may occasionally have been either over-protective or failed to protect potentially important sites. For planners simply to promote the protection of all existing open space is to take the easy option and pass on the difficult choices to others:

*“A framework or strategy for open space will also allow local authorities to make more considered decisions for building, or selling some areas of open space which are redundant or unused. The quality of public space is as important as the quantity. The defence of all urban open space regardless of quality or use, reflects a deep sense of distrust and a failure of management. The view that protection of all open space is of the highest priority is a negative view both of urban life and of the capacity of cities to evolve and change.” (Comedia with Demos, 1995)*

7.43 There is also a clear need for planners, designers and managers to be more concerned with driving up the quality of existing open space and less with the provision of additional areas of it. This will be particularly important in relation to greenspace because if it is neglected or under-maintained it is liable to deteriorate more, and more quickly, than hard landscaped civic spaces. It will also require a wider range of knowledge and skills and is more expensive to maintain. Achieving an appropriate balance between quantitative and qualitative approaches, and being responsive to the wishes of what should be an expanding range of stakeholders as social inclusion initiatives give more people a greater say in those things which affect their lives, is very important but will not always be easy.

7.44 The local plan will be the best place to set out the land use implications of the strategy and define and protect the key components of the green network. Policies within it can require the provision of new open spaces as part of developments; require developers to make arrangements for long term maintenance; and set out the purposes for which councils will seek Section 75 agreements. While a strategy can constitute a material consideration in connection with the determination of planning applications, NPPG1 suggests that the best approach will be to set out relevant supporting material from it in the form of Supplementary Planning Guidance.



### *The Role of Other Public Bodies*

7.45 A number of public bodies other than local councils may also be able to help implement various parts of the strategy. For example:

- Scottish Homes is a key funder of local housing association developments, which should normally incorporate open space
- **Sportscotland** is a distributor of Lottery funds and can provide advice and assistance in kind; other Lottery funds can also provide grants
- SNH can provide advice and grant aid
- hospital trusts, private schools and higher education institutions often have significant land holdings, much of which may be open space.

### *The Role of Voluntary Groups*

7.46 While there are many things that voluntary groups cannot usually do, there are also many things they can – and some of them are things which local authorities cannot. For example, community groups can benefit from Landfill Tax Credits and may find it easier than local authorities to obtain grants for local greenspaces from the New Opportunities Fund. The Barnhill Rock Garden Case Study in Chapter 3 summarised how Dundee City Council has been able to work with its local community both to save money and enhance a valuable local greenspace. The Britain in Bloom Case Study, also in Chapter 3, highlighted the success of Perth and Kinross Council in working with its local communities to enhance the green environment throughout its area, reduce vandalism and attract world-wide publicity. In other areas, groups such as the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers have amassed considerable experience of working alongside local communities and are a source of expertise, tools, insurance, training and advice on funding.

### *The Role of Local Businesses and Town Centre Managers*

7.47 Given a little encouragement, the energies of local businesses can also be harnessed to improve urban environments. The Edinburgh Grassmarket Case Study in Chapter 6 highlighted one successful initiative, developed over a number of years. There are many other examples of where local businesses have seen the benefits of a more attractive environment and contributed financially to local greening initiatives. There is also growing evidence of local business seeing the benefits of working together to appoint town centre managers who could well play an important role in the promotion and management of greenspaces. Edinburgh City Council has gone further and set up a dedicated company, with private sector partners, to manage the city centre.



An example where a private sector company has sponsored public art and open space maintenance

### *The Role of Developers*

7.48 Every development has the potential to make a worthwhile contribution to the quality of the local environment in some way. The environmental quality of business parks is getting better and better, with the most successful developments, like Edinburgh Park on the western edge of the city, providing high quality buildings set in an equally high quality landscape with a clear separation between car parks and the pedestrian environment. Many housing associations, actively supported by Scottish Homes, are encouraging architects to develop new and often more colourful forms of urban housing with high quality, albeit often small, open spaces. They provide useful models for the volume housebuilders of how it is possible to develop brownfield sites.

### *The Role of the Scottish Greenbelt Company and Similar Bodies*

7.49 The Scottish Greenbelt Company, created initially by Strathclyde Regional Council, will take ownership of open spaces from developers, with a suitable commuted sum, and maintain them thereafter. It provides a flexible alternative to council adoption and is working more and more widely throughout Scotland. In some areas, it has been able to initiate creative approaches to the provision and management of open space, as highlighted by the Hallside Case Study in Chapter 3.



Edinburgh Park: A high quality business park development with a traffic-free open space at its centre

### *Resources*

7.50 A strategy will not, of itself, deliver new or additional resources, but can be an essential pre-requisite to a successful application for external funding. For example, Glasgow's Parks and Open Spaces Strategy was critically important in its successful application for funding of over £8.5m from the Heritage Lottery Fund; indeed, the Fund has recommended to Dundee City Council that it should adopt the same broad approach as Glasgow in relation to its application for a grant of approximately £3.5m towards the restoration of Baxter Park. **The existence of a comprehensive strategy allows potential funders to see that they are being asked to contribute to something which has been carefully considered, really is a high priority and will deliver worthwhile benefits.** Apart from the local authority's own resources, there is a growing list of possible sources of funding, or assistance in kind, which can be used to help implement strategies.

7.51 Some possible sources of funding were discussed in Chapter 3, *Emerging Opportunities*. Others include:

- The Royal Society for Nature Conservation, which has been awarded nearly £14m by the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) for disbursement to projects across the UK to support Social, Economic and Environmental Development (SEED). This programme is designed to support a range of environmental projects, including community food growing and marketing, energy efficiency, waste management and sustainable transport projects.
- Sustrans Ltd, which has been awarded nearly £7.5m by the NOF for a Green Routes, Safe Routes programme which will focus on safe routes to schools, bus and rail stations, home zone projects in residential areas and green transport corridors to, from and in disadvantaged areas.
- European Regional Development Funds.
- Government/Executive initiatives, such as the New Deal which may allow established organisations to appoint trainees.

- national agencies such as Scottish Enterprise and its related network of Local Enterprise Companies.

7.52 Capital funding for the provision or enhancement of open space, however, is of relatively little use if there are inadequate resources for long term management and maintenance. Possible sources of revenue funding, sponsorship or assistance in kind include:

- developers' commuted sums
- local businesses, which may be willing to sponsor particular areas of open space in return for advertising
- national agencies such as SNH and **sportscotland**
- Government/Executive initiatives
- local community groups
- schools and other educational institutions
- specially created interest groups.

## **Step 10: Involve Local Communities and other Stakeholders in Setting Strategic Aims and Policy Objectives**

7.53 Once the key issues and strategic options for tackling them have been identified, it will be desirable to try to involve key stakeholders in defining strategic aims, policy objectives and related performance indicators and targets. Doing so will help to identify any important issues which have been overlooked and establish stakeholders' initial reactions to each of the main strategic options, including whether they might be willing to become involved in implementing particular options. This part of the process will obviously work best if stakeholders can see that the draft strategy options link clearly to the initial consultations with them in Step 4.

7.54 Dundee City Council found that working hard at involving local people can pay dividends because they come to realise the constraints under which local authorities have to work and that there are often no easy answers. Other councils have found that the key to involving local communities, rather than simply consulting them, is to give them some say over how resources are used in their area.

7.55 As there will probably be considerable local interest in this stage, and inadequate resources to consult all interested bodies and individuals, it will normally be sensible to publish a short summary setting out the issues and options for wide local circulation.

7.56 The outcome of the work summarised above will be a broad statement of key issues together with the views of local communities and other stakeholders. Once these are known, it is possible to start preparing suitable strategic aims, with related objectives and policies, for discussion and hopefully confirmation at the Steering Group. Particular topics which can usefully be reflected in strategic aims include the quality of the urban environment and the local quality of life; local community and business involvement in open space management and use; linkages between urban areas and the countryside; education and interpretation; and the use of open spaces for walking and cycling. Strategic aims should be succinct, limited in number and provide a broad framework for more detailed objectives and policies, including those in the Development Plan. Dundee's Public Open Space Strategy, for example, is based on a vision and four strategic aims. The vision is that:

*“Dundee City Council, in conjunction with the public, private and voluntary sectors, will seek to provide public open spaces that contribute to a high quality of life throughout the City, and which help to deliver economic prosperity, a sustainable future and Best Value for all citizens and communities in Dundee”*

while the strategic aims are:

- “1 To encourage healthy lifestyles by creating and promoting opportunities for recreation, relaxation and fun for people of all ages and abilities*
- 2 To enhance the quality of the urban environment by providing a network of diverse, attractive and inspiring green spaces which add colour and life to the City*
- 3 To provide safe, and as appropriate, accessible public open spaces which meet the needs of local communities, both now and in the future*
- 4 To contribute to the economic prosperity of Dundee by helping to attract inward investment and tourism and by delivering a quality service that is cost-effective, efficient and provides Best Value for the citizens of Dundee.” (Dundee City Council, 1999)*

7.57 The broad strategy framework should then be complemented by a series of more detailed policy objectives and targets related to the key issues identified in step 8. These policy objectives are likely to cover a wide range of topics, often with a locational component relating them to specific open spaces, including:

- open space management and maintenance
- investment and re-investment in open space
- information and interpretation
- programmes of use and events, whether organised by the local authority, such as fireworks displays, or community events such as gala days, in parks and other open spaces
- community well-being and social inclusion
- the safeguarding of the natural heritage
- public art
- education, awareness and interpretation
- public safety
- paths and access to the urban fringe
- community involvement
- health promotion
- tourism and economic development
- partnerships with the business community and other bodies such as amenity societies and schools.

