



**Walsall Council**

**Supplementary Planning Document  
to the Walsall Unitary Development Plan**

**Urban Open Space:**

**Statement on Consultation**

**April 2006**



## **Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Matters**

- Title of SPD:** Supplementary Planning Document for Urban Open Space.
- Subject:** This SPD expands on “saved” policies GP3 and LC1 to LC6 of the Walsall UDP regarding provision of open spaces in the borough of Walsall.
- Consultation:** Comments could be made on the draft SPD and the Sustainability Appraisal between 27 January and 24 February 2006.
- Address:** Further information may be obtained, in written or electronic form, from:  
Physical Regeneration Strategy Team  
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council  
2nd floor, Civic centre  
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Walsall  
WS1 1TP  
Telephone: 01922 652450  
Fax: 01922 623234  
Email: LDF@Walsall.gov.uk  
The relevant documents can be inspected on the Council’s website, at [www.walsall.gov.uk](http://www.walsall.gov.uk), during normal opening hours, at Planning Services reception in Walsall Civic Centre and at public libraries in the borough of Walsall.
- Adoption:** Anyone could have asked to be notified of the adoption of this SPD at a specified address.
- Evidence:** The evidence base for the SPD will be the Audit and Assessment Report (“The Audit”) for the Walsall Green Spaces Strategy (GSS), which is being developed in parallel with the SPD.  
Reference is also made to the Council’s Playing Pitch Strategy.



## **Developing the Draft SPD**

- 1.1. This statement on consultation explains how the Council has consulted on the draft Walsall Urban Open Space SPD. It sets out how the Council has involved key stakeholders, residents and others in preparing this SPD.
- 1.2. Before publishing a draft of this SPD the Council sought, informally, the view of a range of interested parties including:
  - Local people or groups or organisations that have asked to be consulted;
  - Developers active in the borough;
  - Councillors
  - Other developers;
  - Representatives of developers or other providers of new housing in the borough;
  - Applicants for planning permission to build residential property in the borough;
  - Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) who are active in the Borough;
  - Other people who have expressed an interest in planning in the borough.

## **Informal Consultation**

- 1.3. Informal consultation was carried out via:
  - Discussions with neighbouring authorities, in particular a request for comparative data about standards and off-site contributions.
  - Discussions with colleagues in other parts of the Council, notably the Green Spaces Team.
  - A Consultation Event on 19 January 2006.
- 1.4. There has also been some overlap with the Green Spaces Strategy Audit and Assessment, including:
  - A householder survey<sup>1</sup>.
  - Consultation with Friends of Parks groups.
  - A Members' Working Group.

## **Summary of issues raised**

- 1.5. The main issues raised were:
  - (a) Comparison with other Black Country authorities.
  - (b) Should "luxury" developments contribute more.
  - (c) Which types of homes should contribute.

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<sup>1</sup> Informal only in the sense of it not being part of the formal SPD consultation.

- (d) Maintenance, especially of existing facilities.
- (e) Cost of formal provision for children and young people.
- (f) Variety of types of open space in all areas.
- (g) Develop a borough wide indoor skate / wheeled sports facility.
- (h) The SPD should allow for other types of open space, for example town squares or pedestrian areas with hard landscapes to assist the regeneration of the urban centres in the borough.

### **How the SPD has taken account of these comments**

- 1.6. The comments received were helpful in strengthening the SPD, which has been amended and builds on the majority of the comments received.
- (a) At the Event it was said that Walsall should be comparable with the rest of the Black Country; in the top three quarters. The scale of contribution arrived at is a little higher than Sandwell and Dudley, but lower than Wolverhampton (who produced a higher figure after the Event). It was also considered that Walsall's figure should be lower than Lichfield, which it is.
  - (b) It was considered that the price of a home was not in itself justification to seek a higher contribution; price not being an indicator of how many people would be putting pressure on open spaces. However, because land values vary across the borough it can be more expensive to provide new open spaces in some areas, so a Land Value Adjustment has been incorporated into the SPD.
  - (c) At the Event there was much debate about whether particular types of household generated more or less pressure of various types of open space. It was generally considered that, although different types of household used open spaces differently, the overall impact would not be greatly different. Therefore, it would be reasonable to expect all types of home to contribute equally. The SPD reflects this.
  - (d) The SPD includes provision for maintenance of new facilities for 10 years. As explained in the SPD Section 106 Agreements should not be used to secure maintenance of existing facilities, which is a matter for the Council to address through other mechanisms, including the Green Spaces Strategy.
  - (e) There was concern that equipment for children's play and young people's activities are very expensive and that less costly alternatives might exist. The SPD does not address specific spending priorities, but it is clear from the Audit and the householder survey that there is clear deficit in facilities for children and young people, so this is likely to take a large proportion of resources in any case.
  - (f) An object of the Audit was to look at the distribution of various types of open spaces in the borough. The SPD does not address this in detail, but the aim is to address deficiencies of

whatever type. The Green Spaces Strategy will work up priorities for action and will guide the use of funds raised as a result of this SPD.

