



# Ipswich Local Plan

## *Supplementary Planning Guidance*

# Public Open Space



**IPSWICH**  
BOROUGH  
COUNCIL

Sue Arnold BA MRTPI  
Head of Strategic Planning and Regeneration  
Ipswich Borough Council  
The Civic Centre  
Civic Drive  
Ipswich IP1 2EE

Telephone (01473) 262933  
Fax (01473) 262936

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# Public Open Space

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# Public Open Space

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Ipswich has often been perceived as a Town rich in parks and open spaces. There is no doubt that the open spaces within the Town contribute a great deal to the quality of urban life. The Council is committed to enhancing existing open spaces and providing new facilities in deficient areas of the Town. Other opportunities to create new open spaces arise from development proposals. The Council will seek, in co-operation with developers to incorporate open space as part of the design of new developments.

1.2 To support this aim, this supplementary guidance has been prepared. It forms the background to the open space proposals in the Local Plan and Policy RL6 in particular.

Policy RL6 states:

**It will be expected that in residential developments providing 15 or more homes open space will be provided sufficient to meet the needs of the residents for children's play and informal recreational use where this is not available from public provision convenient to the site. Such land should be landscaped and equipped for its purpose by the developer and retained permanently as open space. On sites where the provision of such open space is not practical a contribution may be sought for the provision of comparable recreational provision as a part of public open space proposals convenient to the site by way of planning obligation agreements.**

1.3 These guidelines interpret and provide more detail for the implementation of Local Plan policies and have been produced in line with government guidance.

1.4 Existing public provision in the Town has been categorised as either District Parks (of 20 hectares or more in size providing a range of activities, which may be visited by foot, cycle, car or public transport), or Local Parks and other public open spaces primarily for pedestrian visits. A detailed definition of the different types of open spaces can be found in Appendix 4. The facilities and their catchment areas are shown in Appendix 1.

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1.5 These guidelines are concerned with the provision of space, primarily for informal recreation, but also to provide an attractive open area to break up the built environment. Typically such areas will include open landscaped spaces within or adjacent to built up areas, as well as tree belts, parkland or recreation grounds. The definition does not include facilities for formal sport such as playing pitches and courts.

1.6 Children's play areas may be integrated within such areas of open space, however, it is not the purpose of this document to provide detailed guidance on their provision. Relevant advice is the subject of a separate supplementary planning guidance note 'Children's Play - Guidance for the provision and maintenance of children's play space' (September 1995). Provision of children's play areas is outlined under Local Plan Policy RL12.

1.7 There is evidence to suggest that the overall value of the open spaces in the Town will be enhanced if they are linked together; wildlife needs 'corridors' to allow species diffusion and habitat reinforcement. Pedestrians and cyclists benefit from attractive green routes, free from traffic. The Council is therefore proposing to establish a network of Green Corridors between inner parts of the Town and the surrounding countryside. Open space provided in the vicinity of the proposed Green Corridors (Appendix 2) will be expected to contribute to the aims of the Green Corridors initiative in accordance with Policy NE4.

1.8 All new developments in the Town should be suitably landscaped and where appropriate, feature incidental open space. This requirement is the subject of Local Plan policy NE6, however, it is outside the scope of this document to provide guidance on such requirements.

2.1 The value of open space as an urban amenity is largely determined by accessibility although its quality and variety should also be considered. Local Plan policies that relate to open space are concerned with improving access for existing and new residents of the Town. This is to be achieved through;

The provision of open space as part of new housing developments;

The creation of new parks, located to benefit those areas of the Town presently deficient in open space; and

## 2. BACKGROUND

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Through an ongoing programme of improvements to existing facilities.

2.2 The Local Plan was the subject of a public inquiry in 1995 during which policy RL6 was considered. Whilst the inspector commended the principle of the policy, he commented that;

*The absence of a standard makes it difficult to assess just what might be expected of any particular site (Inspectors Report page 230.)*

This document seeks to address these concerns.

## 3. THE STANDARD

3.1 No national standards are available for the provision of open space for amenity and informal recreation purposes. Government advice contained in PPG17 urges local planning authorities to set their own standards based on local circumstances.

3.2 In the context of housing development design and layout, open space can be usefully categorised as Informal/ Amenity Open Space or Structural Open Space.

### 3.3 Informal/Amenity Space

3.3.1 In addition to its role in enhancing the character of a development, open space should provide (now and potentially) for a wide variety of informal recreation activities.

