



ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL

OPEN SPACE PROVISION AND ENHANCEMENT

(Draft)

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

April 2024

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1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this document

1.1 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) are documents that build upon and provide more detailed advice or guidance on policies in an adopted Local Plan. SPDs cannot introduce new planning policies, nor can they add unnecessary financial burdens on development. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites or on particular issues, such as open space provision and enhancement contributions. SPDs are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the Development Plan. The requirements for producing SPDs are set out in Regulations (at the current time this consists of Regulations 11 to 16 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, as amended).

1.2 This SPD sits alongside the St Helens Borough Local Plan up to 2037 (the “Local Plan”), which was adopted in July 2022. The purpose of this Open Space Provision and Enhancement SPD is to set out the Council’s approach to seeking high quality open spaces for new developments and to enhance existing open spaces through the Borough of St Helens. This document provides guidance for applicants including landowners and developers as well other stakeholders in relation to **Policy LPC05: Open**

Spaces and Policy LPD03: Open Space and Residential Development of the Local Plan. It works towards achieving the Council’s corporate priorities of supporting a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy and by creating green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture.

Overview of Open Spaces in St Helens Borough

1.3 When considered as a whole, open space fulfils a variety of important functions of value to the public. For example, it provides opportunities for formal and informal recreation and activities; play and social interaction; environmental enhancement and attractiveness; wildlife conservation; education; food growing; and quiet contemplation. It provides strong health and well-being benefits for local people and, moreover, the provision of new and / or enhancement of existing open spaces will support the Council’s Climate Change Emergency Declaration.

1.4 Within the Borough of St Helens, open space is categorised into the following differing typologies¹:

- parks and gardens;
- natural and semi-natural greenspaces;
- amenity greenspace;

¹ Definitions of open space typologies are provided in Appendix 7.

- provision for children and young people (including equipped play areas);
- allotments;
- outdoor sports and recreation facilities (such as playing fields, golf courses, bowling greens, tennis courts and recreational water bodies); and
- cemeteries (this is a typology however it is not something that we would ask for to be provided).

1.5 Developers will be required to provide for the different types of open spaces where appropriate, and the approach to seeking provisions is clarified in this SPD.

Existing Provision within the Borough

1.6 Within St Helens Borough there is a total of 286 identified sites equating to approximately 1,004 hectares (ha) of open space. The largest contributor to open space provision within the Borough is natural & semi-natural greenspace (626 ha), accounting for 62%. For further information please refer to the Open Space Assessment Report (June 2016), and/or any update to this document.

1.7 The Open Space Assessment Report summarises the results of the quality assessment for open spaces across the Borough, excluding outdoor sports and recreation facilities. There is generally a good quality of open space across all typologies, which is reflected in just over three quarters threshold for quality.



2. BACKGROUND

National Policy

The Environment Act 2021:

2.1 The Environment Act 2021 incorporates provisions that affect the management of public open space, which include:

- A mandate for net gain in biodiversity through the planning system, requiring a 10% increase in biodiversity after development, compared to the level of biodiversity prior to development taking place. Whilst using a sequential approach means that the preferred approach is for the provision of biodiversity net gain on development sites, where this cannot be achieved there may be opportunities to provide net gain off site, including within public open space (as appropriate). This can include the enhancement of existing habitats within public open space, as well as the creation of new habitats and in both cases will include a requirement to resource and manage the retention and management of these areas for a minimum of 30 years. Further information will be included within the Council's emerging Nature Conservation SPD to explore opportunities for Biodiversity Net Gain within St Helens public open spaces.
- Local Nature Recovery Strategies are required to be produced and work is being led by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority in the production of this. St Helens public open spaces will provide opportunities for nature recovery, particularly where sites are within Nature Improvement Areas, and where they contain Local Nature

Reserves, Local Wildlife Sites, and functionally linked habitats.

- The Act has amended Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 to strengthen and improve the duty on public bodies to conserve and enhance biodiversity in accordance with proper exercise of their functions. This will include a requirement to report on how the Council is improving and protecting biodiversity within the Borough.
- Re-enforcing of Habitat Regulations 2017 (as amended) to support delivery of domestic biodiversity priorities, including requiring local authorities to consult local residents prior to felling street trees.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

2.2 The following content outlines the policy framework at the national level in which this SPD is being prepared. Of particular relevance are the national policies focussed upon open space, sport and recreation that are set out in Chapter 8 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the "NPPF").

2.3 Chapter 2, paragraph 8 of the NPPF outlines the over-arching objectives of the planning system towards achieving sustainable development. Paragraph 8, part b) of the NPPF states that the fundamental social objective is:

“to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future

generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being"

2.4 In addition, paragraph 8, part c) states that an environmental objective to delivering sustainable development is:

"to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment ..."

2.5 Furthermore, the importance of achieving the NPPF social and environmental objectives regarding the provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities is further illustrated in paragraph 20. This paragraph states that:

"Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision for:

- a) *.....leisure ... development;*
- b) *.....*
- c) *.....Community facilities;*
- d) *Conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure"*

2.6 Consequently, the above demonstrates that there is an expectation that development will deliver positive outcomes regarding

the provision of new open space, and protection, as well as enhancement of existing open space, sport and recreation facilities, as justified by evidence.

2.7 Chapter 8 of the NPPF focusses upon how national policy intends to facilitate the creation of healthy and safe communities, signifying the importance of open space and recreation in achieving healthy communities and requires planning policies to be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sport and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreation provision is needed and this should be reflected in proposals (NPPF paragraph 102).

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG): Open space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space

2.8 National planning practice guidance (NPPG) provides additional guidance to support the NPPF and contains information relating to open space, sport and recreation² relating to:

- How open space should be considered in terms of proposed new developments and the impacts of proposed developments on existing open spaces;

² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space>

- How Local Authorities should assess the needs for open spaces; and
- Who Local Authorities should consult regarding open space matters.

The National Design Guide (2019)

2.9 The National Design Guide (2019) sets out ten characteristics illustrating how well-designed places can be achieved in practice. Two of these characteristics, 'Nature' and 'Public Open Space,' relate directly to green open spaces:

- 'Nature' aims to provide high-quality green open spaces with a variety of landscapes and activities including play, and support biodiversity; and
- 'Public Open Space' aims to create well-located high-quality and attractive open spaces, provide well-designed spaces that are safe, and make sure public spaces support local interaction.

The Fields in Trust 'Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play: 'Beyond the Six Acre Standard' (2015)

2.10 This document sets out the national benchmark guidelines and guidance to ensure that the provision of open spaces is of a sufficient size to enable effective use; that they are located in an accessible location and in close proximity to dwellings; and are of a quality to maintain longevity and to encourage their continued use. Although the Council does not use these standards specifically, the criteria set out within this document is used as guidance.

Local Policy

St Helens Borough Local Plan up to 2037

2.11 The St Helens Borough Local Plan up to 2037 (the "Local Plan") was adopted by the Council in July 2022 and sets out the framework for the growth and development of St Helens Borough, identifying how and where new development and regeneration should take place and thereby guides the future development of St Helens.

2.12 The Local Plan consists of strategic policies as well as policies focussing on specific matters relating to homes and communities, environmental resources, and development control principles. All policies should be read alongside each other when considering development proposals. Policies of particular importance in relation to open space matters are **Policy LPC05: Open Space** and **Policy LPD03: Open Space and Residential Development**.

2.13 Policy LPC05 seeks to ensure the protection and management of the Borough's existing open spaces in the most effective way. It also enables the provision and / or enhancement of open space where this is needed. The Council will support the implementation of programmes and strategies to manage and enhance all forms of open space, including where applicable using Green Flag or similar designations.

2.14 The Council will resist development proposals that would result in the loss of open space unless

at least one of the criteria in part 2 of Policy LPC05 has been satisfied. When assessing if a proposal would comply with these criteria, the Council will take account of the most recent assessment of the Borough's open space, sports and recreation provision and needs.

2.15 Policy LPD03 acknowledges the importance of ensuring that new residential development that would increase demands on the Borough's open spaces either make new provision to meet this demand or contribute towards the expansion or enhancement of existing open spaces in line with the Council's open space standards³.

2.16 Other related Local Plan Policies include:

- Policy LPA01: Spatial Strategy;
- Policy LPA02: Development Principles;
- Policy LPA04: Strategic Housing Sites;
- Policy LPA07: Infrastructure Delivery and Funding;
- Policy LPA08: Green Space;
- Policy LPA12: Health and Wellbeing;
- Policy LPC06: Biodiversity and Geological Conversation;
- Policy LPC07: Greenways;
- Policy LPC08: Ecological Network;
- Policy LPC10: Trees and Woodland; and
- Policy LPC12: Flood Risk and Water Management.

Bold Forest Park Area Action Plan (AAP), July 2017

2.17 The Bold Forest Park Area Action Plan (AAP) is a statutory document that forms part of the St Helens Borough Council development plan. The AAP sets out the detailed policies and actions needed to develop and sustain the Forest Park, which include a network of open spaces and routes accessible to connect the wider countryside with our local communities. A key aim and objective is to '*create an easily understood and accessible network of linked open spaces within the Bold Forest Park and surrounding areas*' by promoting the '*provision and positive use of green space for the benefit of the local community and visitors*'.