7.58 The policy objectives should provide useful inputs to much of the work of the local authority and its key partners, for example:

- structure and local plan(s)
- Local Agenda 21 strategies
- Local Bio-diversity Action Plans
- Local Transport Strategies
- health strategies
- parks management and service plans
- sport and recreation strategies
- social inclusion strategies
- public art strategies
- events or tourism strategies
- housing strategies
- community safety strategies.

7.59 The stronger the links between different plans and strategies, the more likely that effective partnerships can be formed to progress policies and proposals in the strategy.

## **Step 11: Implementing, Monitoring and Reviewing the Strategy**

### *Implementation*

7.60 The role of the strategy is to set the overall policy framework and long term targets. Ideally they should remain valid for several years, although it is obviously sensible to keep a watching brief on external sources of funding. Implementation, however, is best tackled through an Action Plan.

7.61 Action Plans should focus on achieving highly specific **outcomes** – that is, the things which will actually be done within a series of specific time frames, usually of one financial year. Action Plans must therefore set out clearly who is to do what, when, where and why and how the necessary resources will be found. They must also be agreed with local communities, who must be allowed to influence what is done and how it is done. Each policy objective should have related performance indicators and clear targets. Some of



these targets may be achievable in one year, while others will inevitably take longer; each of these longer term targets should therefore be complemented by annual targets leading to their longer term delivery. One useful format is to set out the Action Plan in the form of a table, grouped in terms of key issues or particular policies. A typical extract from Dundee's Public Open Space Strategy (Dundee City Council, 1999) is given at Table 7.1 below. A slightly better approach would be to add clear intermediate targets for those tasks or actions which will take more than one year.

### **CASE STUDY: MANSFIELD PARK, PARTICK**

Mansfield Park, in the Partick area of Glasgow's West End, provides a good example of the importance of involving local communities in implementation. The area is included in one of Scotland's Pathfinder Projects, through which local communities look at the services they receive from their local authority and other agencies and seek to find more effective ways in which they can be delivered by involving the local community.

The Partick Housing Association has been involved for a number of years in refurbishing tenements in the area and, as part of the work, has promoted the redesign of a number of back courts and streetscape improvements. Mansfield Park, located on a small brownfield site off Dumbarton Road, was created on a gap site left by the demolition of a tenement block. It incorporates a children's play area, an enclosed blaes kickabout pitch and various areas of planting and seating. However, as a result of wear and tear, inadequate maintenance by the local authority and possibly some inappropriate materials, the park deteriorated considerably. Parts of it – notably the children's play area – had become unsafe.

Partick Housing Association therefore proposed that the park should become one of Glasgow's Millenium Squares, but the local community did not support the idea and it was dropped. Around the same time, a rumour started that the park – which is seen as a potentially valuable site on the edge of the city's West End – was to be sold for development by the City Council, its owner. The Association approached the City Council and established that the rumour had no basis in fact; unfortunately it also established that the City Council had no plans or funds to refurbish the park.

More or less simultaneously, the local councillor called a meeting of interested parties to determine the local community's wishes for the park, attended by representatives of the Community Council, the Partick United Residents Group, the Partick Housing Association and representatives of the City Council.

Following this meeting, the City Council agreed to allocated some £17,000 for a number of repairs, half from its area budget and half from its Land Services Department budget, and informed the community of what these would be. The local community, while pleased that the works proposed by the Council would result in some improvement and enhance the safety of a children's play area, also recognised that they could be no more than a "holding operation" and would contribute little to the wholesale regeneration of the park.

As the local community was not sure what it wanted, the Housing Association, as the one community-based body in the area with considerable experience of procuring building works, approached Scottish Homes on behalf of the local community for funding for the preparation of a scheme for the regeneration of the Park. This plan is likely to concentrate on facilitating more community use by providing an all-weather surface for the kickabout pitch and development a multi-function landscaped area. In addition, as the local school has no outdoor sports facility, resurfacing will also make it easier for it to use the Park. When the plan is agreed by the local community, the intention is to seek external funding from the New Opportunities Fund, a Landfill Tax operator and any other sources which can be identified. One possible way of progressing the works is to involve WestWorks, a community-based business created to provide environmental services in the area covered by Partick, Meadowside and Thornwood and Scotstoun Housing Associations. By working with the Wise Group, which is funded by the Scottish Executive and the ERDF Social Fund, it is able to employ a supervisor and local residents as "New Deal" trainees with the aim of becoming self-financing by March 2002. If WestWorks is involved, this will obviously maximise the community benefit from the scheme and, therefore, community support for it.

This case study provides a number of lessons. First, the regeneration of the Park is important to local people. Second, it shows that local groups should not become disillusioned when environmental improvements are obviously needed in their area but there is only inadequate local authority funding available; they may have the ability to harness other mechanisms and sources of funding. Third, it demonstrates the potential of having local delivery mechanisms in regeneration areas – in this case, WestWorks. Fourth it shows that local councillors can be effective catalysts in bringing different groups together.

7.62 Achieving Action Plan targets might involve the local authority on its own; the local authority in partnership with other agencies or the local community; and, in some cases, the setting up of a new community-based body in order to access particular sources of funding such as Landfill Tax Credits.

7.63 An Action Plan in this format provides both a checklist for reviewing progress and a basis for preparing staff work programmes. It can also easily be converted into a progress report, for example to the Steering Group, the relevant local authority committee or local communities.

### *Monitoring and Review*

7.64 No strategy lasts forever, nor is it written on tablets of stone. Accordingly, the outcomes achieved should be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis, taking account of both the outcomes already achieved, the long term targets in the strategy and the resources available. There are two elements to this:

- A brief annual review of the outcomes achieved over the previous year. The most appropriate time for this is therefore shortly before the local authority's budget for the next year is set as this will allow the Action Plan to be rolled on and fine tuned in the light of the resources likely to be available.
- A five-year major review, linked to the Best Value process and also the local plan preparation programme. This emphasises the importance of keeping the audit database up to date as if this is not done it may be necessary to redo parts of the audit.



**Table 7.1: Extract from Dundee's Public Open Space Strategy**

**Aim 3: Provide safe, and where appropriate, accessible public open spaces which meet the needs of local communities, both now and in the future**

**Paths and Access**

Objectives	Tasks	Time-scale	Corporate/ National Links	Performance Indicator	Financial Implications	Key Bodies
3.3 Promote sustainable integrated transport links to parks	<p>3.3.1 Sustainable Transport to City Parks</p> <p>Encourage improvement in the provision of bus stops, bus routes, information at bus stops and cycling facilities at all City Parks and Greater Camperdown Country Park.</p>	3 years	<p>Dundee 21: Planning for sustainability</p> <p>Key Theme 7</p>	<p>Review completed for the parks management plans</p> <p>New routes and/or bus stops provided as appropriate.</p>	Within existing budgets	Planning & Transportation Leisure & Parks
3.4 Account for the needs of people with disabilities in the provision and improvement of public open spaces for recreation	<p>3.4.1 Path Construction Standards</p> <p>Investigate the adoption of the BT Countryside for All Accessibility Standards in new path construction in targeted areas, such as the City Parks</p>	3 years	<p>Corporate Plan, DCC - Aim 2.</p> <p>Equal opportunities</p> <p>Heritage Action Plan, DCC - Action point 6.6.3</p>	Feasibility explored	<p>May increase path construction costs.</p> <p>Potential for external funding</p>	Leisure & Parks Planning & Transportation
	<p>3.4.2 City and Country Parks</p> <p>Consider access and the provision of integrated facilities for people with disabilities within the management plans for the City Parks, and the Country Parks.</p>	3 years	<p>Corporate Plan, DCC - Aim 2.</p> <p>Equal opportunities</p>	Accessibility reviewed in park management plans	<p>Within existing budgets</p> <p>Potential for external funding</p>	Leisure & Parks

## 8 THE NEED FOR A PLANNING ADVICE NOTE

### INTRODUCTION

8.1 This research has identified that although NPPG11 contains sensible planning guidelines relating to many open space issues, parts of it – especially the process guidelines - have been ignored by planning authorities. At the same time, the need for high quality open spaces, especially greenspaces, is clearly increasing and many councils are well aware of the need to develop much better open space planning methodologies and policies than they have relied on so far. They also accept the need to promote more effective working in relation to open space issues across council departments; to encourage alternative mechanisms for the long term maintenance of open space to local authority adoption; and to find ways of involving their local communities. However, they are unsure of how to achieve these things against a background of reduced, and reducing, resources. This penultimate Chapter therefore concentrates on the topics which it will be desirable to include in a Planning Advice Note designed to extend the policy guidelines in NPPG11 into practical advice.

8.2 It is split into four main groups of topics:

- criticisms of NPPG11
- the content of a PAN on open space to complement NPPG11
- areas in which planning authorities have indicated that they require additional advice on specific issues related to open space planning
- advice on the preparation of open space planning policies and strategies.