3.3.2 The Suffolk Design Guide, which has been adopted by all Suffolk Planning Authorities as supplementary planning guidance, advocates that 10% of the developable area of a new housing site should comprise amenity open space. For the purposes of this document, 'developable area' is defined as the whole site area, less any provision of structural open space.

3.3.3 It is appropriate that this County-wide standard, adopted in 1993, should be applied in Ipswich.

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3.3.4 It is possible that in some developments, the open space needs of residents may be met on areas of the site that cannot be developed; for example, areas subject to noise or topographical constraints. However, it is stressed that the provision of open space should be an integral part of the development, considered at the beginning of the design process. It should not merely be the 'space left over after planning.'

3.3.5 The requirement for open space provision will be kept under review as part of the Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report.

### 3.4 Structural Open Space

3.4.1 This space is intended to provide a framework for the development and will not form part of the open space allocated to a specific housing site. Such spaces often consist of retained landscape features such as groups of trees or hedgerows, or may be formed by new planting, providing a buffer to existing development or roads.

3.4.2 The amount of structural open space provided on any individual site will vary according to the location and characteristics of the site. Whilst it is not appropriate to set a prescriptive standard, it is estimated that on average, structural open space within suburban housing sites will comprise approximately 5% of the total site area.

4.1 Plan No. 6 of the Local Plan illustrates the general catchment areas of different types of open space in the Town. For the purposes of this guidance, a revised plan has been developed which identifies more clearly those areas of the Town which fail to meet the local accessibility criteria. This plan is included at Appendix 1. It is stressed that the catchment areas shown are illustrative only.

4.2 The District Parks in the Town perform a dual role, providing a local facility to those homes close to them, whilst serving a wider catchment area of people making less frequent visits. Because this guidance is concerned primarily with local accessibility, only the local catchment areas are illustrated on the Plan.

## 4. PROVISION OF OPEN SPACE AS PART OF NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

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4.3 For the purposes of this guidance, to meet the accessibility criteria, housing should be within 400 metres of an area of public open space, i.e. a Local Park or a District Park.

4.4 Proposals for residential development in areas of the town deficient in open space will be expected to meet fully, the standards for open space provision.

4.5 Because its function is primarily visual structural open space must always be provided on site. Amenity open space should be provided on-site wherever possible. If it can be demonstrated that full on-site provision of amenity space is not possible, developers will be expected to provide and lay out an area of amenity open space in a location agreed with the Council that will be convenient to future residents. Alternatively developers may be given the option of commuting responsibility to the Council.

4.6 Residential development proposals inside the catchment of the open spaces illustrated in Appendix 1 will be expected to include structural open space. However, they will not normally be required to make provision of amenity open space.

4.7 The Council will require the land to be retained permanently as open space and for arrangements for the ongoing maintenance of the area to be made. Such arrangements may be supported by a legal agreement where appropriate. In the Council's experience, the most effective system for ensuring satisfactory ongoing maintenance is for the Council or a Housing Association to take on this responsibility.

4.8 If developers wish the Council to adopt areas of open space, a 10 year maintenance payment will required from the developer, secured through a planning obligation agreement. The current cost of maintaining areas of open space is £1500/1000m<sup>2</sup>/year. This figure will be revised from time to time to account for inflation.

4.9 Arrangements for the ongoing maintenance of Children's Play Area Activity Zones are set out in ' Children's Play - Guidance for the provision and maintenance of children's play space' (September 1995).

4.10 Landscaped Buffer Zones provided around play areas are likely to comprise part of the open space allocation for an individual housing development. It is appropriate that their ongoing maintenance is dealt with accordingly.

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5.1 If it can be demonstrated that suitable amenity open space cannot be provided on-site, the Council may assist the developer to meet their obligations by accepting a capital payment in lieu of physical provision.

5.2 In order for the commuted payment system to operate in a fair and equitable manner, the estimated cost of providing the proposed facilities needs to be clearly set out.

5.3 The cost of implementing open space schemes will vary according to the type of scheme proposed and the characteristics of the site, therefore the following costs should be treated as indicative only.

5.4 Based on the experience of the Council's Parks Service, the cost of laying out 100m<sup>2</sup> of amenity open space, landscaped to an agreed standard, assuming there are no abnormal costs would be between £800 and £1,500. It is anticipated that the pro rata cost will fall as the site size increases. If in addition to landscaping, it was necessary to acquire the land, the associated cost will be added.