- (g) The Audit did not consider specifically the provision of borough wide facilities for children and young people. However, the list of such facilities in paragraph 4.10 is not exclusive. Where clear evidence is provided that a borough level facility is needed there is no reason why it could not be addressed through the SPD.
- (h) The Audit did not address paved areas in urban centres. However, the SPD leaves open the opportunity to address deficiencies of this type. The lists of borough and neighbourhood level spaces referred to in SPD paragraphs 10 and 4.12 are not exclusive. UDP paragraph 8.15 says that urban open spaces can include water areas and paved areas such as town squares and pedestrianised streets within centres.

### **Formal Consultation on the draft SPD**

- 1.7. The Council invited and welcomes comments from everyone.
- 1.8. However, the following categories of people have been consulted directly, in line with the Local Development Regulations:
  - Relevant “specific consultation bodies” and “general consultation bodies, focusing on those who would be most likely to make valuable contributions on affordable housing;
  - The same categories of parties that were consulted informally, but a wider range, more than 700 letters.

### **Summary of Issues Raised**

- 1.9. The main issues raised during the formal consultation period were:
  - (a) Health benefits of open spaces; a supportive letter from the Primary Care Trust.
  - (b) Nature conservation and biodiversity; wider strategies, other standards, creation of new semi-natural spaces, indicator.
  - (c) Playing Pitch Strategy.
  - (d) SPD should refer to a wider range of policies.
  - (e) Greenways.
  - (f) PPG 17 and Companion Guide.
  - (g) Contributions should be required for other types of development.
  - (h) The 10 dwelling threshold.
  - (i) On-site provision.
  - (j) Transformational change agenda for the Black Country.
  - (k) Cost estimates.
- 1.10. All comments are detailed in Annex A to this statement.

## **How the SPD has taken account of these comments**

- 1.11. The comments received were helpful in clarifying and strengthening the SPD, which has been amended and builds on many of the comments received.
- (a) The health benefits of open spaces have been emphasised in the SPD and the Sustainability Appraisal.
  - (b) The SPD sets an overall target for natural and semi-natural space and will be reinforced by the Greenspace Strategy, which will be consulted on during the Summer. Most of the issues raised are already covered in the SPD and UDP / LDF or will be covered in the Greenspace Strategy. Nonetheless, some minor changes have been made regarding these issues.
  - (c) The Playing Pitch Strategy is referred to in more detail in relevant sections.
  - (d) The SPD now refers to more aspects of national planning policy, notably in PPS 1 and PPG 17.
  - (e) Greenways are specifically included (they were not excluded by the draft SPD).
  - (f) It was suggested that some aspects of the SPD were not consistent with PPG 17 and its Companion Guide. Mainly, this arose from a lack of clarity in the SPD so these areas have been sharpened up. The playing field standard has also been raised to address concerns that the draft would lead to losses contrary to PPG 17.
  - (g) The SPD is now more explicitly focused on residential developments.
  - (h) It was suggested that the 10 dwelling threshold was not justified, but there is a clear case for such a threshold supported by current practice elsewhere and by the Companion Guide to PPG 17, which says exceptions should be made for smaller developments. The threshold has been retained.
  - (i) Several respondents said there was a lack of clarity in the draft about on-site and off-site provision so this has been clarified in a number of places in the SPD.
  - (j) It was suggested that the SPD should refer to the transformational change agenda being developed through the Black Country Study and RSS review. However, this is at too early a stage and will not feed into the LDF until adoption of the Core Strategy in early 2009. The SPD is for the period up to then.
  - (k) There was concern that the cost estimates for providing open spaces are too low. The estimates are based on recent experience and broadly reflect the approach in neighbouring authorities, which was a key outcome of the consultation event (see 1.6(a) above).



- 1.12. In all 65 comments were received. Some were in the form of questions and some did not appear to seek changes. 18 comments resulted in significant changes to the SPD.

### **Notification**

- 1.13. The Council has notified people of the consultation by a range of means, including:
- Advertisement in local press;
  - Press release;
  - Direct mail;
  - Website.

### **Replies to consultees**

- 1.14. The Council will reply to everyone who has commented on the draft SPD and/or sustainability appraisal.

### **Statement of Community Involvement**

The SPD has been prepared in accordance with the draft Walsall Statement of Community Involvement. The draft SCI was submitted to the Secretary of State for Independent Examination in November 2005. The outcome is awaited.



**ANNEX A:**  
**Summary of Representations on the**  
**Walsall Urban Open Space SPD**  
**January 2006.**