

Policy COM1 - Meeting the Community's Needs

Infrastructure and facilities required to meet the needs generated by new development, including sports, arts, community (including youth) and voluntary sector space, education and health provision, open space and play areas shall be provided as the community is established.

Infrastructure or facilities designed to meet localised needs should normally be provided on-site. Other needs will be delivered in liaison with the relevant stakeholders and service providers to ensure that the provision is supplied in a way that meets their requirements and supports sustainability.

Development monies will be secured via S106 where provision relates to a localised need or as identified through the site allocations in this Local Plan. Otherwise, CIL receipts will be used to deliver strategic provision.

Where the need for developments to contribute to, or provide, particular infrastructure or facilities is dependent on their size, floorspace, traffic generation or any other attribute or impact exceeding a specified threshold and any site is brought forward as two or more separate schemes of which one or more falls below the relevant threshold, the Council will seek from each scheme a proportionate contribution of the level of provision so as to match in total the requirement that would apply if the site came forward as a whole.

In the Borough as a whole, the loss of existing community infrastructure will be resisted unless sufficient evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that they are no longer required or are obsolete and that suitable replacement provision is being provided or is located nearby.

Sport, Recreation and Play

5.431 Recreation, sport, open space and play areas can enrich the quality of our lives and contribute towards healthy living. The Borough currently enjoys a wide range of such space and this provision will be added to when current planning applications are implemented, most notably Chilmington Green which will deliver significant recreational and leisure areas.

5.432 The following total quantum's of recreational, play, sport and open space are required to meet the needs of the new development proposed in this Local Plan. These figures are derived from the emerging Sports Pitches and Indoor Sports Facility Strategy, alongside standards set out in the current Green Spaces and Water Environment SPD. They take into account planned provision that is earmarked to come forward, such as at Chilmington Green. The figures do not take into account the role which could be played by provision at schools. This provision should be treated as supplementary as in most cases it tends to have limited public access at key times.

Informal space	22.5ha
Children's play	5.6ha
Strategic Parks	3.4ha
Allotment provision	2.2ha
Sports halls (1 badminton hall or equivalent)	4
3G Artificial Pitch	1
Football Pitches	7 adult, 3 junior
Hockey 2G pitch	1 adult
Rugby	2 senior pitches
Cricket square and outfield	1

5.433 These figures are a 'target' as not all residential development coming forward will be required to deliver a proportion of these provisions. For example, some development will be excluded on viability grounds such as most proposals coming forward in the town centre, and a number of developments will fall below the threshold that trigger a requirement for provision. However, this is somewhat countered as CIL receipts can be used to deliver recreation, sport, play and open space, where it is strategic in nature. This type of provision effectively meets a need for all new developments in the Borough. Therefore the identification of a target figure is considered to be a robust starting point for the policy below.

5.434 In order to determine the quantum and type of provision required for each qualifying proposal, applicants will be expected to use the Sports England Calculator and the relevant standards in the Green Spaces and Water Environment SPD. Aside from informal space – which will normally be delivered on site and form part of the wider landscaping/ SUDs strategy, incidental space around buildings, discussions with the Council shall then take place as to what exact provision will be sort from any S106 monies to be collected, using the projects identified within the supporting Infrastructure Delivery Plan schedule as the starting point.

The Hub Approach

5.435 The Local Plan seeks to deliver a community hub model and the strategies emerging for recreation, sports, open space and play all recommend the same model. The sport and recreational hubs are identified on Strategic Diagram 2 which supports this Local Plan. They are:

5.436 **Discovery Park:** a new, major open space and recreational area that is proposed to include a number of sports pitches (including the provision for 3G pitches), a large scale indoor sports building, strategic play space and managed outdoor recreational space. The majority of Discovery Park will come forward in response to development at Chilmington Green and the area is protected as part of the Chilmington Green Area Action Plan, the provisions of which fall outside the scope of this Local Plan. However, an extension to Discovery Park is proposed to come forward as part of the Court Lodge development (policy S3).

5.437 **Conningbrook Park:** a new large water based recreational resource and facilities at Conningbrook Lakes and significant indoor sports provision in the form of the existing Julie

Rose Stadium. Complementary provision in the form of strategic play space and informal space will also be provided here.

5.438 Ashford Town Centre: a key location for indoor sports provision within the Borough. The Stour Centre is the principal indoor sports facility within the borough and caters for a range of sports, including swimming, badminton, squash, netball and football. In addition the Town Centre is also home to green spaces in the form of Victoria Park, Memorial Gardens and the Green Corridor. The Town Centre will continue to be a key recreational and sporting hub over the plan period.

5.439 Finberry/ Park Farm: a community and leisure hub adjacent to the planned primary school that compliments the facilities planned at Bridgefield Park. This Hub aims to deliver a 3G state of the art sports pitch which will be supported by a multi-use play area, a community building with indoor sports courts and changing facilities.