5.5 As an example, based on these figures, a development of 15 houses at an average density of 25 dwellings/hectare would normally attract a requirement for approximately 600m<sup>2</sup> of open space or a contribution of between £4,800 and £9000.

5.6 In the event of off-site provision being agreed, developers may commute responsibility of provision to the Council in the form of a capital payment, secured through a planning obligation agreement under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, in accordance with Circular 1/97. Payments will always be used to benefit residents of the new development.

5.7 The Council will apply the commuted payment system on a discretionary basis. General principles of the commuted payment scheme are:

Early consultation should be made with the Council to establish whether the commuted payment option will apply. The option will only be made available if alternative open space proposals which have a reasonable chance of being implemented are identified at the outset.

The commuted payment will be based on the site area and the requirement for open space generated by the development.

Provision will not normally be required for developments of less than 15 units except where the site forms part of a larger development area.

### 5. ADMINISTERING THE PROVISION OF OPEN SPACE



## Public Open Space

5.8 The planning obligation agreement will be entered into before planning permission is granted and payment shall be made in full once the development is commenced. The agreement will require the payment to be held by the Council in a separate interest bearing account to be used to provide open space facilities in Ipswich. The payment will be used to implement open space schemes that are convenient to the residents of the proposed housing development and will fairly relate in scale and kind to the development. Policy RL8 of the Local Plan identifies those sites which have a high priority for implementation.

5.9 The provision of open space in off-site locations will be made within an agreed time scale between the developer and the Council (usually up to 15 years). This time scale will form part of the Section 106 agreement. The agreement will include a clause that if the facilities are not provided within the agreed time scale, the commuted payment will be paid back with interest to the developer.

5.10 If developers of smaller sites agree to allow their contribution to be used to partially fund larger open space proposals, the Council will seek to negotiate a time scale long enough to allow sufficient time for further housing sites to be brought forward.

5.11 Sites which already have planning permission will be exempt from the provisions of this document. Renewals of existing permissions will, however, be expected to meet these requirements.

### 6. IMPLEMENTING LOCAL PLAN PROPOSALS

6.1 Any open space provided as part of a new residential development should reflect the character of the development. Clearly housing sites in central areas will generate different open space requirements to suburban sites. These two types of site are considered separately.

#### 6.2 Sites in the Town Centre, Wet Dock and Transition Area

6.2.1 Town centre housing sites present special circumstances for the provision of open space. Such sites are typically of higher density than suburban schemes and the provision of open space on-site to the adopted standard may not be achievable. However, it is stressed that Town Centre schemes present different demands for open space rather than no demand.

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6.2.2 All of the Town Centre housing allocations are on 'brownfield' sites and surrounded by existing buildings. This situation limits the scope for the type of structural landscaping associated with suburban sites. Instead, Town Centre sites may successfully meet some of the open space needs of residents by providing a smaller area of space landscaped to an agreed standard, including provision of street furniture or art work to mitigate the effect of reduced site area.

6.2.3 There remains, however, a requirement for larger areas of amenity open space which afford opportunities for informal recreation. Many housing sites around the centre of the Town are not well related to existing Local Parks, particularly the area to the south of the Town Centre, north of the Wet Dock. To meet the needs of existing and future residents of this part of the Town, the Local Plan allocates land to the west of Bridge Street as a small urban park (Site 5.14).

6.2.4 It is considered that the open space needs of future residents may best be met, partially from on-site provision, and partially by collectively contributing towards a larger area of open space. This view was supported by comments made with reference to policy RL6 in the Inspector's Report of the Local Plan Inquiry:

*Clearly, such a policy would be more likely to achieve useful open spaces from the smaller developments if it were possible to aggregate the provision for individual sites towards the realisation of open spaces proposed in the Plan. (Inspectors Report page 231)*

6.2.5 Developers of some sites in the Town Centre, Wet Dock or Transition area may, therefore be given the option of providing a proportion of the open space requirement for their development in the form of a commuted sum to enable the implementation of larger open space schemes including the urban park proposal (Site 5.14) or other appropriate schemes as may be put forward.

6.2.6 It is recognised that some of the allocated housing sites, particularly in central areas of the Town have numerous constraints associated with their development. Any extraordinary costs will be taken into account when calculating the open space requirement for individual sites.