2.18 AAP **Policy BFP1: A Sustainable Forest Park**, sets out how the Council will work with its partners to (amongst other things) ensure the Forest Park area continues to meet the Borough's needs for housing, employment, open space, sport, and recreation, in order to create an easily understood and accessible network of linked open spaces that benefit the local community and visitors to the Borough.

2.19 Furthermore, AAP Policy **BFP SN2: Planning Obligations** requires development to contribute to the infrastructure of the Forest Park. This will include the provision of maintenance or improvements to footpaths, bridleways, cycleways, and car parks. It also states that in

³ Open Space standards are also included in Table 8.1 of the St Helens Borough Local Plan up to 2037

instances where it is appropriate, a contribution to the Forest Park could be accepted instead of the on-site provision of open space.

St Helens Open Space, Sport, and Recreation Evidence Base

2.20 When assessing the impact of development on current open spaces, sports and recreation area, the Council considers the most recent assessment of the Borough's open space, sports and recreation provision and needs. The St Helens Indoor and Built Sports Facilities Needs Assessment (2016), the St Helens Open Space, Sport, and Recreation Assessment (2016) (OSSRA) and the St Helens Playing Pitch Strategy Assessment (2016) all currently provide the most up to date evidence and identify that there are a number of deficiencies in the Borough on a neighbourhood basis. These deficiencies include amenity greenspace, natural and semi-natural greenspaces and parks and gardens. In terms of Open Space, Sports and Recreation Evidence Base, it is identified that most sports suffer with capacity issues and in many instances poor facilities, including football, rugby union, hockey, and cricket.

2.21 To note, the Council have commissioned updates to these 2016 documents in order to ensure the Council has an up to date and effective evidence-base. The St Helens Borough Council Playing Pitch & Outdoor Sport Strategy: Assessment Report and the St Helens Borough Council Open Space Report are in preparation and both documents continue to conclude that there are still

capacity and deficiency issues with various sports, recreation and open space provision within the Borough, enabling officers to consider whether provision or enhancements should be sought in terms of specific applications.

Borough Strategy (2021–2030)

2.22 The Borough Strategy (2021-30) is the blueprint for working together for a better borough. It sets out the Council's vision for St Helens Borough, the themes that identify our place, the six strategic priorities the Council will focus on and the outcomes the Council will strive to achieve. Priorities two and five specifically aim to make St Helens a better, healthier, and more sustainable place ensuring good access to open space that enables residents and visitors to get active and enjoy leisure services and the parks and open spaces we have in our Borough.

St Helens Active Lives Strategy (2022-2027)

2.23 The St Helens Active Lives Strategy 2022-2027 aims to work with partners to increase levels of physical activity across the whole population of St Helens Borough, whilst maximising opportunities for people experiencing inequality to participate in activities.

2.24 Active St Helens is a public health campaign to encourage people who live, work and study in St Helens to be more active. The campaign promotes walking, running, cycling, and swimming; these are activities that you can do no matter your age or ability. The Active St Helens website provides handy hints to start being

active and a variety of different types of activities that you can do for all age groups and fitness levels.

2.25 Being more active leads to significant gains in physical and mental health, builds vibrant, stronger communities and can make an economic contribution through improving skills and attracting inward investment. It is recognised that the environment is crucial in increasing activity levels and that green spaces, playgrounds and cycle lanes have a big impact on improving health by encouraging people to be active every day.

2.26 There is significant and growing evidence on the health benefits of access to good quality green spaces. The benefits include better self-rated health; lower body mass index, overweight and obesity levels; improved mental health and wellbeing; increased longevity. People living in the most deprived areas are less likely to live near green spaces and will therefore have fewer opportunities to experience the health benefits of green space compared with people living in less deprived areas. Increasing the use of good quality green space for all social groups is likely to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities. It can also bring other benefits such as greater community cohesion and reduced social isolation.



The Healthy Weight Declaration

2.27 In addition to Active Lives', the Local Authority Declaration on Healthy Weight presents the opportunity for local authorities to lead local action and demonstrate good practice in adopting a systems approach to tackling obesity and promoting the health and well-being of communities. It is a statement, individually owned by each adoptive authority. It encapsulates a vision to promote healthy weight to improve the health and well-being of the local population. St Helens Borough Council are in the process of agreeing local priorities, along with the 19 'healthy weight declaration' commitments.

3. DETERMINING OPEN SPACE PROVISION

Pre-Application Advice

3.1 It is advised that applicants engage in pre-application⁴ enquiries with the Council's Planning Service to determine the open space requirements as early as possible, as this can affect the design and layout of the development. As part of this process, consultation will be carried out with the Council's relevant departments to establish the types of open space and amounts required to be delivered on-site. Detailed calculations can be provided based on an assessment of the quantity, quality, and accessibility of existing open space provision in the area. As part of a pre-application or planning application, the applicant should:

- decide how open space requirements are to be met;
- provide clear plans identifying all open space types to be provided within the development site and annotating measured areas of each of these;
- specify how open space will be integrated into the design of the development and connect to wider green networks; and
- design and provide open space links through the site and new enhanced connections with the wider environment.

3.2 Applications are considered on a case-by-case basis.

Key Principles

3.3 The Council will require new residential developments to follow the key principles which are set out below. That are aimed at achieving open spaces which are well designed, well located, well maintained, and accessible for all users to meet local needs.

- **Meeting local needs** – providing for a range of different open space, sport and recreation facilities where required, to meet the needs generated by the development in the context of the existing local provision. This can also include improvements to existing open spaces, for example improving habitats, updating sports & play equipment, and improving the infrastructure of existing parks and open spaces to make them more accessible.
- **Meeting the Borough's open space standards** – the Council's open space standards, which accompany Policy LPC05, will be used to determine the nature and amount of new open space required (see Table 3). To ensure the standards are met across the Borough, the Council will seek to ensure that the Borough's network of open spaces is protected, managed, enhanced, and expanded, where appropriate.

⁴ <https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/article/3481/Your-guide-to-planning-building-Control>

- **High quality design** – green open spaces should be high-quality, well-located, safe, well-designed, and attractive. They should be easily accessible and be able to be enjoyed by all people, regardless of visual and cognitive ability, mobility, or age.
- **Multi-functional benefits** – creating multifunctional green spaces with potential benefits and uses for amenity, wildlife, local climate change resilience, flood control, water management, outdoor activity, food growing and social benefits.
- **Connectivity** – providing enhanced connectivity to wider networks, such as the wildlife habitat network, cycling and walking network, green infrastructure networks, canals and waterways and water management systems.
- **Comprehensive provision and cumulative impact** – developments that come forward as part of a larger multi-phase site should have regard to the total open space expected for the comprehensive development of the wider site and be designed accordingly. The cumulative effect of a number of phases may create the need for open space provision to serve the whole community of that specific new development.
- **Location** – new open space should be provided on-site where existing provision in the area is insufficient. Off-site provision may be acceptable through a financial contribution where it is considered more appropriate to develop or enhance existing open space, sport

or recreation facilities within the local area that are accessible from the new development.

- **Maintenance and Management** – open spaces should be properly maintained and managed for continued use and enable them to serve their purpose.

3.4 The design of all signage, street furniture (and other associated public realm) and play equipment within open spaces should be approved by the Council in all instances. Other hard landscaping features and materials should be sourced by the applicant or developer, but details should be submitted and approved to the Council prior to development commencing.

3.5 Any play equipment and associated landscaping must comply with the relevant regulations current at the time of installation, and provide an exciting, challenging, and safe environment for the appropriate age group it is intended for. The Council must agree the design and equipment which should be robust and easy to maintain, including a 25-year warranty for all play equipment.