### CRITICISMS OF NPPG11

#### General Criticisms

8.3 The first general criticism of NPPG11 is that while targeted primarily, although not exclusively, at planners, it fails to differentiate adequately between local authorities in general and their specific role as planning authorities. Some planners, and many non-planners, tend to see these as different. 27 of the 101 paragraphs in NPPG11, for example, provide general background information rather than planning policy guidelines. In addition, parts of the process guidance would more appropriately be directed towards the council departments responsible for asset management or sport and recreation, rather than planning.

8.4 This raises a second general issue: the difficulty of achieving effective corporate working across local authority departments when they are struggling to cope with constant change and reducing resources of people, expertise and money. It is ironic that while many individual council departments are more focused on their priorities than they often were in the past, they lack the resources to make meaningful differences and may sometimes be less aware of what other departments are doing – sometimes exacerbated by apparently frequent re-organisation. They are also facing pressures to engage more with their local communities, under the general policy heading of “renewing democracy”, but are not resourced to do so.

8.5 The main criticism of NPPG11, therefore, is that it takes no account of the resource constraints facing councils. It is clear that a number would in principle like to follow the process guidance in NPPG11, but simply do not have the resources to do so. One planner commented that:

*“It is easy to talk about what Councils should do in terms of data collection, analysis and monitoring, but it requires a considerable commitment of resources to sustain the effort, particularly in a situation of constant change. Councils need advice about what to do when they can’t do all this survey,*

*analysis and monitoring. NPPG11 fails properly to acknowledge the resource, manpower, expertise, operational and other constraints facing local authorities and is not of much practical use.”*

8.6 Given their lack of resources, it is not surprising that some councils simply want a “quick fix” – an off the shelf set of model policies or standards, rather than process guidance which they cannot afford to follow. NPPG11 does not help all that much as it is perceived as fudging important issues by trying to be even-handed. However, councils are also well aware of the limitations of simple solutions and want to be reassured that any quick fixes on offer – such as **sportscotland**’s Facilities Planning Model (FPM) – really are valid for their area. They are also concerned that agencies such as **sportscotland** have theoretical and unrealistic expectations of what they can deliver and loth to raise local expectations by including unachievable proposals in local plans.

### Specific criticisms

8.7 There are also a number of more specific criticisms of NPPG11. The first is that it is too focused on sport and recreation, no doubt because **sportscotland** was heavily involved in its preparation but SNH only marginally. **Sportscotland** offers advice to councils on all matters related to sport and recreation but there is no similar source of comprehensive advice on open space issues. Interestingly, one consultee involved in open space management in England saw NPPG11 as very much better than PPG17, which is concerned solely with Sport and Recreation, because it includes a substantial open space component.

8.8 At the same time, NPPG11 is unclear in some respects relating to sport. The phrase “intensive sports facilities” is one with which some councils struggle, as it is rarely used in other contexts and refers in NPPG11 to both indoor and outdoor facilities. It would be much better to clarify exactly what the term covers or exclude built facilities so as to concentrate on issues which are clearly relevant to open space. For example, if “intensive facilities” includes synthetic pitches and water sports and motorsports (all of which are specifically covered under the *Additional Guidelines for Particular Sports* section), does it also include synthetic athletics tracks and if not, why not? Tracks require a considerable land area and are often accompanied by spectator accommodation, yet the *Stadia* section of NPPG11 refers almost exclusively to football.

8.9 A number of councils also criticise the apparent credence that NPPG11 gives to the NPFA Six Acre Standard and the Edinburgh District Local Plan Open Space Standard. Even with the caveats relating to them in NPPG11, this is interpreted by some councils effectively as endorsement of them, although others interpret the inclusion of these standards with a statement that they are inadequate, as a fudge. **Sportscotland** opposed the inclusion of the NPFA Standard in the draft of NPPG11 and recommended that it should be deleted.

8.10 The next criticism of NPPG11 is that it places too much emphasis on the role of the structure plan and is therefore out of tune with much local authority practice. The recently issued NPPG1 states that development plans should seek to deliver the land use elements of Community Plans and this is welcome clarification.

8.11 Councils in largely rural areas are of the view that paragraphs 60-67 of NPPG11 are heavily oriented towards urban areas, or meeting the needs of people from urban areas when they visit the countryside. Unfortunately, there are no easy answers to the particular problems these councils face, such as:

- The inappropriateness of provision standards in largely rural areas where even main settlements are small and houses often scattered across a wide area. For example, many villages want to have a pitch, but this could lead to significant “over-

provision” in relation to population-based standards when compared with urban areas.

- Lack of support amongst residents for open space as part of new developments: for many people, “huddles” of houses, offering shelter to each other in poor weather, may be preferable.
- The problem of obtaining commuted sums towards maintenance costs from small developments of 1 or 2 houses or developers’ contributions to sport and recreation facilities where land values are low but community expectations high. The apparent over-provision referred to above can place extra maintenance and therefore financial burdens on councils with a low tax base in relation to their land area, although people living in rural areas are often more willing than city dwellers, of necessity, to undertake maintenance work themselves. However, this raises specific problems of quality and, in those cases where pitches are “cut” by grazing animals, potential health and safety concerns.
- Inadequate recognition that development pressures arise mainly from within local communities rather than from developers.
- The over-riding importance of generating jobs, even if this conflicts with what might be thought of as good planning.

8.12 Finally, NPPG11 is seen to be extremely weak in relation to children’s play - an issue over which planners and housing developers are often at loggerheads - possibly reflecting the fact that there is no national agency responsible for it.

### **Possible Changes to NPPG11**

8.13 Generally speaking, most councils do not disagree fundamentally with any of the open space guidelines in NPPG11, or believe that it requires urgent amendment, although housing developers believe that councils should interpret it more flexibly. The one issue on which there is wide agreement is that the definition of open space in the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, and referred to briefly in paragraph 35 of NPPG11, is no longer relevant. For all practical purposes it is simply ignored.

## **THE POSSIBLE CONTENT OF A PAN ON OPEN SPACE**

8.14 There are a number of important messages it will be desirable to promote through a Planning Advice Note, together with further advice on the policy content of structure and local plans.

### **General Messages**

8.15 Open space, and greenspace in particular, has come up the political agenda in England as a result largely of the ETRAC report and Urban White Paper. The most important thing which seems to be lacking in Scotland is a “vision” of how greenspace can and should contribute to urban life. A possible vision is that urban areas should have:

- comprehensive networks of accessible, high quality and sustainable greenspaces and civic spaces...
- which contribute positively to the image and overall strategic framework for development...
- promoting both economic development and social inclusion...
- with each individual open space planned, designed and managed to serve a clearly defined primary purpose...
- while also delivering important secondary benefits for local people and, where appropriate, bio-diversity and wildlife.

8.16 Within this overall strategic aim, planning should seek much more actively to promote and enable the enhancement of existing open spaces. The main emphasis should therefore shift from the application of simple quantitative standards, especially as these implicitly relate mainly to greenfield developments, to the promotion of quality and, in many areas, the enhancement of existing open spaces and the green network. While councils must obviously continue to require developers to provide new open spaces in appropriate circumstances, these standards must be flexible. One way in which this might be done is suggested in paragraph 8.24 below.

8.17 The need for resources to enhance and maintain open space is clearly an – if not the – important issue for the future. Planning policies requiring the provision of new greenspaces, or a capital contribution to the enhancement of existing ones, unsupported by comprehensive arrangements for their subsequent long term management and maintenance run the risk of being counter-productive. It follows that planning authorities must work closely with other departments of their council, or open space management and maintenance bodies like the Scottish Greenbelt Company, both during the policy formulation process and also over development control issues. However, the pressure to determine planning applications within an acceptable timescale sometimes makes it difficult to undertake the sometimes complicated negotiations which may be necessary to convert a reasonable proposal into a good one. Achieving what is ultimately an arbitrary performance target for the speed with which councils determine planning applications cannot be more important than the quality of the resulting developments.

8.18 Related to this, if councils do not adopt a strategic and considered approach to the future of open spaces in their area, they will probably find it difficult to release resources, which might ultimately benefit some open spaces, by selling others for development. Accordingly, as well as good planning, it may be in councils’ own financial interest to follow the guidance in NPPG11, as extended by this report.

### **Structure Plans**

8.19 NPPG11 sets out the Scottish Office/Executive’s view of the role of structure plans in relation to open space issues. An alternative view, based on this research, is that Structure Plans should:

- Emphasise the role of good quality, well maintained greenspace in promoting sustainability, improvements to air quality and the control of pollution, urban regeneration, social inclusion, economic development and health and relaxation.
- Promote the concept of a **strategic green network** as the setting for cities, towns and villages within a wider landscape and the main focus of informal open-air recreation for residents of urban areas.
- Require that local plans promote the concept of **local green networks** within urban areas, with appropriate linkages between local networks and the strategic network.
- Identify and require local plans to protect those existing greenspaces which are of strategic importance. These will tend mainly to be regional and country parks and the larger historic urban parks, although some other greenspaces within urban areas will also be important – for example, Glasgow’s Necropolis and Arthur’s Seat (more formally, the Queen’s Park) in Edinburgh.
- Require that local plans include flexible policies relating to the protection and enhancement of those existing spaces which are critical to the existence of local green networks; and requiring the provision or enhancement of greenspace in or related to appropriate housing and non-housing developments.
- Emphasise that quality, accessibility and long term sustainability are more important than quantity.