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## 6.3 Suburban Housing Sites

6.3.1 Unlike Town Centre sites which offer scope for collective provision, housing allocations in the rest of the Town are dispersed throughout the urban area and offer little potential for collective off-site provision. In the majority of cases therefore, provision of the full open space requirement on-site will be appropriate.

## 7. DETAILED DESIGN

7.1 The Council will expect the following considerations to be addressed through the design of open spaces in housing developments:

*Safety and security* - site layout should seek to strike a balance between the area being in visual control of the housing to which it relates and ensuring that excessive noise and visual intrusion does not disturb the nearest residents. Design and layout should have regard for road safety and, in particular, avoid planting that could obscure visibility splays.

*Maintenance* - where appropriate, site design should permit the use of machinery to enable economical maintenance. Water resources are at a premium in the County. Landscape designers should consider the use of drought resistant plants or the use of mulches and flints placed in the soil to help retain moisture.

*Access* - developers should have regard to the Green Corridors initiative and Policy NE4 in particular. The Council will expect developers of sites within the vicinity of proposed Green Corridors to enable continuous green and open links to be established and, wherever possible, to achieve routes that will be available to the public at large. The Council will expect developers to have regard for the needs of disabled people when designing schemes.

*Wildlife* - design and planting of amenity open space should, in addition to aesthetic value, aim to provide a habitat for wildlife. The Council will encourage schemes which retain or introduce native trees and hedgerows. Support will also be given to innovative schemes featuring surface water attenuation ponds and ditches which can provide valuable wildlife habitats.

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*Energy* - where appropriate, developers should seek to utilise layouts which reduce wind chill and heat loss from buildings and minimise overshadowing of southerly elevations.

7.2 More information on the above topics can be found in the following references:

*The Suffolk Design Guide for Residential Areas (1993)*

Jointly published by the Local Planning and Highways Authorities in Suffolk:

The guide offers comprehensive advice on design and lay out of public open space with particular reference to security, maintenance and aesthetic appeal.

*Sustainable Settlements - a guide for Planners, Designers and Developers (1995)*

Published by the University of the West of England and the Local Government Management Board:

The guide contains helpful information on the role of open space in relation to recreation, wildlife refuges, drainage networks, water treatment, and energy and pollution management.

7.3 In addition, the Council's Parks Service and the Greenways Project Officer are able to offer specialist advice in relation to the design of public open space, arboricultural and wildlife matters, and how best to contribute to the Green Corridors initiative.

7.4 Suffolk Constabulary are able to offer advice on relevant issues including safety and security matters.

## *Appendix 3*

# **Local Plan Policies**

- NE3 Green corridors will be established in the following locations:-**
- A Between Alderman Road Recreation Ground and Whitton Sports Centre playing fields and grounds, Whitton Church Lane and adjoining countryside.**
  - B. Between Christchurch Park and the playing fields north of Whitton Church Lane and adjoining countryside.**
  - C. Between Christchurch Park and the proposed district park east of Henley Road and adjoining countryside.**
  - D. Between the Cemetery and the Guardian Playing Fields, Tuddenham Road and adjoining countryside.**
  - E. Between Woodbridge Road and Bixley Heath.**
  - F. Between St Helens Street and the Orwell Country Park and surrounding countryside.**
  - G. Between the Gipping Valley path near Station Bridge and Bourne Park and adjacent countryside.**
  - H. Between Alderman Road Recreation Ground and the detached playing field for Chantry High School and adjacent countryside.**
  - I. Between Alderman Road Recreation Ground and Chantry Park and adjacent countryside.**

## Appendix 3

**Local Plan Policies**

**NE4** Within the green corridors the Council will seek to establish linear form, enhance their appearance and character and make public access available wherever practicable. Development proposals where there is an opportunity to further these objectives will be expected to respect natural features and enhance the appearance, character and access of the corridors by:

1. the retention of natural features such as trees and hedgerows;
2. the comprehensive landscaping including tree planting; and
3. the establishment of public access.

**NE27** The Council will support and encourage the conservation of energy and the use of alternative and renewable sources of energy in the design and layout of development proposals for new buildings and converted existing buildings. In considering applications for planning permission the Council will, where appropriate, encourage the use of:-

- (a) heat recycling and solar energy;
- (b) layouts which reduce wind chill;
- (c) maximum natural daylight; and
- (d) alternatives to non-renewable materials (e.g. tropical hardwood).

