

Meeting of:	CABINET
Date of Meeting:	13 MAY 2025
Report Title:	DRAFT OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES
Responsible Officer:	JACK DANGERFIELD SENIOR STRATEGIC PLANNING POLICY OFFICER
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no impact on the policy framework or procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval to consult on the Draft Outdoor Recreation Facilities Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) document. Subsequent adoption of this SPG will enable effective implementation of the Outdoor Recreation Facilities policy within the adopted Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP), the Council's statutory land-use Planning document.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval to consult on the Draft Outdoor Recreation Facilities Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) document (**Appendix 1**).

2. Background

- 2.1 The adopted Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP, March 2024) plays a key role in ensuring new housing development incorporates the appropriate amount and mix of outdoor recreation facilities to alleviate the additional pressure placed upon existing facilities. This helps to ensure that developments remain sustainable and can support the needs of the community long-term.

- 2.2 The purpose of the Outdoor Recreation Facilities SPG is to support and provide further direction on the implementation of RLDP Policy *COM10: Provision of Outdoor Recreation Facilities*, which requires development to provide a specific quantity of recreation space on-site, thus helping to create sustainable, cohesive and inclusive communities where everyone has access to good quality recreation spaces and facilities.
- 2.3 Policy COM10 defines five categories of outdoor recreation facility to reflect those set out in the Fields in Trust's (FiT) 'Beyond the Six Acre Standard'. The policy sets a spatial requirement (hectares) per 1,000 population for each facility typology. These include:
- **Playing Pitches** – Areas marked for formal, pitch-based recreation activities such as football, rugby union/league and cricket pitches;
 - **Other Outdoor Sports** – Non-pitch sports facilities, such as tennis courts, bowling greens and athletics tracks;
 - **Equipped/Designated Play Areas** – Either Local Areas for Play (LAPs), Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) or Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs);
 - **Other Outdoor Provision** – Other types of sports facilities not included in the above categories, such as Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs) and skate parks; and
 - **Allotment provision** - Open space dedicated to food growing.
- 2.4 This SPG converts the policy requirement from hectares per 1,000 population to square metres per dwelling to enable officers and developers to calculate the spatial requirement on-site. In cases where proposed development is not able to deliver the required quantity of recreation space on-site, financial contributions may be acceptable in lieu to support and/or enhance provision elsewhere in the vicinity of the development. The SPG includes a set of evidenced-based costings reflective of how much it would cost to both provide the different types of recreation facility off-site and to maintain on-site and off-site facilities over a 15-year period. With the inclusion of these costings in the SPG, the Council will be able to justify seeking appropriate planning contributions to cover the cost of the provision and maintenance of high quality, inclusive and accessible recreation facilities throughout the County Borough.
- 2.5 Where developers justify that the full policy requirement cannot be met on-site, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) will refer to the results of the latest Outdoor Sport and Children's Playing Space audit and/or the Allotments and Community Gardens audit to determine which typologies should, where possible, be prioritised on-site. These audits will also be used to help identify how commuted sums should be spent to meet local need.
- 2.6 The SPG also includes design guidance for the provision of outdoor recreation facilities and links to a range of external 'best practice' guidance documents. This

section was informed by a Health Impact Assessment and is intended to ensure that facilities delivered are inclusive, accessible, environmentally sustainable, and maximise health and wellbeing benefits to all. This approach is key to ensuring balanced, socially cohesive and sustainable communities.

2.7 Policy COM10 requires developments to provide the following quantities of recreation space for each typology:

- 1.2 hectares of Playing Pitches per 1,000 population;
- 1.6 hectares of Other Outdoor Sports (non-pitch) per 1,000 population;
- 0.25 hectares of Equipped/Designated Play Areas per 1,000 population;
- 0.3 hectares of Other Outdoor Provision per 1,000 population; and
- 0.2 hectares of Allotment Provision per 1,000 population.

2.8 However, due to physical size and viability constraints associated with smaller developments, the SPG clarifies that the policy requirement will only apply to developments with eleven or more dwellings.

2.9 The existing SPG 05: Outdoor Recreation Facilities and New Housing Development was adopted on 9th March 2022 and was prepared to expand upon the previous LDP's outdoor recreation facilities policy. Since its adoption, new Fields in Trust standards, which define a target for the quantity of recreation space provision, have been introduced. These standards are universally accepted as the recommended benchmark for the provision of recreation space and facilities. The existing SPG is therefore out-of-date and requires re-drafting so it aligns with the adopted RLDP Policy COM10. The SPG also needs updating to provide current evidence-based cost figures to guide committed sums. This will ensure capital and maintenance sums secured through the planning system will better reflect the actual cost of providing such facilities. Indexation of the supporting evidence used to inform the SPG will enable these sums to be updated annually to ensure they remain current.