5.440 Kingsnorth Recreation Centre: already a well established urban hub for the area and town. This could support an increase in the recreational and outdoor space offer located here.

5.441 Sandyhurst Lane: another site already offering social, community and sports provision (comprising two full size grass football pitches and one rugby pitch supported by a pavilion comprising four team and one officials changing room, bar and large function room). New provision is proposed which could include improved sports pitches, informal and natural green space and potentially allotment space.

5.442 Spearpoint: a busy football hub already existing on this site and contains six grass pitches, a newly built pavilion and tennis courts. The courts are currently in poor condition. The aspiration is to refurbish the tennis courts and provide a major new play area. Further leisure development on this site could also be considered.

5.443 Pitchside/Courtside: Pitchside and Courtside are adjacent dual use sites in South Ashford on the campus of John Wallis Academy. Pitchside consists of a full size 3G pitch and two full size grass football pitches for community use. In addition the Academy grass playing field has a junior pitch, full size football pitch and full size rugby pitch which are available for occasional community use as demand dictates. Pitchside is supported by a 4 changing room pavilion. Courtside comprises six hard courts supported by a two changing room pavilion with meeting room and office. The primary use of the courts is for netball with tennis the main secondary use. This provides a key mixed use sports hub and has the potential to be extending and upgraded.

Local Provision

5.444 Not all of the provision of recreation, sport, open space and play areas will serve a wider catchment or play a strategic role. There are a number of local areas which fulfil a key role in meeting the everyday communities needs. These areas include Bridgefield Park, South Willesborough (Bulleid Place/Swan Centre), Singleton (Cuckoo Park/ Singleton Environment Centre), and Repton Park and Community Centre. These offer multi-use community space for local residents, children's play and informal recreational open space. Hythe Road Recreation ground should be up-graded to provide a much needed quality open space for informal recreation including multi-use games area. When new development comes forward, there will

remain a need to deliver provision at a local scale, to directly serve the community in which it is located.

The approach in the rural area

5.445 The spatial approach in the rural area has to be a different one to the strategic hub approach above, given the dispersed nature of the settlement pattern. Here the Council has a strong track record of working with Parish Councils to ensure the delivery and maintenance of small scale provision across the rural settlements of the Borough.

5.446 In the rural areas it is important that the provision is linked where possible to public transport routes in order to work to avoid social exclusion, to ensure facilities are as accessible as possible to the widest catchment of users and thereby maximize the viability and vitality of the facilities themselves.

5.447 The Council will continue to liaise with the Parish Councils to determine the optimum level of provision possible in the rural areas.

Policy COM2 - Recreation, Sport, Play and Open Spaces

As a target, the Council shall seek to deliver the quantum of provision as new recreation, sport, play and open space provision by 2030 as set out in table 4 of this Local Plan.

Proposals will utilise the Sports England Calculator and comply with the standards set out within the Green Spaces and Water SPD, where practical.

Informal green space will normally be provided on site in line with the guidance and provisions contained within the Green Spaces and Water Environment SPD.

In Ashford, the provision of children’s play, strategic parks, allotments, sports facilities shall be concentrated on key allocated sites within this Local Plan or at the sports and recreation hubs identified above. Proposals which undermine the ability of a hub to play a role in delivering this provision shall not be supported.

Provision that meets a localised need shall normally be required to be delivered on-site in a way that supports the local community as it comes forward.

In the rural area, provision should normally be delivered in a way that helps maintain, enhance and potentially expand existing provision at the settlement where development is proposed, or at the nearest settlement.

In line with the provision within the NPPF exceptions to the approach outlined above could be justified, should the following circumstances arise in that:

- a. there is suitable open/ green space provision nearby and this provision can be accessed by green routes,**
- b. there is suitable sports provision nearby and this provision is accessible and the facility is able to and has the capacity to be used by the public at key times and this access can be secured over the long term at determination of the application,**
- c. delivering such provision would render a scheme unviable,**
- d. not delivering the required provision is supported by the Council or in agreement with the Parish Council.**

Allotments

5.448 Allotment gardening is an increasingly popular leisure activity and allotments themselves are an important feature in both urban and rural communities, providing wildlife and species rich habitats and attractive areas of green space in otherwise residential areas.

5.449 Allotments also make an important contribution to the planning and promotion of healthy communities, with the benefits of such safe, attractive and functional green areas including not only the direct provision of places for physical activity, but also the psychological and social benefits that arise from engaging with nature and opportunities for informal social interaction. Given their role in the well-being of communities and the difficulties in finding new open spaces within existing built up areas, the development of existing allotment land will only be supported in exceptional circumstances.