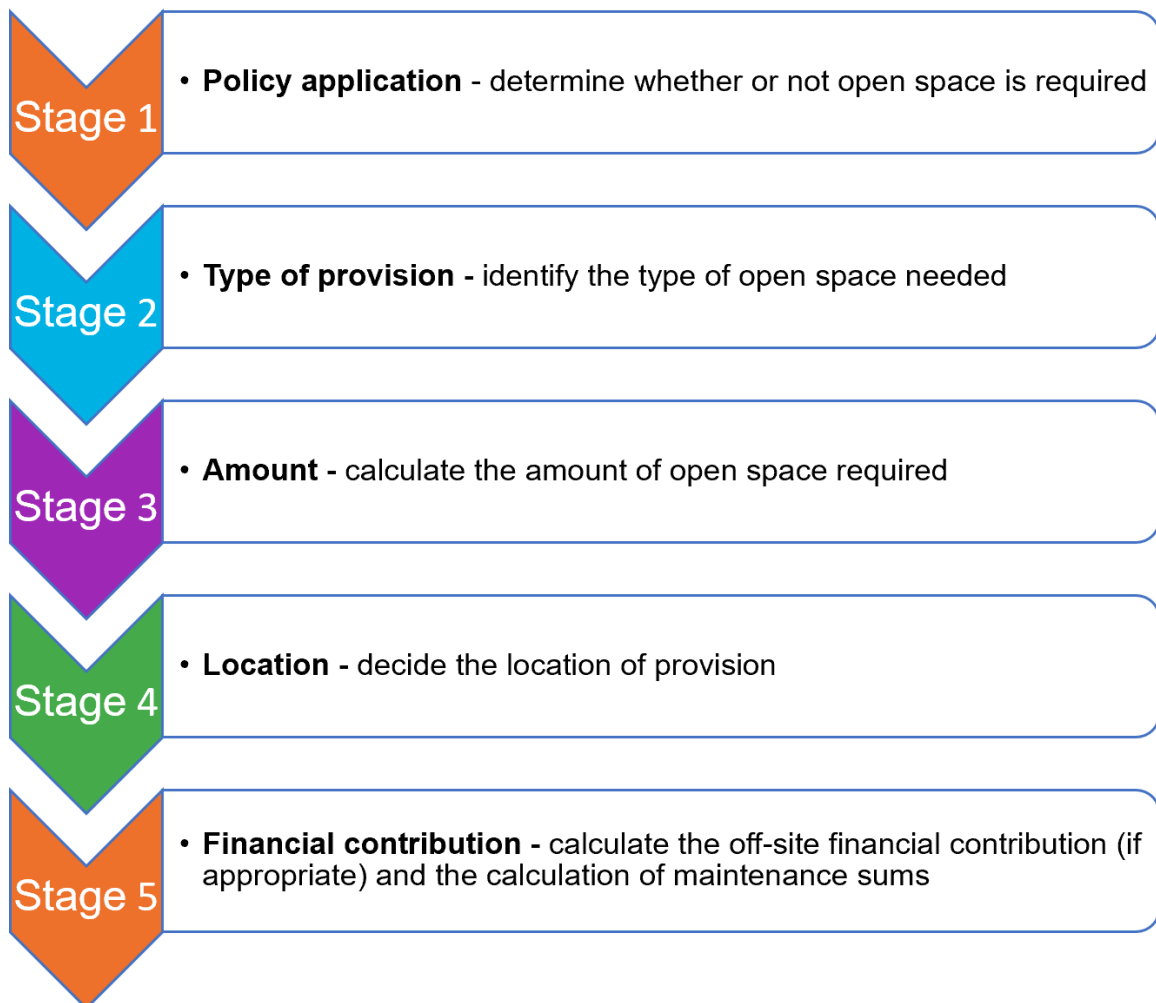
Outdoor Sports Facilities

3.6 This SPD does not cover the provision of outdoor sports facilities. The provision for on-site or financial contributions in lieu of on-site provision will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis for each planning application, in line with Part 3 of Local Plan Policy LPD03.

3.7 Where existing provision would be exacerbated by the additional demand generated by a new

residential development, or where new residential development would generate the need for new provision developer contributions will be sought towards the enhancement of existing facilities or provision of new facilities in the area to address this shortfall, as informed by the Council's latest Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan (or any future update thereof).

3.8 The five-stage approach set out below summarizes the method which will be used to establish the nature and extent of open space the Council will normally require as a result of new residential developments. Each key stage is explained in greater detail in this SPD and two worked examples for 45 and 300 dwellings are provided in Appendices 5 and 6.



4. STAGE 1: Determining whether Open Space is required

Developments requiring Open Space provision

4.1 The Council uses a threshold of 40 dwellings for on-site public open space contributions, in accordance with Policy LPD03 of the St Helens Borough Local Plan (2022) (see Appendix 1 for full policy wording).

4.2 For developments of less than 40 dwellings, there is no requirement to provide new open space in accordance with Local Plan Policy LPD03 and this SPD. However, the Council would encourage the provision of amenity space, with natural habitats, within the development to ensure a well-designed and visually attractive scheme for the benefit of new residents.

4.3 All play equipment will be required to have a 25-year warranty and comply with the relevant regulations current at the time of installation, including a full Installation Certificate on completion.

4.4 Any new open space created will be afforded protection in accordance with Local Plan Policy LPC05.



5. STAGE 2: Establishing the type of Open Space required

Residential Type

5.1 The Council will consider the needs arising from the proposed development to determine the appropriate open space required, considering the nature and type of residential proposed. Different types of residential proposals will generate different open space needs. Certain types of development, such as sheltered and retirement housing, are unlikely to increase the demand for play provision for children and young people and will, therefore, be exempt from requiring such facilities. In these cases, on-site amenity space would be preferable to achieve a well-designed scheme. Table 1 shows the potential requirements and applies to residential new build and conversions (see Table 7 for dwelling thresholds).

Table 1: Residential Development and Open Space Required

	Parks & Gardens	Natural & semi-natural Greenspace	Amenity Greenspace	Allotments	Children & Young People	Outdoor Sports Facilities
Market Housing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Affordable Housing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Housing for Older People	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No

5.2 For sites where a masterplan is to be prepared in accordance with Local Plan Policy LPA04: Strategic Housing Sites, and residential sites intended to be developed in phases, Local Plan Policy LPD03 will apply to the residential site as a whole and a holistic approach to new open space provision will need to be provided and approved as part of the preparation of the masterplan.

5.3 When assessing planning proposals, the Council will pay due regard to any impact that developer contributions towards infrastructure provision or other policy requirements may have on the economic viability of new development. In exceptional cases, the Council will allow negotiation where clearly evidenced viability and/or practical considerations concerning the level of open space provision being sought as set out in

this SPD are deemed to restrict delivery of the development. Robust viability assessments will need to be submitted to allow the Council to determine whether a reduction in the scale and nature of the open space provision is appropriate. This is in accordance with Local Plan Policy LPA07: Infrastructure Delivery and Funding.

Open Space Types⁵

5.4 In accordance with Local Plan Policy LPC05 and this SPD, the Council will require developers to provide and/or contribute towards the Borough’s open spaces, many of which are identified on the Policies Map, and are categorised under the following typologies:

- Parks & Gardens;
- Natural & semi-natural greenspaces;
- Amenity greenspace;
- Provision for children and young people; and
- Allotments.

Open Space Standards

5.5 Open space required for new developments will be determined by applying the minimum open space standards that accompany Local Plan Policy LPD03 (set out in Table 3). These standards will be used to

assess whether or not existing open space within the area is sufficient to meet the needs arising from the development. This assessment will inform the appropriate type and level of open space required.

Table 2: Occupancy Rates for New Developments⁶

Number of Bedrooms	Estimated Occupancy
1	2 persons
2	3 persons
3	4 persons
4	5 persons
5	6 persons
6	7 persons

5.6 The standards set out in Table 3 below, will be used to guide the type, quantity and quality of open space that is required, and derived in this SPD version from the St Helens Open Space Assessment Report (2016). The following matters will be considered:

- a) the estimated number of residents who would occupy the development (based upon the number of new residential bed spaces that would be provided – see Table 2); and
- b) the quantity, accessibility, and quality of existing provision in the area.

⁵ Please see Appendix 7 for definitions of those typologies listed.

⁶ If the house type is unknown, then a standard figure of 40m² will be assumed (based on a 3-bed dwelling provision).

Table 3: Open Space Standards

Open Space Typology	Quantity Standard (minimum number of hectares per 1,000 population)	Accessibility Standard (maximum walking distance between dwelling and nearest open space of this type)	Quality Standard (Site Assessment Rating)
Parks and gardens	0.8	1.2km	60%
Natural and semi-natural greenspace	2	1.2km	35%
Amenity greenspace	1	400m	40%
Provision for children and young people	0.1	800m	50%
Allotments	0.1	1.2km	45%

- **Quantity** standards are aimed at helping to establish areas of surplus and deficit and, where appropriate, to understand the potential for alternative uses and/or key forms of provision.
- **Accessibility** standards (distances) are aimed at improving access to open spaces (e.g., so people can find and get to open spaces without undue reliance on using a car) and helping to identify potential areas with gaps in provision.
- **Quality** standards are individual to each open space typology, based on the audit assessment scores that provide the ability to measure the need for enhancement of existing facilities. They enable the identification of high-quality provision for benchmarking and low-quality provision for targeting as part of an improvement programme. It is a minimum expectation as opposed to an absolute goal. It works as an effective method to reflect the variability in quality at a local level. For further details please see the

latest St Helens Open Space, Sport, and Recreation Assessment.

5.7 Each application will be considered on its individual merits taking account of:

- future demands for open space arising from the development;
- current quantity deficiencies in the area (ward level);
- the quality of existing open spaces in the area; and
- accessibility (distance) to existing open space provision.

5.8 The Council will consider proposed open space provision as part of development proposals in view of existing quantity, accessible and quality open spaces in the local area, and in the context of the open space provision standards as set out in Table 3.