8.20 Structure plans also have an important role in specifying that open space policies in local plans should be derived locally rather than based on standards derived from elsewhere. Specifically, structure plans should require that councils do not simply adopt the NPFA Six Acre Standard for local plan purposes. If they do decide to use them on an interim basis until they derive their own local standards, they should always take account of when, where and how those standards have been prepared. In addition, they should identify any hidden assumptions behind them before trying to relate them to their own circumstances. For example, it is probably the case that most councils are unaware that the NPFA Six Acre Standard is based on a density of 62 houses per hectare (roughly 24 houses per acre) – a density rarely achieved in Scotland.

## Local Plans

8.21 In broad terms, there should be four groups of policies in local plans relating to open space, developed, monitored and reviewed in the way recommended in this report:

- policies relating to urban parks and gardens
- policies relating to **sports pitches and other outdoor sports facilities**, ideally linked to a local sport and recreation strategy
- policies relating to other types of greenspace
- policies relating to **civic spaces**, ideally set within the context of a public realm strategy.

8.22 The main emphasis in local plan policies relating **urban parks and public gardens** should generally be on their protection and enhancement. In addition, where appropriate and as recommended by NPPG11, parks and gardens of high quality may be designated as conservation areas. This should help to attract external funding for their regeneration, where required, for example from Historic Scotland.

8.23 The emphasis in local plan policies relating to **sports facilities** should be on promoting the concept of “pitch sport centres” with several pitches and sports, rather than stand-alone single pitches. In addition, wherever possible, councils and developers should seek to promote the creation of facilities that have the

potential to become viable multi-sport clubs rather than publicly-owned and managed (and subsidised) pitches. Voluntary clubs effectively hold their facilities in trust for the community as club constitutions normally require that on dissolution, any proceeds are applied to the objects of the club and cannot be distributed amongst the members.

8.24 Local plan policies requiring the provision of new, or the enhancement of existing **other greenspaces** when new developments are proposed should promote a flexible approach. Private greenspaces, such as garden ground linked to houses, are important for both children's play and wildlife and can reduce the need for public open space. Plan policies should also promote the desirability of retaining or providing appropriate areas of natural greenspace, in order to provide habitats for wildlife, help to promote bio-diversity and encourage children and adults to develop an interest in wildlife and the natural heritage. It should also be possible for developers, in specific circumstances highlighted in the local plan, to negotiate "trade-offs" between the amount of open space provided as part of the development and Section 75 contributions to the enhancement of existing greenspaces in the vicinity. This may be particularly appropriate, if not essential, for brownfield developments. One way of doing this might be:

- In areas which are deficient in access to public greenspace (defined using criteria set out in planning policies or Supplementary Planning Guidance), new developments **must** include on-site greenspace in accordance with stated standards.
- In areas which are not deficient in access to public greenspace, developers will be required **either** to provide on-site greenspace in accordance with stated standards; **or** contribute a capital sum to the local authority to be ring-fenced and used only for the enhancement of existing off-site and poor quality greenspaces in the vicinity **or** a blend of these two approaches. The choice between these options in any particular circumstances should be negotiated between the developer and the planning authority and other appropriate departments of the local authority. In order to provide certainty for developers when negotiating with landowners, the basic cost of each of these options to the developer must be as near the same as can realistically be achieved, although possibly with some enhancement when this flexibility allows developers to provide additional houses in return for a contribution to off-site greenspace. In addition, "in the vicinity" should be defined using acceptable distance thresholds in local plan policies or supplementary planning guidance.

8.25 The emphasis in local plan policies relating to **children's play** should be primarily on creating child-friendly environments, with equipped play areas a secondary, albeit still important, issue.

## AREAS FOR SPECIFIC ADVICE

8.26 The main additional guidance which councils seek is related to the process guidelines in NPPG11. There are a number of general issues on which there is a broad consensus that further advice is required. In large part, these revolve around resource issues. They are:

- the definition of sustainable open space
- the derivation and use of standards relating to the provision of different types of open space
- the calculation of commuted sums for the maintenance of open space in new developments
- the calculation of developers' contributions to off-site open spaces or open improvements

- the relative importance of local opinions and national guidelines.

### *The Definition of Sustainable Open Space*

8.27 NPPG11 contains an implicit typology of open space, but without any attempt at the definition of different elements of it. The types of open space which councils find most difficult to define are parks and sports facilities. The definition of parks can be tackled effectively by using a locally-derived hierarchy as recommended in paragraph 6.66. As for sports facilities, there is a view that they should be seen as a specific land use in their own right and planned and managed entirely separately from other types of greenspace, especially as this might help to encourage cost-effective linked indoor and outdoor facilities. The recommended planning methodology in Chapter 6 takes account of this view, while also retaining them as a sub-set of greenspace. Some councils also question the link between parks and amenity open space in paragraphs 42-43 of NPPG11 and suggest a better link would be between children's play and amenity open space, as in this report.

8.28 The other important issues relating to definition are the questions of sustainability and of quality. Councils accept that these are both important considerations, but are unsure how to define and, more important, measure them in a consistent way. They are also aware of the difficulty of keeping records relating to quality issues up to date. Recommendations on how quality can be assessed and recorded are given in paragraphs 6.42-6.47 and 7.32-7.33.

### *The Derivation and Use of Standards*

8.29 The question of standards is of fundamental importance. Many councils acknowledge the limitations of their present standards but lack the resources to derive something better for their own area. Perhaps more important, some are nervous of doing so in case they come up with something which is significantly different from their present approach. On the one hand, they see no real prospect of asking developers to provide higher levels of open space in new developments and know that to do so would generate a large number of objections at their next local plan review. In addition, those which are particularly keen to see development in their areas are concerned that the application of any standard can scare off developers. On the other, they believe that a lower local standard could "open the floodgates" to planning applications for the development of existing open spaces. Housing developers generally view open space standards as something they have had to learn to live with, albeit reluctantly, and can cite many examples where they believe "the planners" have insisted on something which they know prospective purchasers will not want – most often children's play areas.

8.30 This relates to the general question of the universality of standards. The same basic standard is not equally relevant everywhere, but does provide reasonable certainty for developers and does not require repeated negotiations and value judgements as part of the development control process.

### **The Use of Commuted Sums**

8.31 Maintenance is seen as very important by both sides of the development industry but something which cannot be controlled by either planners or the planning system. Therefore there is a need to stress the importance of open space strategies as a way of promoting effective open space maintenance and, in particular, demonstrating to developers that commuted sums are indeed being used for maintenance purposes. This problem may well become more acute as housing densities increase and the wear and tear on some areas of greenspace increases.

8.32 Related to this, there is a need for advice for planners on alternatives to local authority adoption and maintenance, such as the role of the Scottish Greenbelt Company and similar organisations. Where councils use these alternative approaches, their planning policies should seek to ensure that they will be both deliverable and effective. This will require that they contribute both to planning policies when they are first prepared and the monitoring of their effectiveness in use.



### *The Calculation of Developers' Contributions*

8.33 The use of Section 75 agreements in relation to open space planning is rather limited in Scotland at present but, if councils accept the advice above regarding the growing importance of enhancing existing greenspaces, is likely to be more common in future. In any case, some councils are beginning to wonder whether they have acceded too readily in the past to claims that projects will not be viable if they seek developers' contributions through Section 75 agreements or even commuted maintenance sums. There are three main aspects to this:

- Whether it is realistic in principle to seek a contribution from small developments, such as a single house. It is, and some English councils, at least, already do.
- The circumstances in which it is reasonable to aggregate contributions for some off-site purpose. The answer is that it should be when the need for good planning, coupled with effective management and maintenance, make it sensible for there to be a smaller number of well located and accessible larger facilities, rather than a larger number of smaller ones. A good example is to aggregate a number of contributions in order to provide a full size synthetic grass pitch rather than a series of small kick-about areas.
- How to calculate developers' contributions.

8.34 Research currently being undertaken by Scottish Executive Planning Services should provide additional guidance on these issues.

### *Local Opinion versus National Guidelines*

8.35 The whole thrust of political initiatives aimed at "renewing democracy" is to give local people a greater say over those things that will affect them. The Best Value regime also requires that councils concentrate on those things which their local communities are willing to support financially. In some instances, there may be potential conflicts looming between the views and preferences of local people and national guidelines or planning policies. National Planning Policy Guidelines may ultimately need to differentiate between "negotiables" and "non-negotiables".

### **Areas in Which Councils Would Like Specific Guidance**

8.36 There are also a number of areas in which councils have identified a need for further advice in relation to specific aspects of NPPG11. They are summarised below, using the headings in NPPG11.

