

WIGAN LOCAL PLAN



Open Space in New Housing

Supplementary Planning Document



Places Directorate: Economy, Waste and Infrastructure

www.wigan.gov.uk

Contents

ONE	Introduction	2
TWO	Scope of the guidance	4
THREE	Financial contributions	6
FOUR	Other issues	9

Appendices

Appendix 1	Calculating the commuted sum, as of 1 April 2014	11
Appendix 2	Useful contacts	13

ONE

Introduction

1.1 We attach great importance to the provision, design and layout of good quality open space and children's play facilities within and close to new housing developments. This document advises developers and their agents on the mechanisms for implementing our policy for open space provision in new housing developments, as set out in Wigan's Local Plan. It provides worked examples of on-site or off-site provision and on the scale of charges which will be levied, for both the provision and maintenance of open space and off-site play equipment required as part of development.

1.2 This guidance supplements and relates to the following specific Local Plan policies:

Wigan Unitary Development Plan policy R1E – Open Space in New Housing Developments

To require off-site provision for housing developments up to 99 homes and on-site provision for housing developments over 99 homes, unless otherwise agreed.

Wigan Local Plan Core Strategy policy CP18 – Developer contributions

Ensuring that development funds, or contributes to the funding of, necessary off-site works or programmes in accordance with the provisions of legislation, national planning policy and other local planning policies and provided that it is viable.

Ensuring that a levy is placed on development to fund, or contribute to the funding of, improving our infrastructure in accordance with the provisions of legislation, national planning policy, other local planning policies and our infrastructure delivery plan and provided that it is viable.

1.3 Separate Supplementary Planning Documents are available on Landscape Design and Residential Design.

1.4 The Wigan Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted in September 2013. It replaces many of the existing policies of the Unitary Development Plan but policy R1E will remain as a saved policy until it is replaced by a policy in the Wigan Allocations and Development Management Local Plan. That plan is due for adoption in 2016. We also intend to introduce a Community Infrastructure Levy by 2015.

1.5 Core Strategy policy CP2 also provides a general policy framework for open space, sport and recreation in the borough. It is supported by our Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment, which identifies provision and needs, including shortfalls. The assessment is being updated to provide open space, sport and recreation standards for inclusion in the Wigan Allocations and Development Management Local Plan.

TWO

Scope of the guidance

2.1 Most proposals for new housing developments are required to either contribute to the provision of public open space and play provision within the proposed site or make an equivalent financial contribution to off-site provision.

Housing schemes of up to 99 homes

2.2 New housing developments present opportunities to create living environments that are inviting, attractive, sustainable, well-maintained and can be enjoyed by all sections of the community, including children, older people and people with disabilities. However, on smaller housing sites it is often difficult to create open space and play space that is big enough to meet needs and is designed and located so as to not adversely affect the amenity of residents. Play facilities provide a focal point for children of all ages and ideally need to be integrated as part of wider open space, off-site but accessible from the development.

2.3 In such circumstances, the developer will need to make a financial contribution to the capital and commuted maintenance costs of off-site open space and play provision. A financial contribution not only avoids the problems associated with disturbance, anti-social behaviour and general nuisance to residents on small housing sites but also allows us to adopt a more strategic approach for the provision of open space and play facilities.

2.4 The sum will be proportionate to the number of dwellings in the scheme, as indicated in the scale of charges set out in Appendix 1. The requirement for a financial contribution will be applied to all new dwellings including single dwellings. This includes barn conversions, conversions of houses to flats, the conversion of any non-residential building to residential use and retirement housing.

Exemptions to financial contributions

2.5 We will consider making exemptions to financial contributions for play provision for particular types of housing development including:

- Care homes

- Nursing homes
- Other specialist housing that would give rise to no, or very little, demand for public open space.

Housing schemes of over 99 homes

2.6 In larger housing schemes developers will be expected to provide public open space at the rate of 25 square metres per dwelling. We will seek a financial contribution towards the cost of play equipment that we will provide, either on-site or off-site, at our discretion. We will also seek a financial contribution towards the commuted maintenance costs of the play equipment and the open space. Where developers intend to retain ownership of open space and play provision, they will need to satisfy the council that they have put in place an acceptable alternative means of ensuring future maintenance.

2.7 On larger sites, developers should also consider the integration of open space and play provision, located with good visibility and access, yet far enough from houses to minimise disturbance to residents. A satisfactory relationship between housing, open space and play provision can only be achieved when the open space elements of the scheme are considered early on in the process as part of the overall layout of the development site. Large nearby open spaces are preferable to a number of smaller spaces distributed across housing development.

2.8 If it is not practical to accommodate suitable play provision because of a site's difficult shape, landform or natural topography, we will consider a more appropriate off-site location, close to the development and within the township.

THREE

Financial contributions

3.1 Financial contributions are to be made to the Planning and Transport Service before the commencement of work on site. Examples of how financial contributions are determined are set out in Appendix 1.