Quantity

5.9 The Council will use the latest quantitative evidence as set out in the St Helens Borough Open Space Study (OSSRA) to determine the existing

level of open space within the area. This will identify whether the existing provision is sufficient to meet the needs of the new residents of the development taking account of the increase in population and subsequent impact this may have on the existing and future level of local provision and facilities.

5.10 In relation to open space and recreation facilities, this impact will be determined by the following calculation:

**Estimation of population for the new residential development (using the maximum occupancy calculation in Table 2) + neighbourhood/ward population
= new estimated population figure**



Then using the existing provision for each type of open space ÷ this by the new estimated population figure, and compare this amount against the benchmark standards (set out in Table 3)

The assessment will use this information to determine the effect on the future level of provision and whether the increase in population will result in a new quantity deficiency.

5.11 New provision will normally be required if the existing amount of open space in the area is insufficient to cater for the needs generated by residents of the new residential development.

Accessibility

5.12 This considers whether residents of the new residential development will be able to access existing open space (of all types) within the accessibility (distance) standards. The Council will use its GIS mapping tools to map a catchment area of all open spaces using the accessibility standards to enable an assessment of the current level of accessibility to existing open spaces within the area. Deficiencies in access will be identified where the development site is not within the specified walking distances for a particular type of open space.

5.13 If residents of the housing development cannot access existing open space within the walking distance standards (set out in Table 3) then new open space provision will be required within the development (on-site), or developer contributions required towards the provision, expansion or enhancement of off-site open space within the locality if it is demonstrated that this would be more suitable.

Quality

5.14 This considers whether the development would require the expansion of or improvements to the quality of existing open space, sport or recreation facilities nearby (within the accessibility distances). The Council will use the most up-to-date evidence and information set in this SPD to consider the quality of the open spaces in the area and may seek improvements to existing provision where required and appropriate.

5.15 Whilst Local Plan Policy LPD03 makes clear that open space should be

provided on-site in the first instance, it is acknowledged that there may be circumstances when improvements to open spaces off site may be more suitable. Within this context, the Council's Open Space Team will be consulted to provide the latest up-to-date information on the quality condition and opportunities for potential improvements of nearby provision (parks, recreation grounds and play areas). This will consider any recent changes that may have occurred, such as routine improvements or the installation of new play equipment, etc.

5.16 Where it is considered that there are improvements that could be made to the quality of existing play and open space provision that will act to increase its capacity to serve a new development (within the walking distance standards) off-site enhancements may be sought to improve its quality. Where open space is to be provided off-site, the Council will seek to ensure it is in a location that is reasonably accessible from the development site and, wherever possible, avoiding the need to cross busy roads. In such instances, contributions may be required in order to enhance crossing facilities (this may not always be possible given topography, land availability or other factors).

Open Space Requirements

5.17 Identified quantity, accessibility and quality deficiencies in existing provision will be used to inform the types and nature of open space required to accommodate the additional

needs that the new development will generate.

5.18 Policy LPD03 requires developments of 40 or more dwellings to make provision for new open space, covering **all** the typologies listed in Table 3; however, as a general rule the Council will expect the required amenity greenspace to be provided within the proposed scheme (on-site) as a minimum.

5.19 In terms of provision of children and young people provision the following guidance in Table 4 will be used. The Council will be guided by the benchmarks as set out by the Fields in Trust, formerly National Playing Fields Association, requirements for equipped play provision, as set out in Appendix 2.

Table 4: St Helens guidance for type of equipped play provision

Number of Dwellings (potential number of residents) ⁷	Local Area of Play (LAP)	Locally Equipped Area of Play (LEAP)	Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play (NEAP)	Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA)
40-50 (80–250)	Yes	No	No	No
51-200 (102-1,000)	No	Yes	No	No
201-500 (402-2,500)	Yes	Yes	No	Contribution ⁸
501+ (2,505+)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes / Contribution ⁸



⁷ Based on a maximum occupancy rate, see Table 2.

⁸ A contribution to the maintenance and upkeep maybe required. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

6. STAGE 3: Calculate the amount of Open Space required

6.1 The consideration of quantity, accessibility and quality of existing provision will be used to inform the amount of new provision required for each different type of open space needed to serve the new housing development.

6.2 In areas where the existing quantity of open space or recreation facilities is insufficient, when compared against the standards set out in the Local Plan (Policy LPD03), the amount of new open space required will be calculated using the open space standards set out in Table 3. The quantity standards (per 1,000 population) can be translated into an equivalent amount per person for the purposes of calculating how much open space is required for a new development. The Council would normally expect the development to provide the required amount of each open space type based on the potential population of the new development.

6.3 Where there is sufficient existing open space provision of a particular type within the area (in terms of quantity, quality, and accessibility) new provision of this type may not be required.

6.4 The need and amount of open space required for children and young people will be calculated on a case-by-case basis, using the estimated number of potential new occupants (as

set out in Table 2) plus the amenity greenspace on which it will be sited. The Council's Open Space Team will also be consulted.

On-site Open Space requirement

6.5 As an example, if a planning application was submitted for 50 dwellings with the following housing mix, then using the maximum occupancy rate (see Table 2) the Council would calculate the number of potential new residents as 195 (see Table 5) and the open space requirements would be as set out in Table 6.

Table 5: Estimated occupancy for a scheme of 50 dwellings

No. of Bedrooms	Estimated Occupancy	Number of dwellings
1-bed	2	0
2-bed	3	15
3-bed	4	25
4-bed	5	10
Total number of dwellings		50
Total number of occupants		195

Table 6: Open Space requirement for 50 dwelling residential scheme

Typology	Policy Requirements (m ² per person)	Requirement (ha) based on 50 dwellings and occupancy of 245 people
Parks & Gardens	8	0.196
Natural & Semi-natural	20	0.49
Amenity Greenspace	10	0.245
Provision for children and young people	1	0.0245
Allotments	50 dwelling = 1 plot	1 plot

6.6 As a minimum, the Council would expect a scheme of this size to provide at least the required amount of amenity greenspace within the development; unless for example, the proposal site is located near, and is therefore accessible to, significant open space, which has opportunities for improvement to increase capacity. In such circumstances, a commuted sum provision may be acceptable. Alternatively, this approach may be acceptable where it has been demonstrated by the applicant that there are constraints with the site preventing on-site open space delivery, subject to Council agreement.

6.7 As a general rule the Council expects the required amenity greenspace to be provided within the scheme, and a potential off-site financial contribution to parks and gardens, natural and semi-natural greenspace, provision for children and young children (unless there are opportunities to deliver these open space typologies within the site to aid in the delivery of high-quality developments), and allotments, based on existing provision of these typologies and opportunities for enhancement or new provision within the locality. More detailed examples of worked examples can be found in Appendices 5 & 6.

7. STAGE 4: Decide the location of provision

7.1 In the first instance the required open space should be provided on-site, as stated in Part 4 of Local Plan Policy LPD03; however, there may be instances where it is suitable to secure developer contributions for off-site activity. In determining whether open space should be provided on-site or off-site, the Council will consider the size of the required provision together with the availability and quality of existing provision nearby within the accessibility (distance) standards set out in Table 3.

7.2 The provision of on-site open space within a development will be expected to be high-quality and accessible to a wide variety of users, multi-purpose, well-designed with appropriate landscaping and well maintained in a safe and secure environment. Please refer to the Design SPD for further information and guidance on the quality of new development that the Council expect. Open space should provide value and benefits for the local community, including opportunities to participate in physical and healthy activity, social interaction and create a sense of community. The design of open spaces should also be shaped by the consideration of providing value to wildlife. Amenity greenspace will be expected to be provided on-site for all developments over 40 dwellings to accord with Local Plan Policy LPD03 to achieve an attractive and well-

designed scheme that benefits future residents.

Thresholds for different typologies of open space

7.3 Table 7 sets out the dwelling thresholds where the different types of open space are expected to be delivered on-site. For both pre-application enquiries and planning applications, the amount and type of open space proposed on-site should be indicated on the site plan. For developments below the thresholds a financial contribution in lieu of on-site provision may be the most appropriate method to deliver open space.

7.4 The Council recognises that in some instances on-site provision may not be the most practical or viable solution; for example, due to practical site-specific factors or where opportunities exist to provide additional or improved facilities in accessible open space nearby.

7.5 Where the Council agrees it is not possible or appropriate to provide open space on-site, expansion or improvement of existing off-site open space, or recreational facilities nearby, normally through a financial contribution will be sought. Advice will be provided to developers during the pre-application and planning application processes. In some circumstances, a combination of on-site and a financial contribution towards off-site provision or enhancement will be appropriate.

7.6 The required amount of open space should be provided on the development site unless it has been demonstrated that developer contributions towards the provision, expansion, or enhancement of off-site open space within the locality would be more suitable. The appropriate balance between provision of new open space and the expansion or enhancement of existing open space will be determined having regard to:

- the amount, proximity, and quality of existing open space in the area;

- the type and density of the proposed residential development;
- the numbers of new dwellings to be created; and
- any other practical site-specific factors.

