



Report to Cabinet

Subject: Recreational Open Space Strategy for the Borough of Gedling

Date: 6th May 2005

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1. Purpose of the Report

To adopt the Recreational Open Space Strategy for the Borough of Gedling.

This report incorporates a short section on the Gedling Borough element of the Playing Pitch Strategy.

2. Background

The 'Public and Open Spaces Strategy' was commissioned by Gedling Borough Council. The study was carried out during 2002 – 2003 and was concerned with an audit and assessment of current provision. The assessment examined the adequacy of current facility provision and noted relevant consultation.

Open space in the context of the brief includes:

- § Playing Pitches
- § Non-pitch facilities
- § Children's play areas
- § Recreational grounds
- § Public open spaces and common land
- § Other urban green spaces.

Children's play areas and Playing Pitches are addressed in their own separate strategy and report.

The Open Space Strategy was compiled through the use of a study identifying existing sites, carried out in accordance with PPG17. The Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions and supplement planning legislation, publishes Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG). PPG17, Planning Policy Guidance, Sport and Recreation, which was published in September 1991, emphasises the value of recreational land and states that the Government attaches great importance to the retention of recreational and amenity open space in urban areas.

The study was also compiled in accordance with Chapter 10 of the Companion Guide in that a hierarchy of provision has been used. This is essentially based on the premise that 'large or high quality spaces or facilities' tend to attract users from a larger area than small or poor quality ones and tend to have a higher local profile.

The study attributes the importance of different types of parks, gardens and amenity open space at four levels of significance; each type of recreational open space within the Borough is classified under a typology such as 'Country Park' or 'large public open space'. Each typology is considered to have the relative significance in the context of the Borough, its residents and visitors and has a catchment zone attributed to it. Amenity green spaces (highway buffers) have been discounted from the mapping as they are considered not to have a safe recreational value.

Research conducted to compile the strategy was undertaken using information from the Gedling Borough Council's contract maintenance documentation, local consultation and site visits.

Although national standards for greenspace are not available, the study has identified from consultancy processes; that in some areas current provision of greenspace in the Borough is not meeting demand. General issues identified include:

- Previously, there has been no comprehensive assessment criteria applied to assess the recreational value of open space in the Borough, or the targeting of resources.
- There is no mechanism employed which allows for key sites within each categorisation definition to be locally prioritised.

The overall vision for the strategy is: *'To provide by 2013 accessible, high quality open spaces and associated facilities in both urban and rural areas, which meet the needs of residents and visitors and are fit for purpose and economically and environmentally sustainable'*.

The Playing Pitch and Non-Pitch Strategy element of the Open Space Strategy:

The Government views playing field strategies as an essential element underpinning its strategy for the protection and provision of outdoor playing space.

The methodology for the Playing Pitch and Non-Pitch assessment follows the guidelines of the 'Playing Pitch Strategy' document published by the Sports Council, National Playing Fields Association and Central Council for Physical Recreation in 1991. The Playing Pitch and Non-Pitch Sports Strategy was developed from the findings of research information, and analysis of outdoor sports provision and levels of use within the Gedling Borough Council area. This was carried out by Knight, Kavanagh and Page, Leisure Management Consultancy.

Playing Pitch provision within the Borough is addressed in further detail in it's own Strategy and report.

The term 'outdoor sports' in this case covers playing pitch sports including football, rugby, cricket and hockey and non-pitch sports including, bowls, tennis, netball, basketball and athletics. Research and consultation was carried out between January and November 2002.

Playing Pitch and Non- Pitch Facilities

Provision for Gedling comprises:

- 47 senior, 17 junior and 16 mini soccer pitches
- 18 senior cricket pitches
- 12 senior and one junior rugby pitches
- Five artificial pitches
- 13 bowling greens
- Seven tennis court sites
- No provision for netball
- No athletics track
- Nine outdoor basketball courts
- Three golf courses.

Open Space Strategy

Objectives have been developed from the key issues emerging from the assessment report. Gedling Borough Council will work to provide, and assist in the provision of, good quality, accessible open spaces appropriate to meet the needs of the community within and beyond the Borough. The achievement of these strategic aims should be carried out through the implementation of the following policy objectives:

- 1) Increase the quality and capacity of existing open spaces to meet the needs and aspirations of users, agencies and Gedling Borough Council.
- 2) Maximise the accessibility of greenspaces and sport and recreation facilities on foot, by bicycle or by public transport
- 3) Meet shortfall in Part seven of the assessment report. The majority of this shortfall can be achieved through the implementation of improvements to, and increased maintenance of the current quantity of open space provision.
- 4) Fill gaps in provision while also making the best overall use of the resources of land and money
- 5) Create, where appropriate, green corridors between urban areas and their surrounding countryside and improve the accessibility of the urban fringe and rights of way in the countryside.
- 6) Provide usable, accessible and viable greenspace within the Borough in the context of the UDP (Urban Development Plan).
- 7) Encourage participation and support local voluntary sector contribution
- 8) Improve the health and well being of the Borough's residents by providing improved opportunities to access high quality sporting activity.