Open space provision

3.2 Off-site open space provision will be enhanced in accordance with a priority list of projects prepared by the Director, Economy and Skills, in liaison with the Portfolio Holder and Assistant Director with responsibility for leisure. The priority is to provide or improved open space that is strategically located, accessible and usable. Contributions will be combined where appropriate in order to achieve this. The priority list will be reviewed at least annually and more regularly if other needs arise as a result of safety or risk management issues, opportunities for matching funding and/or strong community support. It will be published on the council's website.

Play provision

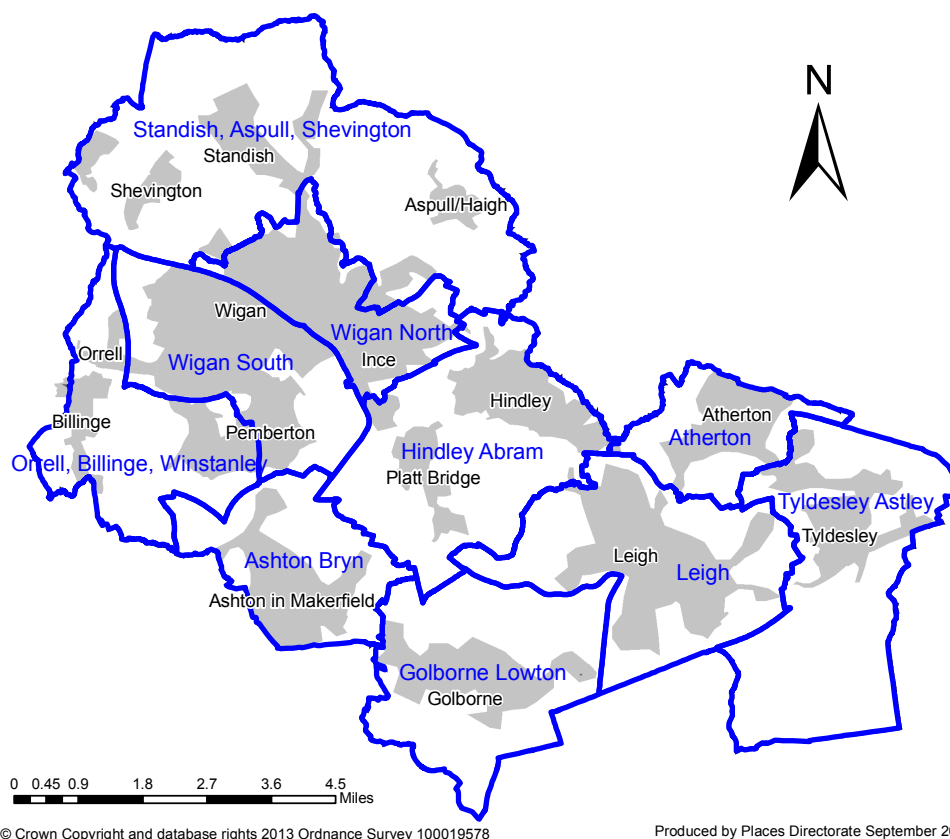
3.3 Where possible off-site play provision will be provided close to the development and accessible from it. However, whilst it is not always possible or desirable to provide open space adjacent to, or in the immediate vicinity of new housing, it should be provided within the township. There are ten township areas in the borough, as shown on the map under paragraph 3.5. This will ensure that play space provision that is provided or enhanced is strategically located, accessible, usable and can be sustained as a community facility.

3.4 Contributions will be spent in accordance with a priority list of projects prepared and published in the same way as for open space provision. The list for play provision will in the main identify land that is council owned but may also include land owned by others, such as a parish council.

3.5 In general, contributions will be used for:

- the provision or replacement of equipped children's play facilities
- the provision of new, or improvements to existing, formal recreation areas and sports pitches
- the provision of teen meet shelters

- the creation of activity and adventure play facilities for the over 12s
- the creation and improvement of informal kick about areas
- the creation and improvement of skate park type facilities
- the creation of 'green gyms' and other outdoor fitness facilities.



Map 1: Township boundaries

3.6 Around 5% of the budget for play provision will be top-sliced for spend at the three principal parks in the borough: at Haigh Country Park, Mesnes Park, Wigan and Pennington Flash Country Park, Leigh, as these sites attract people from a wide area.

3.7 The council will also retain a 5% fee in order to manage and administer the system of play provision improvement.

3.8 Commuted sums for maintenance will be held in a separate account to make sure that the equipment and facilities are maintained to a suitable standard.

Making prospective residents aware of open space and play provision

3.9 The location and proximity of open space, play provision and footpaths can result in noise and disturbance problems for residents. Although this type of disturbance can be minimised by careful design, the responsibility is with the developer to ensure that prospective buyers are made aware of the location and extent of the open space and play provision.