#### **8.37 Levels of Provision**

- The relationship between the level of provision required to meet current demand and achieving an optimum spatial distribution that will serve the community for the long term. How can councils determine a base resource that will remain robust for many years? Without some guidance about minimum or absolute standards, Councils tend to look at what they are already providing or can afford to provide and set standards accordingly. This can lead to wide variations between authorities and possibly long term under-provision if land is sold off for development. **See Chapters 6 and 7.**
- While it may be desirable for there to be an overall national target (or targets) for open space provision, if it is provided there will also be a need for guidance on how to apply it in ways which meet local circumstances. **See paragraphs 5.34-5.37.**

- Standards and approaches for establishing catchment areas and accessibility to green space and recreational facilities. **See paragraphs 2.11 and 6.35-6.41.**
- Approaches to the provision of green space associated with new developments other than housing. **See paragraphs 6.68 and 6.69.**
- Examples of good practice where authorities have developed and introduced local standards. See paragraph 6.61 and Waters, T, and Smith, M (1999), *The Planning and Management of Urban Open Space in Scotland: A Case Study based on the development of Dundee's Public Open Space Strategy*, Perth: SNH.
- How the provision of private open space (for example in house gardens) can affect standards for public open space. **See paragraphs 6.33-6.34 and 8.24.**

### 8.38 Open Space

- The use of structure planting and landscaping to provide shelter and reduce energy consumption in buildings. **See paragraph 5.21.**
- Guidance on the provision of open space in relation to brownfield developments. What open space standards should be applied, bearing in mind the extra costs the developer may have to face? **See paragraph 8.24**
- Different approaches for different development types – for example, should houses and flats be dealt with in exactly the same way? NPPG11 seems to suggest they should. **See paragraphs 6.33-6.34.**
- Clearer guidelines on the protection of open spaces from development. **See paragraphs 6.66-6.83.**

### 8.39 Public Parks and Amenity Open Space

- Guidance on planning policies for historic burial grounds. **See paragraph 6.83 and NPPG5.**
- Sources of funding for the management and maintenance of open space following enhancement. **See paragraphs 3.16-3.22 and 7.50-7.52.**

### 8.40 Playing Fields and Sports Pitches

- Advice on methods of assessing the need for pitches in an area and the circumstances in which it is clear there is likely to be a long term excess of pitches, so allowing some pitches to be sold for development. This should take account of the fact that if councils base their level of pitch provision on existing demand, they will reinforce existing patterns of participation rather than help new ones to develop. **See the forthcoming guidance from sportscotland, to be published in the first half of 2001.**
- Guidance on the interpretation of “formerly used” for sports pitches and playing fields (paragraph 46), especially where the scale and nature of former use is not recorded. The number of pitches on a particular site may vary from year to year. **See the forthcoming guidance from sportscotland, to be published in the first half of 2001.**
- Guidance on dealing with proposals for the enhancement of pitches, together with the role of the planning system in delivering this enhancement, which is normally driven by other council departments. For example, a floodlit synthetic pitch can be used for many games each week, so can the number of grass pitches, which can be used for only 2-3 games each week, be reduced where synthetic pitches are provided? Alternatively, are X grass pitches better than Y blaes pitches? In addition, how should planners handle the conversion of an existing pitch into a synthetic one, when the latter is a potential “bad neighbour”. **See paragraphs 6.14-6.17.**

- Guidance on the amount of land required for different pitches, including allowances for required for spectators, changing facilities, maintenance equipment and parking, and best practice in terms of ancillary and site layouts. **See the forthcoming guidance from sportscotland, to be published in the first half of 2001.**

#### 8.41 Intensive Sports Facilities

- Examples of where local authorities have played an enabling rather than direct provision role. **See the Perth in Bloom case study in Chapter 4.**
- Examples of good practice in provision, especially where the planning system has played a key role by promoting the development of facilities on brownfield sites or linked to good public transport. **Seek advice from sportscotland.**
- Guidance on handling applications for floodlighting – often the subject of complaints or objections. There is a need for clear guidance on how to minimise nuisance; for example, some people maintain that higher columns reduces light spill nuisance, others that it increases it. **See PAN 51, Planning and Environmental Protection.**

#### 8.42 Sport and Recreation in Rural Areas

- Promoting access to the countryside through informal arrangements rather than by the assertion of rights of way, which many farmers oppose. Ideally this should be set within the context of discussion of land reform issues affecting public access to the countryside for recreation. **Seek advice from SNH.**
- Greater recognition that some councils are responsible for both urban and rural areas. If a planning authority is to adopt a consistent approach throughout its area it really needs one set of policies. If it adopts different urban and rural policies, where does the relevance of one type of policy end and the other start? **See paragraph 6.89.**
- The need for different approaches in rural areas, where the application of standards (not only for open space, but also other things such as lighting standards on roads) may largely be irrelevant. **See paragraph 8.11.**
- Recognition that in many small villages, ready access to the countryside by means of a suitable footpath network provides a substitute for urban open space, for example for strolling or walking dogs. **See paragraph 6.34.**
- The effective promotion of Countryside Around Towns projects: Highland Council is keen to promote greater access to the countryside. **Seek advice from SNH.**

#### 8.43 Action Required

- Advice on the relationship between Development Control and implementing policies and standards for open space which may require the collection and possibly the

analysis of a considerable amount of local information. The key issue is that proper evaluation requires time and negotiations, particularly if several LA Departments are involved. This can create conflicts with the pressure to turn applications round within 8 weeks. It may be desirable for guidance to recommend that councils insist that this evaluation forms part of pre-application procedures. **See paragraph 6.97.**

## **OPEN SPACE PLANNING METHODOLOGIES AND STRATEGIES**

8.44 Finally, it will also be desirable for a PAN to incorporate the detailed open space planning methodologies in Chapter 6 and emphasise the importance of open space strategies, initiated by local authorities but involving a range of other local bodies and stakeholders, along the lines suggested in Chapter 7.

## 9 IN CONCLUSION

9.1 Nothing remains the same for ever and the pendulum of public and political opinion swings just as much as any other. Over the past twenty or so years, Compulsory Competitive Tendering and successive squeezes on local authority expenditure, coupled with a view that other things are a higher priority for the public pound, have pushed the open space pendulum in the direction of long term decline. But the decline is not terminal and this research suggests that the pendulum has swung too far. Fortunately, however, concerns over the urban renaissance and the quality of life in urban areas, the need to deliver social inclusion and rising environmental concerns are now pushing it back in the opposite direction. As Sir Peter Hall put it in *Cities of Tomorrow*:

*“Good environment, as the economists would say, is an income-elastic good; as people, and societies generally, get richer, they demand proportionally more of it. And, apart from building private estates with walls round them, the only way they are going to get it is through public action.”* (Hall, 1990)

9.2 “Public action” is now certainly higher on the agenda than only a year or so ago, although the results are only just beginning to appear. Over the next few years, however, the growing investment in parks and other historic urban landscapes funded by Lottery tickets will demonstrate to everyone that high quality, well maintained open spaces are not simply an “income-elastic good” but an essential part of twenty-first century urban life.

9.3 But we cannot rely only on a limited number of high profile open spaces, such as our heritage of Victorian parks, to deliver an enhanced quality of life. We must seek to ensure that *all* open spaces are attractive, well maintained, well used and safe. If they are not, we will all be the poorer. This will require:

- effective, fact-based and therefore defensible planning policies which are designed to protect existing open spaces and encourage the provision of quality open spaces as an integral part of new developments, enforced sensibly and pragmatically
- effective management by local authorities and other land owners, which delivers both what local communities want and wider environmental, economic and social benefits to the nation as a whole
- effective involvement of local communities in the planning and management of their local environment.

9.4 Everyone therefore has an important role to play in “rethinking open space”.

## **ANNEX A OPEN SPACE STRATEGY WORKSHOP**

### **INTRODUCTION**

A.1 This annex summarises the outcomes and conclusions from the scoping workshop at the start of the study. For concision, it is in bullet point rather than narrative form.

### **SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP OUTCOMES**

#### **Trends in Open Space Planning and Provision**

A.2 The current concerns of local authorities in relation to open space planning, provision and maintenance include:

- The impact of the best value regime, forcing them to question and re-assess many traditional attitudes and programmes
- The way in which local authority policies are becoming essentially resource-driven, leading to pressure to dispose of potentially valuable assets (such as open space) to fund high priority programmes, with open space sometimes seen as a disbenefit or liability (rather than a cultural, social and community asset) and no “duty” on the local authority to maintain it
- Central government initiative overload; as soon as local authorities have become familiar with one government initiative, along comes another which supersedes it
- Development pressures promoting town cramming
- Finding effective means of engaging with local communities over the planning, provision and maintenance/management of open space – especially for new developments, where “the community” does not yet exist – and how this can be resourced
- Pressures for the development of private open space, with some developers approaching land owners eg economically fragile bowling and tennis clubs
- The lack of solid, defensible criteria for use in planning open space, whether quantitative, qualitative or related to accessibility
- Open space planning is an urban design issue as much as a planning one
- The key issues in open space planning are quality and function (rather than quantity); safety (especially for children and women); creating networks of open space; and resources. A particular concern is to find ways of persuading the private sector to engage positively and voluntarily in the provision and management of open space (in addition to Section 75 agreements)
- The promotion or safeguarding of bio-diversity
- There is a need to raise the political importance and profile of open space; one way of doing this might be by using the health agenda. At present local Councillors tend to have a short-term perspective.
- In some authorities (eg Glasgow, Dundee), an inadequate tax base creates special resource difficulties
- Minimum standards inevitably become maximum standards over time: should there be “rock bottom (absolute minimum)” and target standards?