7.7 Timescales and triggers for the laying out and completion of the approved open space provision will be agreed by the case officer and applicant on a case-by-case basis and conditioned accordingly.

Table 7: Open Space Thresholds

Type of Open Space	Thresholds for On-Site Provision	Reason for On-Site Threshold	Thresholds for Off-Site Contributions
Parks & gardens	500+ dwellings	Scale of development generates the requirement for a small park/recreation ground.	40 dwellings
Natural & semi-natural greenspace	500+ dwellings	Scale of development would require the creation of some natural & semi-natural greenspace. Additional tree planting may also be required.	40 dwellings
Amenity greenspace	40+ dwellings	For amenity purposes and to achieve a well-designed scheme.	Preference is for on-site provision
Provision for children & young people	40+ dwellings	Size able to accommodate a Local Area of Play.	40 dwellings
Allotments	500+ dwellings	Developments of over 1,000 dwellings should provide 20 plots on-site.	50 dwellings (generate the need for one plot)

8. STAGE 5: Calculating the off-site financial contribution (where appropriate)

Calculating financial contributions

8.1 Where the Council considers it appropriate, a financial contribution (to be paid in lieu of on-site provision) towards new or enhanced provision off-site within the vicinity of the development will be considered where the need arises directly from the development. The Council must ensure financial contributions are necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, directly related to the development and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development.

8.2 Financial contributions may be necessary for some, or all types of open space required by the new housing development to ensure open space is provided, expanded, or improved in lieu of on-site provision to address improvements in the quantity, quality and/or accessibility of open space, sport and recreation facilities in the local area where opportunities exist and this helps to meet the needs of the residents in the new development.

8.3 The off-site financial contribution in lieu of on-site provision will be based on the size and type of open space required by the proposed development and calculated in

accordance with the number of dwellings proposed and the associated potential population generated (based on the maximum occupancy rate as set out in Table 2), and includes the following:

- A sum for delivering off-site open space that is of at least equal value to that of on-site provision (as set out in Table 8).
- In some instances, an additional 10% administration charge, which is based on existing practice and average costs used to inform the spending of financial contributions for the design, implementation, and delivery of off-site open space provision, such as costs to undertake community consultation, professional fees for landscape architects, procurement and site supervision during construction, including project management costs.
- A commuted sum to cover a 25-year maintenance period.

8.4 Development proposals that would include new open space must incorporate suitable arrangements for its long-term management and maintenance and ensure that it will have continued public access.

Table 8: Costs per square metre (m²) to provide new or improved open space

Type of Open Space	Open Space Standards (m ² per occupant)	Threshold	Cost ⁹ of provision and enhancement per m ²	Cost of maintenance per m ²	Maximum total per resident (provision + maintenance costs x standards required)
Parks and gardens	8	40+ dwellings	£49.09	£2.96	£442.48
Natural and semi-natural greenspace	20	40+ dwellings	£31.55	£1.96	£846.40
Amenity greenspace	10	40+ dwellings	£41.06	£2.86	£447.40
Provision for children and young people	1	40+ dwellings	See Table 9	£17.47	£267.47
Allotments	1	50+ dwellings (50 dwellings = 1 plot)	£18.72	£0.92	£16.58

8.4 Financial contributions for off-site provision for children and young people (in lieu of on-site provision) will be encouraged where there is an existing play areas or teen facilities nearby, within the accessibility standard set out in Table 3, which require additional provision to increase capacity and/or quality enhancements to accommodate the new residents.

Calculations will be based on the cost of the new provision of a size and scale as set out in Table 4 and Appendix 2, with an additional sum for maintenance and inspections for a 25-year period. These costs do not include the administration charge of 10% or the financial contributions that may be required towards improving the facilities at the nearby recreation ground.

⁹ The costs and figures will be reviewed on an annual basis, indexed linked and updated accordingly. They are NOT inclusive of the 10% administration fee.

Table 9: Estimated costs per play provision type¹⁰

Type of Play Provision	Estimated Cost	Estimated Cost per SQM new build
Local Area for Play (LAP)	£40,000.00	£400.00
Locally Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)	£100,000.00	£250.00
Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)	£175,000.00	£175.00
Multi-Use-Games Areas (MUGA)	£110,000.00	£137.50

8.5 It is acknowledged that some types of residential uses are less likely to be occupied by families with young children; therefore, housing for older people and specialist residential provision for single adult occupancy and development for flats/apartments for one-bedroom will not trigger contributions for children and young people open space provision.

8.6 Where provision on-site does not fully reflect the identified open space needs, the remaining amount of open space not provided on-site will need to be provided for through developer contributions. In such instances, the off-site provision contribution will be proportionate to ensure the full requirements are met between the off-site and on-site provision together.

Developer Contributions

8.7 Developer Contributions for open space will be secured through a Section 106 Agreement to ensure the necessary open space to make the development acceptable in planning

terms can be delivered. The terms of a planning obligation will depend on the development proposal but may include financial contributions towards the provision of new or enhancement of existing open space, its management, and maintenance. Further information can be found in the St Helens Borough Council **Development Contributions SPD (2023)**.

How financial contributions will be spent

8.8 The Council will ensure that off-site commuted sums will be spent within the vicinity of the development, usually within the accessibility walking time/distance standards as set out in Table 3 of this SPD, or if this is not practical then primarily within the ward boundary based on the facilities mostly likely to meet the needs of the development. There may be instances where off site sums could be spent on facilities slightly further away, where they are of strategic importance, as long as it is considered that residents

¹⁰ These costs are an estimate only based on 2023 figures, and will be subject to regular review which may see the figures increase, they do not include administrative charges for potential commuted sum.

of the new development would use such facilities.

8.9 Since some off-site projects funded through financial contributions are not always ready to commence on the ground, and therefore contributions cannot be spent at the time of their receipt, the Council would expect to retain the contributions for a minimum period of 10 years (from the date of the last payment) to ensure infrastructure provision and expenditure. In some instances where payments are phased over a number of years, such as for large, or multi-phase developments, or where there is extensive community engagement for open space, the 10-year period may need to be extended as determined by the Local Planning Authority.



9. MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF OPEN SPACE

9.1 The developer is responsible for securing acceptable means for the future management and maintenance of open space on-site and needs to provide the Council with full details of these arrangements for the lifetime of the development before a planning application is determined.

9.2 In some circumstances, where appropriate, the Council may adopt and therefore maintain on-site open space as part of a new housing development, subject to the provision of a commuted sum to cover the necessary maintenance costs for up to 25 years. This should be explored at any early stage as part of pre-application discussions.

9.3 Where it is proposed that open spaces on-site are to be managed and maintained by management companies (where responsibility is also shared between residents), the developer needs to ensure the costs imposed on residents are fully understood by residents, are reasonable and remain so for the lifetime of the development.

9.4 The Council expects the on-going management and maintenance arrangements to be sufficient to ensure that areas of open space remain high-quality in a good, usable, and safe state. Any play equipment erected within the development should have a 25-year warranty. This is to avoid open spaces becoming

neglected and deteriorating to an extent that their appearance, public enjoyment, safety, and functionality is adversely affected.

9.5 Financial contributions towards off-site provision or enhancement to existing facilities will include a 25-year maintenance period to ensure that the costs will not lead to an increasing maintenance burden for the Council in the short to medium term. This may also be applicable to on-site provision.

APPENDIX 1: Local Plan Policies

St Helens Borough Local Plan Policy LPD03: Open Space and Residential Development

Policy LPD03: Open Space and Residential Development

1. Proposals for new residential development of 40 dwellings or more will be required to make provision for new open space, or the expansion or enhancement of existing open space provision, where:

- a) there are existing deficiencies in the quantity, accessibility or quality of open space(s) in the area;
- b) the development would generate a need for open space that cannot be satisfactorily or fully met by existing provision in the area; or
- c) it is appropriate to provide certain typologies of open space as part of the design to provide accessible children's play areas and create a visually attractive development.

2. The standards set out in Table 8.1 will be used to guide the type, quantity and quality of open space that is required. The following matters will be considered:

- a) the estimated number of residents who would occupy the development (based upon the number of new residential bed spaces that would be provided); and
- b) the quantity, accessibility, and quality of existing provision in the area.

3. Provision for outdoor sports facilities will be achieved through contributions to enhance existing facilities or the provision of new facilities, which will be informed by the Council's latest Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan.

4. The required amount of open space should be provided on the development site unless it has been demonstrated that developer contributions towards the provision, expansion, or enhancement of off-site open space within the locality would be more suitable. The appropriate balance between provision of new open space and the expansion or enhancement of existing open space will be determined having regard to:

- a) the amount, proximity and quality of existing open space in the area;
- b) the type and density of the proposed housing development;
- c) the numbers of new dwellings to be created; and
- d) any other practical site-specific factors.

5. Development proposals that would include new open space must incorporate suitable arrangements for its long-term management and maintenance and ensure that it will have continued public access.