It is proposed that Gedling Borough Council become more actively involved in working towards developing sites that meet the targets of the Nottingham Local Biodiversity Action Plan. The targets are as follows:

- 1) Ensure no further loss of designated wildlife sites
- 2) Biodiversity should be a consideration in all land use decisions, not just those affecting designated sites.
- 3) Ensure that all officials involved in decisions that affect biodiversity are adequately trained, or have sufficient access to expertise to make well-informed judgements.
- 4) Stimulate local action for biodiversity, and strengthen local pride in the environment by involving communities in setting conservation objectives and in managing protected sites wherever possible.

It is evident that certain types of open space could be used to help meet the deficiencies found in the pitch and non-pitch sport facilities and children's play areas studies. For example there is 111.7 ha of amenity greenspace. This could in theory meet some of the shortfall for playing pitches and children's play areas. It is recommended that further work be undertaken to assess in detail the sustainability of these sites and to determine whether they could meet the identified shortfall. Such work would involve assessing other factors such as topography accessibility, and funding.

There is the opportunity for the Council to consider more detailed distance thresholds (that is, the maximum distance that typical users can be expected to travel to each type of provision using different modes of transport). This would allow a further analysis to be conducted using maps to determine the percentage of the population that lives within a certain distance threshold of a significant local open space, subsequently mapping those areas requiring additional provision in order to meet the accessibility standard.

It is proposed that senior pitches are relocated to Greenbelt land; freeing conurbation pitches for junior and informal play equipment.

Areas of shortfall have been identified within the Borough. The shortfall of greenspace identified through consultation processes can be addressed by carrying out improvements to existing facilities or by increasing the biodiversity of a site in order to increase its value.

Specific key issues that have been identified with relation to shortfall within the Borough are identified as follows:

- *Shortfall of Parks and gardens:*
 - Identification of a shortfall of one additional park to service the urban fringe
 - Issue surrounding Gedling Colliery site with the future of the site currently in the balance. Issue surrounding funding of the site to bring it to a safe and usable state.

- *Natural and semi natural greenspace:*

- Gedling House Woods is designated LNR (Local Nature Reserve) status but the meadowland within the site is not.
 - Gedling is currently operating well below the English nature target for LN sites per 1000 population.
 - Importance of developing management plans for key sites and in order need to strengthen any bids for LNR status or similar.
 - Demand for sites to have a richer biodiversity to satisfy a broader range of users and in order to work more closely to achieve the targets set out in the Biodiversity action plans.
- *Green Corridors:*
 - Demand for networks to link up at least the major open spaces within the Borough
 - Rights of way shortfalls have been identified in Ravenshead, Linby, Newstead and Papplewick.
 - Demand has been identified for the creation of additional cycle ways and improved links to pedestrian crossings.
- *Amenity greenspace:*
 - No identified demand for additional amenity greenspace in Gedling.
- *Allotments:*
 - The provision and future of allotments within the Borough of Gedling has been addressed separately in the Allotment Strategy for the Borough of Gedling.
- *Cemeteries:*
 - The provision and future of cemeteries within the Borough of Gedling has been addressed separately in the Burial audits for the Borough of Gedling.
- *Civic Space:*
 - Demand for green space in Arnold for community use identified through the Town Centre Plan. This is being addressed through the works planned for the King George the 5th recreation ground.

General Recommendations

- Gedling Borough Council should strengthen partnerships, focused around specific sites, to enable improved delivery of Local Agenda 21 action plans in order to manage and improve its own environmental performance.
- Gedling Borough Council should become more actively involved in working towards developing sites to meet The Nottinghamshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan framework.

- Gedling Borough Council should work more closely with English Nature in order to improve its current low local standard for designated LNR (Local Nature Reserve) per 1000 population.
- Cycle routes are to be maintained to an appropriate standard to meet the needs of the users.
- Section 106 agreements for new housing should provide for both amenity green space and recreational green space. Recreational green space includes play facilities to provide opportunities for informal play. Amenity green space it to improve the aesthetics of the development.
- Consideration should be given to providing a number of additional rights of way to begin to meet the shortfalls identified in Ravenshead, Linby, Newstead and Papplewick. This process should be completed in partnership with users, including The Ramblers Association.
- To commit to the site-specific recommendations as outlined in the action plans of the Recreation and Open Space Strategy.