2.10 The Development Control Committee were informed of the need to revise the Outdoor Recreation Facilities SPG at their meeting of 8th August 2024, with two Members of the Committee volunteering to champion the production of the updated Outdoor Recreation Facilities SPG and work alongside the Senior Strategic Planning Policy Officer to progress the SPG. The draft attached to this report (**Appendix 1**) represents the culmination of this workstream.

3. Current situation / proposal

3.1 The Draft Outdoor Recreation Facilities SPG is intended to support and provide further direction on the implementation of Policy *COM10: Outdoor Recreation Facilities* contained within the adopted RLDP. Once adopted, the Outdoor Recreation Facilities SPG will be a material consideration in the determination of all planning applications for residential development including applications for renewal of

consents. It will update and replace the previous SPG 05: Outdoor Recreation Facilities & New Housing Development (adopted March, 2022).

3.2 This SPG provides updated, specific guidance on:

- How developers should calculate the required quantity of the five recreational facility typologies defined by Policy COM10 on-site;
- How developers should calculate the split between on-site provision and a financial contribution for the enhancement/provision, if required;
- How to calculate a suitable financial contribution to cover the long-term maintenance of either/both on-site and off-site facilities;
- The use of planning obligations (via s106 agreements) to secure outdoor recreation facility provision off-site;
- Information on the Council's preferred accessibility benchmark standards for each recreation facility typology;
- Design guidance for the five typologies of recreational facility to encourage best practice when providing new facilities on-site; The Council's approach to the management and maintenance of on-site recreation facilities;
- Information on the Council's preferred approach to the management and maintenance of on-site outdoor recreation facilities; and
- How issues surrounding development viability may be considered in respect of outdoor recreation facility provision.

3.3 Prior to seeking Council approval for adoption, the Outdoor Recreation Facilities SPG will be subject to a public consultation exercise. Consultation responses will be sought to influence and shape the final version of the SPG. A consultation report will be presented back to Cabinet then Council to document a general summary of comments, the issues raised, the LPA's response and how those comments have influenced the final version of the SPG. Once adopted, the final SPG will add weight to the interpretation and application of RLDP Policy COM10, provide more detailed advice to planning applicants and will become a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

4.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

- 5.1 The Outdoor Recreation Facilities SPG will provide additional guidance and material weight to support adopted RLDP Policy COM10: Outdoor Recreation Facilities, which seeks to enhance the supply and standard of outdoor recreation facilities. This is a key contributory factor to delivering Local Wellbeing Objective 7; 'A County Borough where we support people to live healthy and happy lives'. It also contributes to Objective 5; 'A County Borough that is responding to the climate and nature emergency'.
- 5.2 The SPG will also contribute to the following goals within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:
- A resilient Wales – Enabling residents to access opportunities for food growing close to where they live, live closer to nature, and for socialising. By designing in natural habitats, wherever possible, the SPG also supports wildlife to thrive.
 - A more equal Wales – By providing accessible and inclusive recreation facilities, the SPG is helping to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to exercise and participate in sports and in play activities.
 - A healthier Wales – By providing equitable access to recreation facilities close to where people live is essential for ensuring that residents have the opportunity to socialise, play and exercise, all important contributors to health and wellbeing.
 - A Wales of cohesive communities – Enabling well-connected, accessible and inclusive spaces for people to meet and socialise together will foster sustainable, socially cohesive communities.

6. Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 Outdoor recreation facilities and spaces play an important role in meeting the challenge of climate change and flooding through integrating Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and providing opportunities for conserving and enhancing the natural environment. The SPG will enable the provision of appropriate recreation facilities in accessible locations (close to new dwellings and/or active travel routes). This will help reduce dependence upon private vehicles, minimise the need for residents to travel to access recreation facilities and therefore help reduce carbon emissions. The SPG will also promote well-designed recreation facilities that utilise durable materials, thereby minimising the future maintenance burden and the need for replacement materials in the medium to long-term. Enabling community food-growing spaces close to where people live will also provide residents with the opportunity to source food with minimal impact on the environment.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 There are no Safeguarding and Corporate Parent implications from this report.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. Recommendations

9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (a) Approve the Draft Outdoor Recreation Facilities SPG (**Appendix 1**) as the basis for a public consultation period of 6 weeks;
- (b) Authorise the Corporate Director - Communities and Group Manager - Planning and Development Services to make minor presentational changes, typographical or factual corrections as necessary prior to public consultation; and
- (c) Authorise the Corporate Director - Communities and Group Manager - Planning and Development Services to undertake the public consultation for a period of 6 weeks and to report the results of the public consultation back to Cabinet for approval to send the Report to Council and seek adoption of the final SPG.

Background documents

None