6. Any new open space created will be afforded protection in accordance with Policy LPC05.

St Helens Borough Local Plan Policy LPC05: Open Space

Policy LPC05: Open Space

1. The Council will seek to ensure that the Borough's network of open spaces is protected, managed, enhanced and where appropriate expanded. To achieve this, it will support the implementation of programmes and strategies to manage and enhance all forms of open space, including where applicable through the use of Green Flag or similar designations.

2. Development proposals that would result in the loss of open space will only be permitted where:

- a) it has been clearly demonstrated that the open space (having regard to the standards referred to in Table 8.1) is surplus to requirements; or
- b) the open space that would be lost would be replaced by new provision that is equivalent or better in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- c) the proposed development is for alternative sports and / or recreational provision, the benefits of which would clearly outweigh the loss of the existing open space.

3. New residential development will be required to contribute towards the provision, expansion and / or enhancement of open space to meet needs in accordance with Policies LPA07 and LPD03.

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APPENDIX 2: Fields of Trust Requirements for Equipped Play Provision (By Type)

Equipped provision type ¹¹	Age-group	Minimum size of activity area in hectares (ha)	Buffer zones	Requirements
Local area for Play (LAP) (fencing, furniture, path surfacing and signage)	Children (up to 6 years)	Minimum activity zone = 100m ² (10x10) (0.01ha)	5 metres minimum separation between activity zone and the boundary of dwellings.	<p>Contains at least 3 features that enable children to identify the space as their own domain, e.g., low key games such as hopscotch, a footprint trail, mushroom style seating etc.</p> <p>Should also contain adequate seating for parents and/or carers. The fencing should be at least 600mm in height around the perimeter, with a self-closing pedestrian gate to prevent access by dogs.</p> <p>Occupies a well-drained site with a grass or hard surface and features and appropriate impact absorbing surface beneath and around the play equipment.</p> <p>Signage should be included indicating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The area is solely for use by children up to 6 years. ▪ Adults are not allowed unless accompanied by children. ▪ Dogs are excluded.
Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP) (play equipment, fencing, furniture, path)	Pre-teens	Minimum activity zone = 400m ² (0.04ha)	20 metres minimum separation between activity zone and	<p>Contains at least 5 pieces of play equipment, of which two are individual pieces, rather than a multi-play unit.</p> <p>Each type of play equipment should be designed to stimulate one of the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Balancing ▪ Rocking

¹¹ All play equipment must have a 25-year warranty.

Equipped provision type ¹¹	Age-group	Minimum size of activity area in hectares (ha)	Buffer zones	Requirements
surfacing and signage)			the habitable room façade of dwellings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Climbing ▪ Sliding ▪ Social Play <p>Additional items may focus upon rotating, swinging, jumping, crawling, viewing, counting, or touching.</p> <p>Contains adequate seating for parents and/or carers.</p> <p>Contains a litterbin.</p> <p>Has adequate space around the equipment to enable children to express their general exuberance and play games of 'tag' or 'chase'.</p> <p>Has fencing of at least 1m in height around the perimeter of the activity zone, with two outward opening self-closing gates on opposite sides of the play area to deter entry by dogs.</p> <p>Occupies a well-drained site with a grass or hard surface and features and appropriate impact absorbing surface beneath and around the play equipment.</p> <p>Signage indicating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The area is solely for use by children up to 8 years. ▪ Adults are not allowed unless accompanied by children. ▪ Dogs are excluded. ▪ Name and telephone number of the operator of the facility to report any incident or damage to the play equipment.

Equipped provision type ¹¹	Age-group	Minimum size of activity area in hectares (ha)	Buffer zones	Requirements
<p>Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP) (play equipment, MUGA, fencing, furniture, path surfacing and signage)</p>	<p>Older pre-teens and teens</p>	<p>Minimum activity zone = 1,000m² (0.1ha) comprising of an area for play equipment and structures and a hard surfaced area of at least 465 sqm.</p>	<p>30 metres minimum separation between activity zone and the boundary of dwellings.</p>	<p>Divided into two parts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (NEAP) contains at least 8 types of play equipment comprising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 1 item to stimulate rocking, tough, social or development play among younger children; At least 2 items to facilitate sliding, swinging or moderate climbing, single point swinging, balancing, rotating, or gliding (e.g., cableway). At least 3 of these items should be individual play items rather than part of a combination multi-play unit. (MUGA) – Hard surface of at least 465m² (the minimum area needed to play a five-a-side football). <p>Contains adequate seating for parents and/or carers in the vicinity of the play equipment and other seating within the hard surfaced games area.</p> <p>Contains litterbins at each access point and in the proximity of each group of seats.</p> <p>Has a convenient and secure parking facility for bicycles.</p> <p>Has adequate space around the equipment to enable children to express their general exuberance and play games of ‘tag’ or ‘chase’.</p> <p>Has fencing of at least 1m in height around the perimeter of the activity zone, with two outward opening self-closing gates on opposite sides of the space to deter entry by dogs.</p> <p>Occupies a well-drained site with a grass or hard surface and features and appropriate impact absorbing surface beneath and around the play equipment.</p>

Equipped provision type ¹¹	Age-group	Minimum size of activity area in hectares (ha)	Buffer zones	Requirements
				<p>Signage indicating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This area is solely for use by children up to 14 years. ▪ Adults are not allowed in the equipped space unless accompanied by children. ▪ Dogs are excluded. ▪ Name and telephone number of the operator of the facility to report any incident or damage to the play equipment.

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APPENDIX 3: Design Guidance

Design Guidance

Careful consideration should be given to the location and design of green open spaces and recreation facilities in order to achieve good quality spaces with multi-functional benefits.

Additional guidance is provided in this Appendix in relation to the provision of well-designed open spaces required in new housing developments, including play spaces. Please refer to the Council's Design SPD which provides more detailed information and guidance.

The Council will encourage well-designed green spaces, recreation facilities and provision for children and young people that:

- are a fundamental and integral part of the housing layout located to encourage maximum use by the whole community;
- are well located with good natural surveillance to feel safe and secure;
- are easily accessible and enjoyed by people regardless of visual and cognitive ability, mobility, or age;
- are welcoming and attractive and include the necessary infrastructure, such as paths and furniture (including benches, signs, and bins);
- incorporate opportunities for multi-functional benefits by linking to wider ecological, walking and cycling and green infrastructure networks, and canals and waterways;
- support biodiversity net gain - including retention of existing natural features and the creation of new habitats, such as new tree planting, greening streets and natural areas;
- provide a wide range of activities for different recreational needs, enjoyment and social inclusion and interaction, such as community gardens and growing areas;
- provide play spaces to ensure children of all ages can benefit from a variety of different experiences - including using existing natural landscape features, such as trees, hedgerows, and changes in levels to enhance natural play experiences;
- include equipped facilities that encourage health and well-being, e.g., trim trails, green gyms;
- contribute to water management where appropriate, such as sustainable drainage systems, swales, wetlands, and ponds, however all open space must be useable and safe for recreation purposes; and
- promote green infrastructure management to tackle the threats from climate change and flooding, improve air and landscape quality and reduce flood risk.

Secured by Design

'Secured by Design' is the official police security initiative that works to improve the security of buildings and their immediate surroundings to

provide safe places to live. It supports the principles of 'designing out crime' through adopting crime prevention measures, which have been proven to reduce the opportunity for crime and the fear of crime as well as creating safer, more secure, and sustainable environments.