Within the parameters of the assessment of sites, Knight, Kavanagh & Page (KKP) have been unable to carry out a full, site by site assessment of the open spaces within Gedling. It is therefore recommended that Gedling Borough Council explore the feasibility to provide a comprehensive Borough, all ownership, audit of open space. A criteria 'toolkit' should be adapted, which assesses the recreational value of sites based on the ability to service local need.

The Playing Pitch and Non-Pitch Strategy element of the Open Space Strategy:

The specific sports of Football, Cricket, Bowls and Rugby have been addressed separately in more detail in the County Playing Pitch Strategy.

Hockey

Shortfall of facilities:

- Possible future demand is highlighted for the need for an additional two ATP (All weather Training Pitches) at school sites if school participation is increased.
- Consultation suggests that facilities are not meeting the current demand for hockey in Gedling. The facilities provided are of good quality and provide sufficient capacity, however the current trend in water based all weather pitches has caused a larger demand for these types of pitches and a reduction in demand for the current sand based pitches

Recommendations:

- Local Authority owned / managed ATP facilities should give priority to hockey clubs looking for match slots on a Saturday or Sunday. Gedling Borough Council should encourage flexibility on kick off times to increase the capacity of a pitch to service competitive hockey. This issue is being addressed with priority currently being given to Hockey. For example Redhill Ladies Senior Hockey Team based at Redhill Leisure Centre, already have priority over the pitches on weekend days.

- Gedling Borough Council should monitor school hockey participation over the next 12 months, if this has increased, Gedling Borough Council should consider two new ATP builds at school sites.

Tennis

Shortfall of facilities:

- Council owned facilities are not providing sufficiently good quality tennis courts and associated facilities to adequately meet demand within the Gedling area.
- Demand for one additional court at Church Lane, Bestwood Tennis Club.

Recommendations:

- Gedling Borough Council should re-evaluate its policies for tennis provision across the Borough and consider reducing hire costs to support club development.
- Encourage further development of a partnership between Gedling Borough Council and Lawn Tennis Association to encourage more clubs to join the Club Vision programme.
- Courts at Conway should be re-surfaced to a good standard.
- Support Bestwood Tennis Club in applying for funding in partnership with the parish council.

Netball

Shortfall in facilities:

- No identified demand for outdoor netball courts in Gedling, but this may be related to the issue of supply

Recommendations:

- No reported demand for tennis courts at Redhill Leisure Centre, which should be allowed to develop as good quality netball courts. These netball courts should be promoted as a central venue netball site in the context of Gedling and Nottinghamshire.

Athletics

Shortfall of facilities:

- No demand for a full size, fully equipped athletics track in Gedling.

Recommendations:

- The strategy recommended Gedling Borough Council to develop a satellite-training venue to link in with Harvey Haddon Athletics Stadium in Nottingham, feeding junior members through to the club. This issue has now been addressed through the provision of athletics facilities at Carlton-

le-willows School. This was set up in partnership with the Gedling School Sports Co-ordinator Partnership and Nottingham Athletics Club. It is the first project of it's kind in the Borough and will act as an ideal exit route for children competing in the Gedling Borough Sports hall Athletics competitions that currently exist.

- To provide a 100-metre strip in order to provide sprinting opportunities for members.

Basketball

Shortfall of facilities:

- No demand identified for formal playing facilities

Recommendations:

- Continue to maintain the courts but no further developments to or additional formal playing facilities required.

Golf

Shortfall of facilities:

- No demand identified

Recommendations:

- Gedling Borough Council to expand the work currently being undertaken with Mapperley Golf Club to develop junior participation at other clubs.

Appendix 1 gives an Executive Summary of the Strategy.

Services Scrutiny Committee have examined the Strategy document and Action Plan as requested by the Leisure Portfolio Holder.

At its meeting on the 22nd March 2004 Scrutiny resolved “to endorse the Open Space Strategy and to request the Portfolio Holder for Leisure to ensure Ward Members and residents are fully consulted on usage and developments on open spaces in their area”.

The Leisure Department will ensure the appropriate level of consultation is undertaken prior to developments on open spaces.

3. Proposal

To adopt the Strategy and Action Plan, instructing the Leisure Department to ensure its delivery and promotion.

A full copy of the strategy can be obtained from the Leisure Services Department.

4. Resource Implications

Funding sources to be explored in order to fund the Action Plan.

5. Recommendation

To adopt the Recreational Open Space Strategy for the Borough of Gedling 2004-2009.

6. Wards Affected

All Wards