## **Open Space Quality**

A.3 Important issues relating to open space quality include:

- Quality is very difficult to define, but is best viewed in relation to objectives, fitness for purpose and the availability of resources for provision (effective and appropriate design) and long term pro-active management and maintenance
- Different types of open space have different stakeholders, often with very different perspectives; for example, “parks” and “open space” are very different things. As stakeholder views change, so open spaces may also have to change.
- Local communities regard open space in their neighbourhood as very different in nature and use from city-wide parks
- There is a danger that open space is often the land which cannot be developed economically in some other way (eg lines of major sewers) rather than “designed in” as an integral and central component of housing or other developments
- Parents’ concern for children’s safety is a key consideration in open space planning and management (eg safe routes to school, with parents taking it in turns to supervise a “crocodile” of children); children are not allowed to “range” as much as in the past

## **Open Space Planning**

A.4 Significant issues relating to open space planning include:

- There is often a lack of adequate information about the opportunities available in open space (or how it is used) and effective feedback to those responsible for maintenance and management
- There is a need to approach open space planning, management and maintenance differently in areas of affluence and deprivation; local concerns may be very different (eg in “leafy suburbs” people normally like trees and shrubs and want them to be safeguarded; in deprived areas they may be a hiding place for muggers and therefore a threat; or open space can be gang territory)
- Open space does not have to be “public” – visible private open space contributes to local attractiveness
- There is a case for “reclaiming the street” as a form of open space in housing areas (eg through traffic calming)
- There is a need to find effective and sustainable ways of empowering communities in relation to “their” local open space, especially in the light of local authority decentralisation and promotion of local consultations and delivery of local services
- Planning is too passive, distant and “occasional”; more dynamic and involving/empowering approaches are required
- Open space planning and management must be outcomes-driven, not an academic exercise; a blend of top-down thinking (eg in relation to city-wide parks) and bottom-up involvement. There may be a need for different methodologies/approaches to city-wide open space (eg major parks) and local open space (eg neighbourhood parks and footpath networks). In addition, there is a need to link to other local agendas (eg economic development, transport planning); this implies a need to involve many local authority departments and local communities



- Developers and development control staff need clarity over what types of open space are needed (objectives, functions); where (on site open space or contributions to off site open space); and how it is to be provided, designed and managed (made accessible and maintained)
- Published case studies can be of limited value because the particular circumstances of each case study are rarely replicated in other areas.

## NPPG11

### A.5 Specific concerns relating to NPPG11 include:

- NPPG11 has been useful in local authority negotiations with developers, but primarily as a last resort when all else has failed
- **Sportscotland** and the NPFA believe NPPG11 has helped to safeguard sports pitches from development
- There is a lack of “joined-up thinking” in different NPPGs (probably because they are produced at different times with different agendas and stakeholders)
- NPPG11 is primarily concerned with sport and recreation and much less with wider issues such as amenity and informal recreation

## KEY CONCLUSIONS FROM THE WORKSHOP

### A.6 There were three key conclusions from the workshop:

- The planning system, through NPPGs, PANs, Circulars, Development Plans, Supplementary Planning Guidance and the development control mechanism, can play only a limited part in the planning and effective delivery of quality open space. Therefore there is a need also to consult and **involve** quite a number of local authority departments and local communities in planning, design, maintenance and management. Dundee, for example, involved eleven Council Departments (Leisure and Parks, Arts and Heritage, Corporate Planning, Education, Economic Development, Environmental and Consumer Protection; Finance, Housing, Neighbourhood Resources and Development, Planning and Transportation and Social Work) as well as SNH, the Paths for All Partnership and SET. This suggests a need for a “guidance/good practice” document which is not tied directly to the planning system, in addition to a PAN.
- Many local authorities are likely to lack the resources (mainly people, for consulting/involving communities and individuals and data collection, but also money) to undertake a comprehensive open space strategy, whether as part of a Local Plan review or as a stand-alone piece of work. This suggests a need for sectoral methodologies as well as a means of negotiating over possible conflicts. Alternatively – perhaps as well – there may be a need to adopt different approaches (and possibly different time scales) for different types and scales of open space, eg city-wide and local open space networks. Traditional approaches – eg quantitative standards and hierarchical approaches – may be straitjackets which prevent more creative or flexible thinking.
- Open space planning and strategies must be outcomes-driven; appropriate Local Plan policies are obviously one outcome, but there are many others (eg long term,

sustained community involvement in management, monitoring the impact/success of open space strategies; raising the political profile of open space)

## ANNEX B HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND GRANTS TO SCOTTISH HISTORIC PARKS

B.1 This annex gives examples of grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund's Urban Parks Programme for the enhancement of existing historic parks in Scotland. There is no specific allocation of funds to Scotland; instead, the programme is UK-wide. Further details of grants from the Fund are available at [www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk).

B.2 **Castlemilk Park, Glasgow:** a grant of £250,000 is part funding the restoration of Castlemilk Bridge, the revitalisation of the woodland and the reinstatement of the historic approaches to what was previously Castlemilk House.

B.3 **Dean Cemetery Edinburgh:** the Dean Cemetery in central Edinburgh dates from the 17th century and contains a variety of historic landscapes. It forms part of the Edinburgh World Heritage Site. A grant of £11,500 has been used to part fund the preparation of a comprehensive restoration plan, including such features as improvements to footpaths and increased access for education and quiet recreation. A subsequent grant of £150,000 will help fund the various improvements.

B.4 **Dundee, Baxter Park:** Old Auchentroig, a category A listed laird's house built in 1702, is a rare unaltered example of Scots vernacular architecture and one of the earliest and best preserved prototype two-storey three-bay symmetrical houses. It has been uninhabited for 30 years and faced imminent collapse. The grant of £7,550 will meet part of the cost of making it safe.

B.5 **Dundee's Environmental Stocktake:** a grant of £30,000 is part funding an environmental audit of the natural heritage in Dundee.

B.6 **Glasgow Green:** a grant of £3.65M is being used to revive the historic features of the Green, including the restoration of the Doulton fountain, the provision of children's play equipment and a space for events. Since the announcement of the scheme to refurbish the Green, developers have invested around £200M in the area around it, including "Homes for the Future" as part of Glasgow's contribution to European City of Art and Design.

B.7 **Greyfriars Burial Ground, Perth:** Greyfriars Burial Ground was established on the ruins of the Franciscan Monastery in Perth in 1580. The £245,000 grant is contributing to the repair of walls and paths in the historic graveyard, after which the site will be opened to the public.

B.8 **Menstrie Community Woodland:** Menstrie Community Council has received a grant to acquire and manage one of the Scottish Wildlife Trust's Wildlife Sites, Menstrie Community Woodland, which lies within an area of great landscape value. The grant will enable the site to be managed and includes an amount to assist in the preservation of landscape features and the conservation of habitats.

B.9 **Montrose, Mid Links:** the Mid Links, Montrose, is a series of elegant linear parks built between 1875 and 1925, mainly by George Scott, a professional horticulturist. The whole site lies in the Montrose Conservation Area. The grant of £9,300 will part fund a restoration and management plan.

B.10 **Musselburgh, Lewisvale Park:** a grant of £264,000 is part funding improvements to the main entrance and pathways and the creation of a children's play area. It will also assist with the funding of a park warden for a period of 3 years.

B.11 **Stranraer, Stair Park:** the Coronation Bandstand, opened in 1911, is one of a small number of bandstands remaining in Scotland. The grant of just under £70,000 is being used to pay part of the cost of dismantling, restoring and rebuilding it on a new site within the Park.

B.12 **Strathpeffer Spa Gardens, Highland:** the development of Strathpeffer as a spa commenced in 1819 after a Dr Morrison was supposedly cured of chronic rheumatism by taking the waters. The grant of just under £0.5M is being used to rescue the gardens from their derelict and overgrown state.

B.13 **Tollcross Park, Glasgow:** set in the heart of Glasgow's East End, the Tollcross Estate was acquired by the former Glasgow Corporation in 1897. It comprises 38.8 hectares of green open space and sweeping paths and five historic buildings, including the 1840s Mansion House. The Heritage Lottery Fund has provided two grants for its restoration. The first, of £5,175, part funded a professional landscape survey and the second, of £1,850,000, is contributing to the restoration and extension of the Victorian Winter Gardens (at one time within days of demolition as unsafe), improvements to the Children's Farm and the planting of 1,000 semi-mature trees. The works will also create a children's Adventure Play area, upgrade the International Rose Trials Garden and improve vehicular access for people with disabilities.

B.14 **West Dunbartonshire:** a grant of just over £10,000 is part funding landscape restoration plans for six local parks and two cemeteries. The parks provide an important scenic and recreational amenity and the restoration will increase visitors' enjoyment as well as enhancing their understanding of the heritage value of these areas.

## ANNEX C EXAMPLES OF OPEN SPACE HIERARCHIES

### INTRODUCTION

C.1 This annexe provides examples of open space hierarchies developed for use in Dundee, Glasgow and London. It demonstrates how hierarchies should be purpose-designed to suit local circumstances.