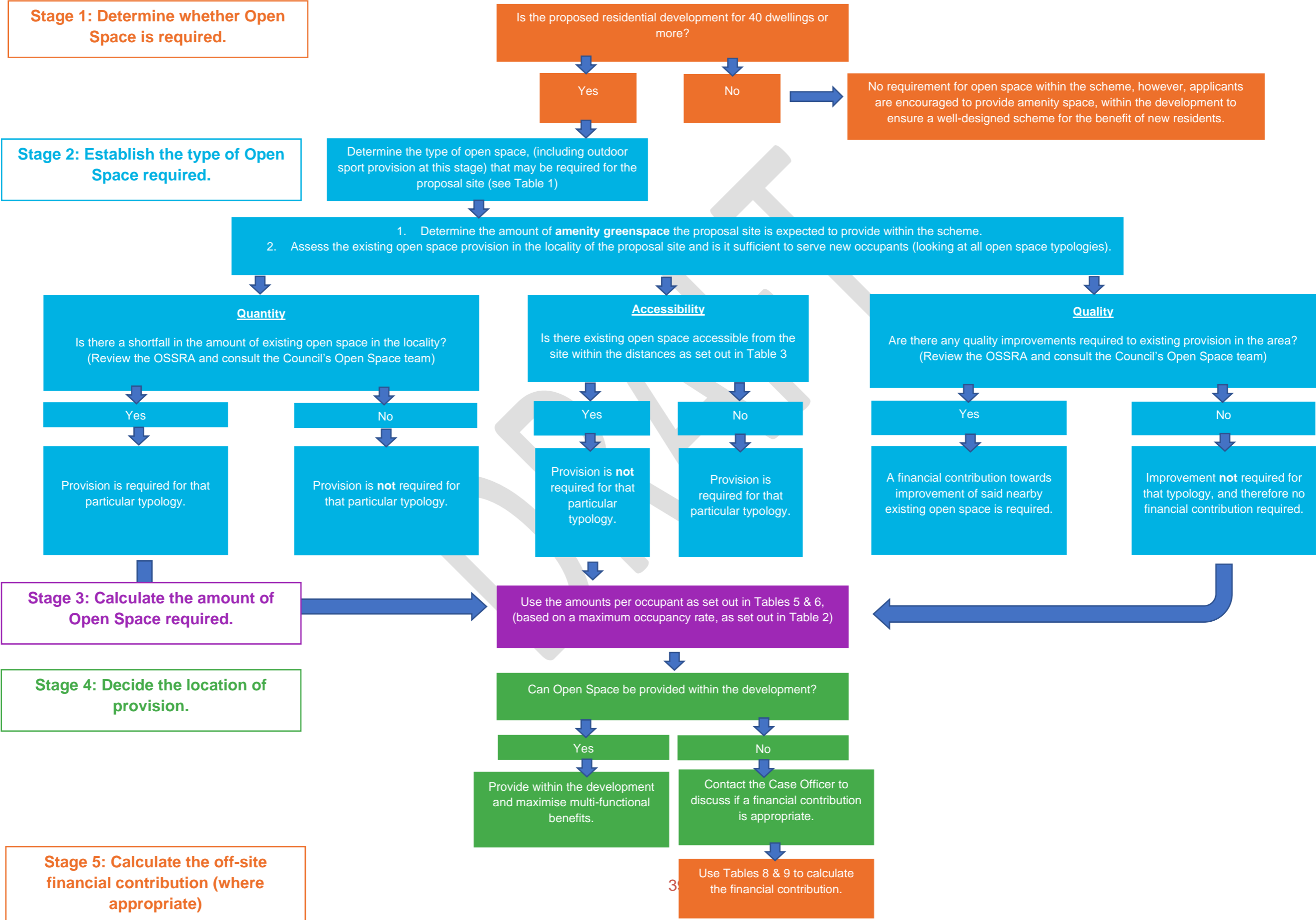
This includes guidance about addressing security and crime prevention needs through the layout of public open spaces. Further information can be found on the Secured by Design website¹².

In order to minimise the risk of crime and maximise safety for the community, the Council will encourage the design of public open spaces, play areas and amenity seating areas that:

- Allow natural surveillance from nearby dwellings with safe and accessible routes for users to come and go;
- Are carefully located to suit their intended purpose and form an integral part of the development to make a valuable contribution towards the quality of the development and the character of the neighbourhood;
- Do not immediately abut residential buildings;
- Ensure a lone dwelling will not be adversely affected by the location of amenity space;
- Avoid the positioning of amenity space and play space immediately to the rear of dwellings as this can increase the potential for crime and complaints arising from increased noise and nuisance;
- Ensure boundaries between public and private space are clearly defined and have features which prevent unauthorised vehicular access;
- Provide a safe clean play area fitted with appropriately specified equipment for the location (urban/rural) and for through age provision to cater for the widest range of participants. Defensible planting can be used as an effective alternative to fencing when used in the correct places and using the appropriate planted species, careful consideration for the location and number of access points for play facilities and playable spaces, with good natural surveillance and clear lines of sight;
- Consider the provision of informal association spaces for members of the community, particularly young people. These must be located in areas of good natural surveillance but sited so that local residents will not suffer from possible perceived nuisance from noise pollution. In addition, they should be sited in such a way that those using adjacent foot and cycle paths will not feel threatened; and
- Include adequate mechanisms and resources to ensure satisfactory future management and maintenance.

¹² <https://www.securedbydesign.com/>

APPENDIX 4: Flow Chart – Process for determining Open Space provision



APPENDIX 5: Worked example for 45 dwellings

Below is an illustrative worked example for 45 market dwellings without any on-site open space and situated within the Thatto Heath ward. Using the guidance and standards set out in this SPD this example sets out the five-stage approach used to determine the nature and amount of open space that the Council would normally expect, including financial contributions in-lieu of on-site provision.

The proposed application site is located adjacent to an existing area of open space with Thatto Heath Park, just 185m to the east, and Broadway Fields lying approximately 475m to the north. Both are well-used open spaces, Broadway Park has a number of football pitches laid out, a basketball court and an equipped play area. The housing mix of the proposed development is as follows:

No. of Bedrooms	Estimated Occupancy	Number of dwellings
1-bed	2	0
2-bed	3	15
3-bed	4	30
4-bed	5	0
Total number of dwellings		45
Total number of occupants		165

STAGE1: Determine whether open space is required

As the new development is for more than 40 dwellings, then Local Plan **Policy LPD03** is applicable and new and or enhanced open space provision is potentially required.

STAGE 2: Determine the Open Space required

In accord with Table 7, normally a development of 45 dwellings would be expected to (as a minimum) provide the required amenity greenspace and provision for children and young people on-site, and then provide an off-site financial contribution for parks & gardens and natural & semi-natural greenspace (allotment provision is not triggered).

Quantity – the latest draft OSSRA shows that there are existing deficiencies in the West Park and Thatto Heath wards in the amount of amenity greenspace and children and young people provision. The estimated population increase from this development is 165 new occupants and, therefore, whilst this would not materially affect the future standard of provision in the ward/locality, the existing quantity deficiencies indicate additional provision in these types of open space is required.

Accessibility – The Council’s open space accessibility mapping shows that new occupants of the proposed development can access existing parks & gardens (Thatto Heath Park), amenity greenspace, provision for children and young people

and natural & semi-natural greenspace within the required distances as set out in Table 3.

Quality - In this example, a nearby outdoor sports area (Broadway Fields), which acts as both an outdoor sports park and amenity greenspace for local residents, lies within the distance standard; however, it is below a low-quality standard (as recommended by the Companion Guidance). There is no requirement to enhance the quality of nearby parks & gardens or natural & semi-natural greenspace.

STAGE 3: Calculate the amount of Open Space required

As a minimum, the Council would expect a scheme of this size to provide at least the required amount of amenity greenspace within the development, unless the proposal site lies adjacent to significant open space whereby a commuted sum provision would be acceptable, or where it has been demonstrated by the applicant that there are delivery constraints with the site. As the site would potentially have 165 new occupants, this would also facilitate the need for a LAP on the site.

In this case, the site lies adjacent to a large area of amenity greenspace, and within walking distance of an existing children's play area; therefore, the Council would accept an off-site commuted sum for the enhancement of the existing amenity greenspace and existing children's play area. This would be calculated as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} & \mathbf{165 \text{ occupants} \times 10\text{m}^2 = 1,650\text{m}^2 \text{ amenity greenspace provision}} \\ & \qquad \qquad \qquad \text{plus} \\ & \mathbf{A \text{ contribution to the maintenance of the nearby LAP}} \end{aligned}$$

STAGE 4: Decide the location of new provision

In this case, there is no need to decide on the location of new open space as it has been agreed that an off-site commuted sum (financial contribution) will be acceptable. The financial contribution will go towards improving the existing open space (amenity greenspace and children's play area) and recreational facilities in the close locality.

STAGE 5: Calculate the off-site financial contribution (where appropriate)

The financial contribution to be paid by the developer in lieu of on-site provision and towards provision and maintenance of existing off-site provision for this worked example is shown in the table below. The contributions are based on the provision of new off-site amenity greenspace and its long-term maintenance cost, and the maintenance cost of the existing children's play area. These are multiplied by the number of proposed occupants (165) of the new development, over a 25-year maintenance period and in regard to the amenity greenspace multiplied by the amount of open space required for each occupant as set out in Table 3 (in this instance 10sq.m. per occupant, which would equate to 1,650sq.m.).

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The following calculation determines the financial contributions that may be required towards improving the facilities at the nearby recreation ground.

Open Space Type	Contribution for new provision	Maintenance Costs (x 25 year)	Total Cost
Parks & Gardens	Not required	Not required	£0
Natural & semi-natural greenspace	Not required	Not required	£0
Amenity greenspace	£41.06 x 1650	£2.86 x 1650 x 25 ¹³	£185,724
Allotments	Not triggered	Not triggered	£0
Children & young people	Not required	£17.47 x 165 x 25	£72,063.75
Total			£257,787.75¹⁴

¹³ The contribution is based on a maintenance fee for nearby amenity greenspace and children and young people's provision, for a 25-year period.

¹⁴ A more detailed breakdown will be provided by the Council for a formal planning application.

APPENDIX 6: Worked example for 300 dwellings

Below is an illustrative worked example for 300 market and affordable dwellings with on-site amenity greenspace open space, a LAP, a LEAP, and an area identified as allotments. The applicants are retaining some existing natural & semi-natural greenspace within the site, which equates to 9,180m². Using the guidance and standards set out in this SPD this example sets out the five-stage approach used to determine the nature and amount of open space that the Council would normally expect, including financial contributions in-lieu of on-site provision.

