

Meeting of:	CABINET
Date of Meeting:	23 SEPTEMBER 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 report back to Cabinet on the results of the 6-week consultation on the draft Outdoor Recreation Facilities Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), the issues raised, the Local Planning Authority's response, and how those comments have influenced the final version of the SPG. This report also seeks Cabinet approval to submit the final form SPG to Council for adoption. 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 report back to Cabinet the results of the 6-week public consultation on the draft Outdoor Recreation Facilities Supplementary Planning Guidance (**SPG**), the issues raised, the Local Planning Authority's (**LPA**) response, and how those comments received have influenced the final version of the SPG. It also seeks Cabinet approval to submit the final form SPG to Council for adoption (**Appendix 1**).

2. Background

- 2.1 The adopted Replacement Local Development Plan ("**RLDP**", March 2024) plays a key role in ensuring new housing developments incorporate the appropriate amount and mix of Outdoor Recreation Facilities (**ORFs**), 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 While there is an existing adopted SPG in place (*SPG 05: Outdoor Recreation Facilities and New Housing Development*, adopted on 9th March 2022), this was prepared to expand upon the previous LDP's ORFs policy and now requires updating to support the adopted RLDP. Other contextual changes also need to be incorporated within a replacement SPG for ORFs. Firstly, 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 and will prove key to implementing Policy COM10. The SPG also needs to provide current evidence-based cost figures to inform commuted 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 in terms of value.
- 2.3 The replacement Outdoor Recreation Facilities SPG will support and provide further direction on the implementation of RLDP Policy *COM10: Provision of Outdoor Recreation Facilities*. This policy requires developments 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.
- 2.4 The revised Outdoor Recreation Facilities 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 of off-site recreational facilities, 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 ORF provision off-site;
- Information on the Council's 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;
- Information on the Council's preferred approach to the management and maintenance of on-site outdoor recreation facilities; and
- How issues relating to development viability may be considered in respect of ORF provision.

2.5 Policy COM10 defines five categories of ORF to reflect those set out in the *Fields in Trust's (FiT) 'Beyond the Six Acre Standard'*. Policy COM10 sets a spatial requirement (hectares) per 1,000 population for each ORF 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.

2.6 The revised SPG converts the policy requirement from hectares per 1,000 population to square metres per dwelling to enable planning officers and applicants to calculate the spatial requirement on-site. In cases where proposed development is not able to deliver the required quantity of outdoor 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 outdoor recreation facility off-site and to maintain on-site and off-site facilities over a 25-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 outdoor recreation facilities throughout the County Borough.

2.7 Where developers justify that the full policy requirement cannot be met on-site, the 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 inform how committed sums should be allocated to meet local need.

2.8 The Outdoor Recreation Facilities SPG also includes design guidance for the provision of ORFs 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 well-being benefits to all. This approach is key to ensuring balanced, socially cohesive and sustainable communities.

2.9 Policy COM10 requires developments to provide the following quantities of recreation space for each ORF 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.

2.10 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 DC 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.

3. Current situation / proposal

3.1 On 13th May 2025, Cabinet provided approval for a six-week public consultation on the draft Outdoor Recreation Facilities SPG to take place. The consultation was subsequently launched on 22nd May and closed on 2nd July, and was promoted through a variety of channels to ensure wide engagement. The consultation was hosted on the Council's consultation portal, supported by a social media campaign and an accompanying press release to maximise public awareness. In addition, targeted emails were issued to approximately 100 stakeholders, including all elected Members, Town and Community Councillors, developers, planning agents, and Registered Social Landlords. This ensured that a broad range of community and development sector representatives were directly invited to comment, providing a robust and inclusive approach to the public consultation.

3.2 A total of four representations were received on the Outdoor Recreation Facilities SPG during the consultation period. This low number reflects the fact that there were no fundamental objections to the draft SPG. All representations, together with the Local Planning Authority's response to each and the reasoning for not incorporating some suggestions, are set out in the Consultation Report attached as **Appendix 2** to this report. The comments submitted related to relatively minor points, resulting in two changes being made to the draft SPG document:

- Insertion of a reference to the '*Including Disabled Children in Play Provision* Position Statement' by the 'Play Safety Forum' under the *Local Community Needs and Accessibility* heading within Section 7.0 *Designing Outdoor Recreation Facilities* of the draft SPG.
- Updated web-link to Play Wales' document, '*Creating Accessible Play Spaces* toolkit' under the heading '*Design Guidance by Outdoor Recreation Facility Typology*' within Section 7.0 *Designing Outdoor Recreation Facilities* of the draft SPG.

3.3 However, there were no other changes considered necessary to the SPG following the public consultation. 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. It will update and replace the previous *SPG 05: Outdoor Recreation Facilities & New Housing Development* (adopted March, 2022).

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 ORFs. This is a key contributory factor to delivering Local Well-being Objective One: '*A prosperous place with thriving communities*'.

5.2 The Outdoor Recreation Facilities 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 ORFs, 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 ORFs 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 and Nature Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct climate change or nature implications from this report, although the Outdoor Recreation Facilities SPG will provide additional guidance to secure ORFs as part of planning applications. ORFs 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 ORFs 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 ORFs and therefore help reduce carbon emissions. The SPG will also promote well-designed ORFs 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) Note the contents of this report and the consultation responses received on the draft Outdoor Recreation Facilities SPG, together with resultant amendments attached as **Appendix 2**.
- (b) Approve presenting the final form Outdoor Recreation Facilities SPG (**Appendix 1**) to Council to seek its adoption.

Background documents

None