### THE DUNDEE HIERARCHY

C.2 The Dundee Hierarchy is given in Waters, T, and Smith, M (1999) *The Planning and Management of Urban Open Space in Scotland: A Case Study based on the development of Dundee's Public Open Space Strategy*, Perth: SNH. It is summarised in Tables C.1 and C.2 below.

**Table C.1: City-Wide Open Spaces**

Requirements: Protect and enhance sites of city-wide importance  
 Account for city-wide trends in leisure patterns and opinions  
 Consult and involve local people  
 Promote to visitors and tourists

Category	Minimum Size	Minimum Distance	Functions and Facilities
Country Parks	200 ha	Accessible by public transport, car, foot, bicycle.  Catchment area: Regional and beyond	“Family Day Out”  Type of visit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extended visit</li> </ul> Provision for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major leisure and visitor attractions(s) facilities</li> <li>Toilets, café provision, major events</li> <li>Nature conservation &amp; visual amenity interest</li> </ul>
City Recreation Parks	10 ha	Accessible by public transport, car, foot, bicycle.  Maximum distance from homes: 2.5 km	“Something for Everyone”  Type of visit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visit of up to a day</li> </ul> Provision for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leisure and recreation facilities</li> <li>Toilets, refreshments, events</li> <li>Nature conservation and visual amenity interest</li> </ul>
City Heritage Parks	Appropriate to type and function of park	Accessible by public transport, car, foot, bicycle.	“The City’s Treasures” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manage/enhance access &amp; recreation whilst safeguarding their heritage value</li> </ul>

**Table C.2: Local Open Spaces**

Requirements: Protect and enhance sites of local importance  
 Meet local needs and account for local characteristics  
 Consult and involve local people  
 Seek to ensure all open spaces are safe, supervised and accessible on foot

Category	Minimum Size	Minimum Distance	Functions and Facilities
Neighbourhood Parks	1 ha	Accessible on foot and bicycle.  1.2 km from every home	Variety of provision across an area  Type of visit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequent local use</li> </ul> Range of provision across and area for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreation (mainly informal, some formal, sport and play)</li> <li>• A civic square or village green</li> <li>• Nature conservation and visual amenity interest</li> </ul>
Local Parks and Open Spaces	100 sq m	Accessible on foot.	Safe, locally accessible open spaces.  Type of visit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily use</li> </ul> Provision for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal recreation and play</li> <li>• Nature conservation interest and visual amenity interest</li> </ul>

## THE GLASGOW PARKS HIERARCHY

C.3 Glasgow's parks hierarchy is given in Glasgow City Council (1997) A New Vision, A New Future - Parks and Open Space Strategy, Glasgow: the Council. It consists of City Parks, District Parks and Local Parks:

- City Parks are defined as those parks which can attract large numbers of visitors, both resident and visitors to the City. They are generally of substantial size and historic important, and can contain major visitor attractions and facilities. City parks will also act as local parks for their immediate communities.
- District Parks are defined as providing quality open spaces but will also have a specific attraction, resource or potential resource which attracts visits from the other parts of the Glasgow area. They will serve a sector of the City (approximately 1.5 miles radius) which, when added to the City parks, will then cover the whole City. District parks therefore require good accessibility (public and private transport), toilets and opportunities for catering and indoor attractions. District parks will also act as Local parks for the their local communities.
- Local parks are defined as parks which are generally accessible on foot and principally cater for local community needs including children's play and local events. They require to be well maintained to appropriate standards and to provide a safe environment for all members of the community. All parks in the city will be considered as local parks by people in the immediate vicinity.

## THE LONDON PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE APPROACH

C.4 Open space planning in London has long been based on the "Open Space Hierarchy" in the Greater London Development Plan's (Greater London Council, 1988) which in turn can be traced back to the original Abercromby Plan. The current version of the hierarchy is quoted in the English *PPG 17, Sport and Recreation*

(London: Department of the Environment and Welsh Office, 1991) and set out in Table C.3 overleaf. In principle, the approach is of general applicability, although the size of the bigger parks is relevant only to large cities like London and would obviously require modification before it could be used in Scotland.

**Table C.3: LPAC Open Space Hierarchy**

Types and Principal Functions	Approximate Sizes and Distances from Homes	Characteristics
<p>Regional Parks and Open Spaces</p> <p>(linked metropolitan open land and green belt corridors)</p> <p>Weekend and occasional visits by car or public transport</p>	<p>400 Hectares</p> <p>3.2 - 8 km</p>	<p>Large areas and corridors of natural moorland, downland, commons, woodlands and parkland also including areas not publicly accessible but which contribute to the overall environmental amenity. Primarily providing for informal recreation with some non-intensive active recreation uses. Car parking at key locations.</p>
<p>Metropolitan Parks</p> <p>Weekend and occasional visits by car or public transport</p>	<p>60 hectares</p> <p>3.2 km or more where the park is appreciably larger</p>	<p>Either natural moorland, downland, commons, woodland etc. or formal parks, providing for both active and passive recreation.</p> <p>May contain playing fields, but at least 40 hectares for other pursuits</p> <p>Adequate car parking</p>
<p>District Parks</p> <p>Weekend and occasional visits by foot, cycle, car or short bus trips</p>	<p>20 hectares</p> <p>1.2 km</p>	<p>Landscape setting with a variety of natural features providing for a wide range of activities, including outdoor sports facilities and playing fields.</p> <p>Children's play for different age groups and informal recreation pursuits.</p> <p>Should provide some car parking</p>
<p>Local Parks</p> <p>For pedestrian visitors</p>	<p>2 hectares</p> <p>1.2 km</p>	<p>Providing for court games, children's play, sitting out areas, nature conservation, landscaped environment, and playing fields if the parks are large enough.</p>
<p>Small Local Parks and Open Spaces</p> <p>Pedestrian visits, especially by old people and children, particularly valuable in high density residential areas</p>	<p>Up to 2 hectares</p> <p>Up to 0.4 km</p>	<p>Gardens, sitting out areas, children's playgrounds or other areas of a specialist nature, including nature conservation areas</p>
<p>Linear Open Space</p> <p>Pedestrian visits</p>	<p>Variable</p> <p>Wherever feasible</p>	<p>Canal towpaths, paths, disused railways and other routes which provide opportunities for informal recreation, including nature conservation. Often areas which are not fully accessible to the public but contribute to the enjoyment of the space.</p>



## ANNEX D CHILD-FRIENDLY HOUSING ENVIRONMENTS

D.1 *Child's Play: Facilitating Play on Housing Estates: A Report for the Chartered Institute of Housing and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation*, (Wheward and Millward, 1997) provides a comprehensive set of guidelines, which if followed, will help to ensure that housing environments provide safe opportunities for children to play. Table D.1 provides a brief summary of the key objectives and measures it recommends for child-friendly environments:

**Table D.1: Achieving a Child-friendly Environment**

<b>Objective: To enable children to ...</b>	<b>Measure</b>
... move freely round their estate on foot, bicycle, skates, or other wheeled vehicle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Footpath network linked to grassy areas, tarmac areas, play areas, school, shops and bus routes.</li> </ul>
...travel safely without danger from traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traffic calming measure to limit car speed to 10 mph: short straight sections, bumps, culs-de-sac, change in surface material or colour, roundels, pinch points, mini-roundabouts and sleeping policemen</li> <li>• Cul-de-sac and "no through route" layout</li> <li>• Narrow sight lines on approach roads and sharp angle turns into residential roads</li> <li>• Wide sight lines to enable drivers to see children moving between pavement and road within residential roads</li> <li>• Car parking off road, on drives or in bays to increase visibility of children moving between pavement and road</li> </ul>
... be able to play in front, or within sight, of their homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A variety of play spaces and surfaces incorporated in the front street landscape, such as walls, sitting areas, grassy areas, and sections of wider pavement, to encourage girls especially to play outdoors, as they tend to have more restrictions placed on them than boys.</li> <li>• Front gardens with good visual oversight from house kitchens and living rooms</li> <li>• Footpath network linked to grassy areas, tarmac areas, play areas, school, shops and bus routes</li> </ul>
...be part of the community and the community's interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A variety of play spaces and surfaces incorporated in the front street landscape, such as walls, sitting areas, grassy areas and sections of wider pavement, to encourage girls especially to play outdoors, as they tend to have more restrictions placed on them than boys</li> <li>• Public open spaces located along popular pedestrian routes to shopping centres, schools and other well used public buildings such as estate offices, to increase the level of informal community supervision</li> </ul>
... be able to play in the natural environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trees and hedgerows conserved and incorporated as street landscape features to encourage climbing and imaginative play</li> <li>• Public open spaces incorporating play equipment (swings and a slide especially), trees, wild areas and flat grassy areas for ball games</li> </ul>
... be able to play in purposefully provided play opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play areas located along footpath network, within public open space, adjacent to public buildings or well used pedestrian routes, to allow for a level of informal community supervision</li> <li>• A variety of play spaces and surfaces incorporated in the front street landscape, such as walls, sitting areas, grassy areas, and sections of wider pavement, to encourage girls especially to play outdoors, as they tend to have more restrictions placed on them than boys</li> </ul>
... be able to play football and other ball games	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public open spaces incorporating play equipment (swings and a slide especially), trees, wild areas and flat grassy areas for ball games</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For seniors and teenagers, a footpath network, flat surfaces for sporting activity, laid out pitches and courts, a fishing pool and places to meet, in public open spaces, within or adjacent to estates.</li> </ul>
... be able to play outdoors within the home environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Back gardens with sections of fence or gate which allow children to see what is going on in the street</li> <li>• Front gardens with good visual oversight from kitchens and living rooms</li> </ul>
... be able to attend playschemes, clubs or other organised activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilities designed or useable for playwork, either paid or voluntary, regular or occasional</li> <li>• Play areas located along the footpath network, within public open space, adjacent to public buildings or well used pedestrian routes, to allow for a level of informal community supervision</li> </ul>

## ANNEX E ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL OPEN SPACE GUIDELINES

E.1 This annex provides a broad summary of Aberdeenshire Council's stand-alone open space policy guidance for developers, *The Design & Provision of Public Open Space for New Residential Development*. It provides a good example of a comprehensive approach.