The proposed application site is located within the settlement of Garswood. Adjacent to the site on the northern boundary is Birch Grove playing field. Garswood Football Club lies to the west of the site and Garswood recreation ground lies to the southwest. There is a children’s play area and MUGA within the Birch Grove playing field, and there is an allotment site to the south of the site, which is in a derelict and overgrown state. The housing mix of the proposed development is as follows:

No. of Bedrooms	Estimated Occupancy	Number of dwellings
1-bed	2	30
2-bed	3	93
3-bed	4	135
4-bed	5	42
Total number of dwellings		300
Total number of occupants		1,029

STAGE1: Determine whether open space is required

As the new development is for more than 40 dwellings, then Local Plan **Policy LPD03** is applicable and new and or enhanced open space provision is potentially required.

STAGE 2: Determine the Open Space required

A development of 300 dwellings would be expected to (as a minimum) provide the required amenity greenspace and provision for children and young people (a LAP, LEAP, and contribution to a MUGA).

Quantity – the latest draft OSSRA shows that there are existing deficiencies in the Billinge and Seneley Green ward in the children’s and young people provision and allotments. The estimated population increase from this development is 1,029 new occupants and, whilst this would not materially affect the future standard of provision in the ward/locality, the existing quantity deficiencies indicate additional provision requirements for these types of open space.

Accessibility – The Council’s open space accessibility mapping shows that new occupants of the proposed development cannot access any parks & gardens, or natural and semi-natural greenspace; however, the site is within acceptable walking distance of a small children’s play area, a MUGA and a number of outdoor sports areas.

Quality - In this example, nearby outdoor sports areas (Birch Grove playing fields, Garswood Football Club and Garswood Recreation Park) lie within the distance standard. After consultation with the Council's Open Space Team, it has been determined that there is a need to enhance these areas.

STAGE 3: Calculate the amount of Open Space required

As a minimum, the Council would expect a scheme of this size to provide at least the required amount of amenity greenspace within the development along with a provision for children and young people. Although 300 dwellings does not trigger the threshold for on-site provision of allotments, the applicants are providing additional plots along the southern boundary adjacent to an existing allotment site. The scheme is also providing some natural and semi-natural greenspace (9,180m²) on site.

A scheme of this size would in addition to the LAP and LEAP being provided, trigger the need for an off-site contribution towards a MUGA. In addition, as there are known accessibility deficiencies for parks and gardens and natural and semi-natural greenspaces, an off-site contribution to the expansion of existing parks and gardens and natural and semi-natural greenspaces would be required. However, given that the scheme is providing 9,180m² of natural and semi-natural greenspace a contribution for this type of open space is not considered applicable.

The expected amount of new open space is calculated by multiplying the number of estimated occupants by the amount of open space required per occupant (Table 3).

$$1,029 \text{ occupants} \times 8\text{m}^2 = 8,232\text{m}^2 \text{ parks and gardens provision}$$

plus

A contribution to the maintenance of the nearby NEAP and MUGA

STAGE 4: Decide the location of new provision

In this case, the most appropriate locations to provide expected new open space provision are:

Parks & Gardens – although there is no requirement for on-site provision, there are accessibility deficiencies in this locality, therefore an off-site contribution to the expansion of existing parks and gardens is required.

Natural and Semi-natural Greenspace – although there is no requirement for on-site provision the applicants have considered the retention of existing on-site natural features, such as mature trees, and new on-site provision, to overcome the known accessibility deficiencies in the locality and in line with Local Plan Policy LPD03 Part 1. C), in order to create a visually attractive development. Therefore, it is considered in this case an additional off-site contribution is not required.

Consider how this could help achieve a Biodiversity Net Gain or alternatively off-site provision could be considered. e.g. new tree planting nearby.

Amenity Greenspace – to be provided on-site to meet the needs of the new residents.

Provision for Children and Young People – to be provided on site with an off-site contribution to a MUGA.

Allotments – not required, however is being provided on-site to meet the needs of the new residents.

The Council has agreed that, in this example, a combination of on and off-site provision is a likely outcome with all the amenity greenspace, an area of new tree planting and two children's play spaces and allotment provision being provided on-site, and a further off-site commuted sum towards the existing MUGA and parks and gardens expansion.

STAGE 5: Calculate the off-site financial contribution (where appropriate)

The financial contribution to be paid by the developer in lieu of on-site provision towards new or enhanced provision off-site for this worked example is shown in the table below. The contributions are based on the capital cost of providing each different type of open space multiplied by the number of proposed occupants of the new development.

The sum also includes for 25 years' maintenance for the lifetime of the MUGA enhancements and the parks and gardens expansion. On-site amenity greenspace and play equipment maintenance will most often be carried out through a maintenance management company and the agreement will be achieved via a planning obligation in the form of a Section 106 Agreement with the Council.

The following calculation determines the amount of financial contributions which may be required towards improving the facilities at the nearby recreation ground (MUGA).

Open Space Type	Contribution for new provision	Maintenance costs (x 25 year)	Total Cost
Parks & Gardens	£49.09 x 8,232	£2.96 x 8,232 x 25	£1,013,276.88
Natural & semi-natural greenspace	Not required (scheme is providing sufficient quantity in this case)	Not required	£0
Amenity greenspace	Not required provided within the scheme	Not required	£0
Allotments	Not required	Not required	£0
Children & young people	£110,000 (contribution to MUGA)	£17.47 x 1,029 ¹⁵ x 25	£559,415.75
Total ¹⁶			£1,572,692.63

¹⁵ Deduction in light of number of 1-bed units.

¹⁶ A more detailed breakdown will be provided by the Council for a formal planning application.

APPENDIX 7: Typology Definitions

Typology	Definitions and Primary Purpose
Parks and Gardens	<p>Managed and accessible, high public value opportunities for informal recreation and community events, including country parks, urban parks, local recreation grounds, formal gardens and pocket parks open to the general public.</p> <p>They typically include paths, benches, tree and shrub planting, formal gardens, high amenity lawns, areas to enable ball games or picnics.</p> <p>They can also include historic Registered Parks and Gardens, which are of national importance and included in a register maintained by Historic England. There are currently three Registered Parks and Gardens in St Helens Borough, these are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Taylor Park; ▪ St Helens Cemetery in Windle; and ▪ The landscape area associated with the former Pilkington Headquarters complex. <p>It is important to note that within the category of parks and gardens there are two distinct types of sites. Some are significant in size and act as destinations offering greater recreational facilities and uses which people will often be willing to travel further to access. Examples of this type include Sherdley Park and Taylor Park. Other sites within the typology of parks and gardens are smaller in size and more formal in character with less recreational uses. Examples of this include Eco Garden, Rainhill.</p>
Natural and semi-natural greenspaces	<p>Sites that provide and support wildlife conservation, biodiversity and environmental education and awareness. This type of greenspace includes woodlands, local nature reserves, scrubland, grassland, heath or moor, wetlands, wastelands, and bare rock habitats, as well as unmanaged and unused sites.</p>
Amenity greenspace	<p>Opportunities for informal activities close to home that can enhance the appearance of residential areas. Such spaces can be used for walking the dog, as informal play spaces, and green spaces in and around housing and village greens.</p> <p>Roadside verges, landscaping, or inaccessible (or potentially unsuitable for play purposes) areas such as permanent water storage facilities are not included as amenity greenspace and will not be acceptable within the calculated requirement.</p> <p>Good amenity greenspace will include pathways, signage, seating, dog foul bins and litter bins.</p>

Typology	Definitions and Primary Purpose
	Larger amenity greenspace sites often lend themselves to informal sporting opportunities such as football. These sporting opportunities as well as other added features on-site, such as good quality play areas, provide increased reasons for people to visit such provision.
Provision for children and young people	<p>Designated areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving young people, such as equipped play areas, ball courts, green gyms and other healthy active facilities, multi-use-games areas, skateboard parks, wheeled facilities, and teen shelters.</p> <p>Play areas can be classified in the following ways to identify their effective target audience utilising Fields in Trust (FIT) guidance, which is a widely endorsed guidance on the minimum standards for play space.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ LAP - a Local Area of Play. ▪ LEAP - a Local Equipped Area of Play. ▪ NEAP - a Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play.
Allotments	<p>Opportunities for people to grow their own fruit, vegetables and other produce. Added benefits of this include the long-term promotion of sustainable living, healthier lifestyles, and social inclusion.</p> <p>The provision of allotments is a statutory duty of the Council.</p>

It is important to recognise that other open spaces such as parks and amenity greenspace often provide opportunities and activities associated with natural and semi-natural greenspace. For example, sites such as Sherdley Park are considered to offer a dual use and purpose. The site is observed as offering greater biodiversity and habitats due to the presence of trees and water features; however, it is important to highlight that it is not always clear to distinguish a sites primary typology. Some sites can bridge the definition of typologies such as natural greenspace and amenity greenspace; for example, a grassed area left unmaintained can start to have characteristics associated with natural greenspace.