**BE13** In considering development proposals, the Council will seek to ensure that the design and layout of buildings, highways and the spaces around them provide for public safety and deter vandalism and crime.

## *Appendix 3*

# **Local Plan Policies**

**RL6** It will be expected that in residential developments providing 15 or more homes open space will be provided sufficient to meet the needs of the residents for children's play and informal recreational use where this is not available from public provision convenient to the site. Such land should be landscaped and equipped for its purpose by the developer and retained permanently as open space. On sites where the provision of such open space is not practical a contribution may be sought for the provision of comparable recreational provision as a part of public open space proposals convenient to the site by way of planning obligation agreements.

**RL7** The Council will support proposals for the creation of public open space providing the site can be cleared of any pollutants, adequately serviced, landscaped and does not conflict with the interests of conservation of the natural and built environment.

**RL8** Land is allocated for the provision of public open space on the following sites:-

**Site No.**

**7.2** **Bramford Lane Allotments.**  
4.85 hectares (11.98 acres) of the 13.3 hectares (33 acres) site is to be set out, landscaped and reserved for public open space along the western boundary of the site;

**7.3** **Land to the east of Henley Road, north of the railway line.** As part of the Countryside Management Plan, opportunity exists for the creation of a district park with a minimum area of 20.20 hectares (54.86 acres). This proposal will help to redress the deficient residential area to the west of the site as well as contributing to the natural visual appearance of this northern approach to the Town;

*Appendix 3*

**Local Plan Policies**

**7.4 Former allotment gardens north of Cliff Lane. 0.99 hectares (2.45 acres). This redundant vacant site could become a natural progression and expansion to Holywells Park. The proposal also includes the provision of a further park entrance, footpath and the creation of a wild-life site within the more densely wooded area; and**

**7.5 Land to east of Braziers Wood, north of the A14. 12.85 hectares (31.75 acres)**



*Appendix 4*

# Standards for publicly accessible open space

**(Derived from Table B of PPG 17 ‘Sport and Recreation’)**

<i>TYPE AND MAIN FUNCTION</i>	<i>APPROXIMATE SIZE AND DISTANCE FROM HOME</i>	<i>CHARACTERISTICS</i>
<b>REGIONAL PARKS AND OPEN SPACES</b>		
(Linked Metropolitan Open Land and Green Belt Corridors) Weekend and occasional visits by car and public transport	400 hectares  3.2 - 8 kilometres	Large areas and corridors of natural heathland, downland, commons, woodlands and parkland also including areas not publicly accessible but which contribute to the overall environmental amenity. Primarily providing for informal recreation with some non-intensive active recreation uses. Car parking at key locations.
<b>METROPOLITAN PARKS</b>		
Weekend and occasional visits by car or public transport	60 hectares  3.2 kilometres or more where the park is appreciably larger	Either (i) natural heathland, downland, commons, woodlands etc. or (ii) formal parks providing for both active and passive recreation. May contain playing fields, but at least 40 hectares for other pursuits. Adequate car parking.
<b>DISTRICT PARKS</b>		
Weekend and occasional visits by foot, cycle, car and short bus trips	20 hectares  1.2 kilometres	Landscape setting with a variety of natural features providing for a range of activities including outdoor sports facilities and playing fields, children’s play for different age groups and informal recreation pursuits. Should normally provide some car parking.

## Appendix 4

## Standards for publicly accessible open space

(Derived from Table B of PPG 17 'Sport and Recreation')

TYPE AND MAIN FUNCTION	APPROXIMATE SIZE AND DISTANCE FROM HOME	CHARACTERISTICS
<b>LOCAL PARKS</b>		
For pedestrian visitors	2 hectares 0.4 kilometres	Providing for court games children's play, sitting out areas, nature conservation, landscaped environment and playing fields if parks are large enough.
<b>SMALL LOCAL PARKS AND OPEN SPACES</b>		
Pedestrian visits, especially by old people and children; particularly valuable in high density areas.	< 2 hectares 0.4 kilometres	Gardens, sitting out areas children's playgrounds or other areas of a specialist nature, including nature conservation areas.
<b>LINEAR OPEN SPACES</b>		
Pedestrian visits	Variable Where possible	River walks, footpaths, disused railway lines and other routes which provide the opportunity for informal recreation, including nature conservation, often characterised by features or attractive areas which are not fully accessible to the public, but contribute to the enjoyment of the space.