

7.5 PUBLIC OPEN SPACE PROVISION IN RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES (RL. 1)

7.5.1 Public open space is land available to satisfy the recreation and leisure needs of the community. It can fulfil a number of functions including:

- (i) areas for formal sporting activity;
- (ii) areas for informal recreation and leisure purposes;
- (iii) play areas; and
- (iv) amenity land.

There are no statutory national standards with respect to how much public open space should be provided. Each location will vary and PPG17 states that it is for local planning authorities to justify the amount and location of new provision. In coming forward with a local standard the PPG advises that it may be helpful to consider the National Playing Field Association (NPFA) recommended standard.

7.5.2 The NPFA recommends a minimum standard for outdoor playing space of 2.43 hectares (6 acres) per 1,000 population but PPG17 also states that in addition open space is important in amenity terms and to the overall quality of the built environment.

7.5.3 Proposals for new housing will be acceptable only where they include appropriate public open space and recreational provision. Informal open space should normally be within the site and accessible safely by foot. This may not be possible for formal sports provision, in which case alternative arrangements such as contributions elsewhere may be appropriate. New rights of way should be provided to afford safe access to and between new and existing open spaces.

7.5.4 The former Newbury District Local Plan (1993) policy REC 1 had a public open space standard of between 3 and 4.3 hectares per 1,000 population in new residential development. The then Local Plan Inspector concluded that there was sufficient flexibility in the wording of this policy as well as the range itself to allow for local variation and generally that the policy was not unreasonable. He also considered the Council had sought to achieve a standard suitable for present day needs within new housing areas rather than trying to remedy overall deficiencies by requiring developers to provide for existing residents.

7.5.5 The standard of 4.3 hectares per 1,000 population has generally been adopted by the other Councils in Berkshire. The exceptions are Reading and Slough where to achieve such a standard would be unrealistic given their built up and urban natures. The adjoining local planning authorities outside Berkshire appear to be applying a public open space standard of 2.8 hectares per 1,000 population. It is against this background that a standard of between 3 and 4.3 hectares per 1,000 population remains reasonable and justified in the context of West Berkshire.

In respect of sheltered and other special needs housing, however, there may be greater flexibility applied in the application of this standard. The second part of Policy RL.1 explains the context.

7.5.6 The threshold of 10 or more dwellings was selected following a comprehensive audit of all open space and outdoor sports provision in West Berkshire, which concluded that, though there was a shortfall of over 50 hectares of such space across the district, no open space was required for developments of less than 10 dwellings.

POLICY RL.1 The Council will require, in new residential development of ten or more dwellings, the provision of between 3 and 4.3 hectares of public open space per thousand population in such form, scale and distribution as may be considered appropriate depending on local circumstances, together with associated facilities/equipment. The Council will seek the

transfer of public open space to local authority ownership control in a condition appropriate for such use together with any appropriate sum for ongoing maintenance.

In the case of sheltered and special needs housing the provision of public open space will be negotiated on the particular type of accommodation and facilities, size of site, the balance of private/public open space needs, local circumstances and the provision and enhancement of nearby accessible and appropriate open spaces.