E.2 The key principles on which Aberdeenshire's guidance to developers is based are:

- **A clearly defined strategic hierarchy** of open spaces, although not intended as a "book of rules" and developers should interpret the hierarchy flexibly to suit particular circumstances and take account of what already exists and the natural topography and existing landscape. The Council also promotes a pragmatic approach which allows small areas of amenity, shelter or structure planting to be included in private gardens.
- **The amalgamation or linking of different open spaces** wherever possible, together with the natural landscape treatment of most sites. In addition, new open spaces should be linked to the overall hierarchy of open spaces in an area to create a network of green corridors.
- **The purpose of new open spaces should determine their location and character**, rather than being the areas on which it may be inconvenient to build
- **The use of Section 75 Agreements**: the Council specifically identifies that it will use Section 75 agreements in order to "open up" specific areas of land, identified on the Proposals Map, for public access
- **Monitoring**: the Council has given a commitment to monitor the effectiveness of its policy in a number of developments

E.3 The standards are set out in two parts:

- A strategic statement of the kinds of facility and level of provision which should be available for each town or village as a whole, presented as an "ideal hierarchy" and given in Table E.1 below
- The detailed standard which will be applied to each new housing development to ensure each will make its own appropriate contribution to the overall strategy and given in Table E.2 below.

**Table E.1 - Ideal Hierarchy of Open Space**

<b>Type of Facility</b>	<b>Range size (sq m)</b>	<b>Population served</b>	<b>Ideal maximum distance from houses served</b>	<b>Function</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Large Park</b> Formal and informal landscaped park, recreation pitches	Over 10,000	2,000-5,000	1,000-1,500m	A park for all the family for organised games, informal play and the casual enjoyment of walking and scenery	A whiff of the country in the town, and often an expression of civic pride, it will normally be a place which families make a concerned decision to visit and so can be relatively distant from some of the catchment, including across roads. Locations are best chosen for the potential of the site, eg based on a riverside, hill or wood with flat land for pitches, rather than for the immediate proximity of houses.
<b>Organised Pitches</b> Recreation pitches Courts, greens etc.	Over 7,000	700-5,000	1,000-1,500m	For organised sports	Often associated with a large park, it can equally be relatively distant from its catchment, but (except for a dry ski slope) must have flat, well-drained ground.
<b>Community Play Area</b> Play equipment kickabout, some informal areas	3,000-4,000	250-1,000 (in some cases in larger towns possibly up to 1,500-2,000)	450-500m	Informal play for 9-14 year olds without supervision, 208 year olds with parental supervision. Especially where amalgamated with amenity areas, it can also provide some informal recreation for adults.	Basically for primary school children, should not be too far from most houses in its catchment area and not across a general access road. The areas of noisy play need to be a minimum distance from the nearest house to prevent nuisance and to be fenced against dogs. Locations chosen more by proximity to houses and suitability for play than by intrinsic potential of the site. Amalgamated with other types of area where appropriate.
<b>Neighbourhood</b>	500-3,000	50-500	100-150m	Informal play for 2-	Basically for smaller children, it will

<b>Green Space</b> Informal Recreation				10 year olds with or without supervision. Especially where linked to amenity areas, it can also provide some information recreation for adults, and as the basis of green 'corridors'	usually have no formal equipment but will be landscaped with play in mind. Needs to be close to catchment houses and certainly not across any main through road, uses existing features where possible. Amalgamated with amenity area where appropriate.
<b>Amenity Area</b> Trees, shrubs	Over 200	10-20 and upwards	N/A	Amenity, shelter, wildlife, structure planting	Location chosen for the function it is to fulfil, eg to the windward side of housing for shelter, or in the area with the best potential for wildlife, or in a visual focal point for amenity. Of suitable dimensions to match the specific purpose, they also use existing features wherever possible. Linked by footpaths wide enough for security and for snow clearing/tractor and cutter. They may also have potential for information recreation but would definitely not include any play equipment.

**Table E.2: Public Open Space Standards for New Housing Development**

<b>Number of houses</b>	<b>Open space requirement at 40 sq m per house</b>	<b>Type of open space</b>	<b>Approximate share of provision (sq m)</b>	<b>Minimum size of space (sq m)</b>	<b>Number of pieces of play equipment</b>	<b>Maximum distance of space from any house</b>	<b>Minimum distance of space from any house</b>
5 – 13	200-520 sq m	Amenity landscape and shelter	200-500 s	200	N/A	N/A	N/A
14- 75	560-3000 sq m	Neighbourhood green space	500-2000	500	N/A	100-150m	N/A
		Amenity landscape and shelter	500-1000	200	N/A	N/A	N/A
76 – 250	3000-10000 sq m	Community play area (include kickabout at larger size)	3000-4000 (include 350-500)	3000 s (350)	Minimum 2 plus one for every 75 houses up to 5	400-500 m	25m
		Neighbourhood green space	2000-3000	500	N/A	100-150m	N/A
		Amenity landscape and shelter	1000-3000	200	N/A	N/A	N/A
251 – 500	10,000-20,000 sq m	Full size pitches	7000-8000	7000	N/A	1000-1500 m	40m
		Community play area (including kickabout)	3000-4000	3000	Minimum 2 plus one for every 75 houses up to 5	400-500m	25m
		Neighbourhood green space	2000-3000	500	N/A	100-150m	N/A
		Amenity landscape and shelter	3000-5000	200	N/A	N/A	N/A

501-1000	20,000-40,000 sq m	Large park (include pitches)	10,000-16,000	10,000	Min 5 plus 1 for every 250 houses up to 15	1000-1500 m	40m
		1-2 Community play area (includingkickabout)	4,000-8,000	3000	Min 2 plus 1 for every 75 houses up to 5 in each	400-500m	25m
		1-2 Neighbourhood green space	3000-6000	500			N/A
		Amenity landscape and shelter	5000-10,000		N/A	100-150m	N/A
					N/A	N/A	

## **ANNEX F**

## **OPEN SPACE STRATEGY OUTCOMES CHECKLIST**

### **INTRODUCTION**

F.1 The outcomes required from open space strategies will vary with the remit and priorities of each of the different agencies or partners involved in their preparation. However, this Annex provides a general checklist of desirable outcomes.

### **Local Communities and Individuals**

- Safe, attractive and well maintained local environments which help to promote and support economic development
- Involvement and empowerment, including some say over how resources are used, in relation to the planning, maintenance and use of their local open spaces
- Safe, attractive pedestrian and cycle routes to schools, local greenspaces, parks and designated children's play areas, with secure bicycle parking at them
- Appropriate, safe accessibility for people with disabilities
- Safe access to the countryside, including country parks woodland
- Colour and variety in their local environment
- Integration of public art
- Adequate signposting and information
- Prevention of dog fouling
- Freedom from litter
- Attractive settings for historic buildings and sites

### **Schools**

- Opportunities for environmental education and study visits
- Adequate sports provision for curriculum and extended curriculum use

### **Local Authorities Generally**

- Defensible, locally-derived planning policies designed to deliver strategic objectives and provide a clear framework for development control and Section 75 agreements, endorsed through public consultation and involvement
- A network of high quality open spaces in towns and cities
- Bio-diversity and sustainability
- Agreement on departmental responsibilities and priorities relating to open space
- Clear linkage of open space objectives, policies and outcomes to the Community Plan and corporate aims and priorities
- Easily measured performance indicators related to the best value regime
- Realistic management plans for public open space management and maintenance
- Annual service plans with adequate resources for their implementation
- The promotion of walking and cycling

### **Nature conservation and wildlife interests (including SNH)**

- Protection of wildlife and their habitats
- Promotion of bio-diversity
- Enhanced access to the wider countryside



### **Sport Interests (including sportscotland, local sports clubs and the NPFA)**

- Well maintained, accessible and affordable open space-based sports facilities, such as pitches, athletics tracks, tennis courts, bowling greens, training/practice areas, golf courses, which meet all reasonable local sports needs, both now and in the future

### **Paths for All Partnership**

- Networks of safe path systems threading through communities and providing access to the wider countryside

### **Cycling/horse riding Interests**

- Networks of safe routes through or close to urban areas, linked to well used community facilities eg schools, leisure centres, shops

### **Tourists and Day Visitors**

- A safe, attractive and well maintained local environment
- Clear signposting and information with interpretation where appropriate
- Safe, clear pedestrian routes with appropriate facilities (eg toilets, refreshments, shelter)

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