FOUR

Other issues

Community safety

4.1 The safety of people and the security of property can be enhanced by good design. Developers should liaise and consult with the Crime Prevention Team at Greater Manchester Police at the pre-application stage when there is a perceived risk management issue. The unit can advise on design measures to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.

4.2 Every design solution must take account of community safety issues and avoid creating potential opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour such as areas that are unobserved, poorly lit or under-utilised and feel threatening to the intended users. All landscape design submissions should demonstrate how community safety and crime prevention measures have been considered.

4.3 In addition the provision and maintenance of access for the emergency services should be ensured.

Protecting natural features

4.4 Trees, woodlands, ponds and watercourses are important natural landscape features that add to the nature conservation value of a site and so, should be incorporated into open space. Developers will be expected to take every opportunity to retain and enhance such features regardless of the size of the development site. Opportunities to link networks of open space would also be encouraged. However, only land which makes a positive, practical and usable contribution to the overall open space should be considered. Highway verges, visibility splays, long thin planting beds adjacent to roads, awkwardly shaped pieces of land and private gardens will not be accepted as counting against the overall open space requirement for a housing development.

4.5 In relation to the protection and enhancement of natural features developers are encouraged to make reference to Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) model at www.naturalengland.org.uk.

The adoption process and interim landscape maintenance

4.6 In planning for on-site open space and play space provision, developers should submit detailed plans showing its layout and distribution with their planning application. When the council is expected to adopt the space dedication boundaries should be clearly identified.

4.7 On completion of the development the developer should notify the council so that an inspection of the landscaping and open space provision can be undertaken to ensure it is in accordance with the approved plans, whether or not it is proposed to dedicate the land to the council. If dedication is proposed, the formal adoption procedure will then commence.

4.8 Developers must maintain the site to an agreed standard for a minimum period of 12 months, subject to the planting season. This includes the maintenance and repair of any fixed play equipment and the replacement of failed planting. Two months before the end of the maintenance period, the council will inspect the site again to agree any remedial works. Until such time as the land and any play provision is adopted, the developer will remain responsible for public liability.

4.9 Once the legal process has been completed and all due financial contributions are made the land will be formally entered on our land register for future maintenance.

4.10 Where amenity open space is not to be adopted by the council, developers will need to demonstrate at the planning application stage that they have put in place an acceptable alternative means of ensuring future maintenance. Full details will be required of such arrangements and it will be secured for a suitable term through a planning condition or section 106 agreement. The developer should also inform prospective purchasers of the surrounding homes that maintenance of the open space will remain their responsibility.

Appendix 1

Calculating the commuted sum, as of 1 April 2014

Housing schemes of up to 99 homes

For example a small housing development of 59 homes:

Financial contribution required	Rate applied (£)	Number of homes	Capital or commuted sum due (£)	Total financial contribution due (£)
In lieu of on-site open space (combined capital and commuted maintenance)	£557	59	£32,863	£32,863
In lieu of on-site play space (capital)	} £1,038	59	-	£61,242
In lieu of on-site play space (commuted maintenance)				

Financial contribution due towards the capital and commuted maintenance costs of off-site open space and play provision, for a small development of 59 homes is £94,105.

Housing schemes of over 99 homes

For example a housing development of 159 homes:

Total public open space required (sq m)		
Area (sq m) required per dwelling or unit	Total number of homes	Total open space required
25 sq m	159	3,975 sq m

Commuted maintenance costs of open space		
Rate (£) per sq m	Total open space required (sq m)	Total commuted maintenance costs required (£)
£13.35	3,975 sq m	£53,066.25

Financial contribution required	Rate applied (£)	Number of homes	Capital or commuted sum due (£)	Total financial contribution due (£)
In lieu of on-site play space (capital)	} £1,038	159	-	£165,042
In lieu of on-site play space (commuted maintenance)				
Commuted maintenance costs of amenity open space	-	-	-	£53,066.25

1.1 Financial contribution due towards the commuted maintenance costs of on-site open space and in lieu of play equipment provision and commuted maintenance costs, for a development of 159 homes is £218,108.25.

Note

1.2 The above rates apply from the 1 April 2014. They will be subject to an annual review and increased at the annual rate of inflation provided by the Office for National Statistics. The new rates will apply from 1 April in each subsequent year.

Appendix 2

Useful contacts

The council can advise on the provision, location, design and layout of open space and on-site children's play areas. It can also advise developers on the council's adopted standard for open space in new housing developments. In addition, advice can be provided on when on-site or off-site provision is appropriate and on the scale of charges that will be required for both the provision and maintenance of open space and the capital and commuted maintenance costs of off-site play equipment.

To discuss details or issues relating to your planning application you will need to contact the Development Management Team, details below.

- **Development Management** - telephone: 01942 489143; email: planningrepresentations@wigan.gov.uk
- **Section 106 monitoring officer** - telephone: 01942 489149; email: section106monitoring@wigan.gov.uk

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**We can make this information available
in other formats on request**

Steve Normington

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