

Meeting of:	COUNCIL
Date of Meeting:	14 JANUARY 2026
Report Title:	OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE
Report Owner: Cabinet Member / Responsible Chief Officer	CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING 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 provide Council with an overview of the public consultation exercise on the draft Outdoor Recreation Facilities Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) document following approval (with amendments) by Cabinet at its meeting on 23rd September 2025. It also seeks Council approval to adopt the final form Outdoor Recreation Facilities SPG. Adoption of this SPG will enable effective implementation of the Outdoor Recreation Facilities policies 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 inform Council of the outcome of the public consultation exercise on the draft Outdoor Recreation Facilities Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) document following approval (with amendments) by Cabinet at its meeting on 23rd September 2025.

1.2 The report also seeks Council approval to adopt the final form Outdoor Recreation Facilities SPG (**Appendix 1**) in order to support the Outdoor Recreation Facilities (**ORFs**) policies within the adopted Replacement Local Development Plan (**RLDP**, March 2024), subject to any necessary minor changes necessary prior to its publication. Council approval is also sought to periodically update the links to best practice guidance in Section 7 of the SPG and the capital and maintenance costs set out in Table 1, Appendix A and Appendix B of the SPG to ensure they remain current.

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 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 Local Development Plan's (**LDP**) ORFs policy and now requires updating to support the adopted RLDP. Other contextual changes also need to be incorporated within the replacement SPG for ORFs. Firstly, new '*Fields in Trust*' (**FiT**) standards, which define a target for the quantity of recreation space provision, have been introduced. These FiT standards are universally accepted as the recommended benchmark for the provision of ORFs and will prove key to implementing RLDP Policy *COM10: Provision of Outdoor Recreation Facilities*. The SPG also needs revising to provide current evidence-based cost figures to inform commuted sums (both for the maintenance of on-site facilities and for the provision and maintenance of off-site facilities when the full policy requirement cannot be met on-site). This will ensure that any commuted sums secured through the planning system will better reflect the actual cost of providing such facilities. Regular review of the cost figures used to inform the SPG will enable them to be updated periodically 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 Policy COM10. 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 ORF typologies defined by Policy COM10 for on-site provision;

- How developers should calculate the split between on-site provision and a financial contribution for the enhancement/provision of off-site ORFs, if required;
- How to calculate a suitable financial contribution to cover the long-term maintenance of either/both on-site and off-site ORFs;
- The use of planning obligations (via s106 agreements) to secure ORF provision off-site;
- Information on the Council's accessibility benchmark standards for each ORF typology;
- Design guidance for the five typologies of ORF 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 ORFs; 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'*. It sets a spatial requirement (hectares) per 1,000 population for each ORF typology. These include:

- **Playing Pitches** – Areas marked for formal, pitch-based outdoor 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 evidenced-based costings contained in Table 1 of the SPG are reflective of how much it would cost to both provide the different types of ORF off-site and to maintain on-site and off-site facilities over a 25-year period. With the inclusion of these costings, 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 ORFs throughout the County Borough.

- 2.7 Where developers adequately 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 be prioritised on-site. These audits will also be used to inform how commuted 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 led by Public Health Wales and involved several internal and external local stakeholders. It is intended to ensure that the ORFs 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 outdoor 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.

- 2.10 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. Cabinet also authorised officers to make appropriate arrangements for that public consultation before reporting the outcome of the consultation back to Cabinet to seek their approval to send this report to Council to seek adoption of the final form SPG.
- 3.2 The public consultation was launched on 22nd May 2025 and closed on 2nd July 2025, 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.

3.3 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 reasons for not incorporating some suggestions, are set out in the consultation report attached as **Appendix 2** to this report. Copies of the full representations are held by the Council's planning department and can be viewed upon request. 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.

3.4 There were no other changes considered necessary to the SPG following the public consultation and the above amendments have now been incorporated within the final form SPG which is attached as **Appendix 1**.

3.5 On 23rd September 2025, Cabinet noted the officer's responses to the consultation representations received on the draft Outdoor Recreation Facilities SPG, together with the resultant amendments set out in **Appendix 2**.

3.6 Cabinet also approved presenting the final form Outdoor Recreation Facilities SPG to Council to seek its adoption, subject to two minor amendments to Table 2 on page 12 of the SPG.

3.7 One of these amendments was to reformat Table 2 to show more clearly how different sized equipped play areas will be required on different sized sites. Instead of showing each type of play area (LAP, LEAP and NEAP) in separate rows, these have been amalgamated into a single row in the final form Outdoor Recreation Facilities SPG (**Appendix 1**), for enhanced clarity.

3.8 The second amendment was to include a requirement for an allotment contribution (commuted sum) on smaller sized developments in the '11-50', '51-100' and '101-200' dwelling ranges, which would necessitate an additional financial payment. The impacts of an additional financial contribution for smaller sites were duly considered for a range of notional sites. It became evident that this amendment would generate significant commuted sums beyond the means of smaller sites, which are already

relatively marginal in viability terms. The per square metre capital and maintenance cost for allotments (as detailed in Table 1 of the SPG) is high on a relative basis due to allotment plot sizes being smaller than other types of ORF covered by Policy COM10, such as playing fields. Hence, applying such allotment contributions to smaller sites would have a significant impact on such sites' viability, while potentially impacting upon each site's ability to fund other necessary infrastructure. Adopted RLDP policies have already sought to maximise planning contributions across a range of thematic policy areas, including affordable housing, education, highways and outdoor recreation. Smaller developments only have limited headroom to fund these contributions, and so an additional allotment contribution would likely lead to many viability challenges from developers. The scope for this approach to deliver new allotment sites would therefore be very limited. Instead, the RLDP's strategy seeks to enable delivery of strategic sites that are sufficient in critical mass to fund a range of supporting infrastructure, including community growing space. This is a more viable and deliverable means for the RLDP to contribute to growing space provision through planning obligations.

- 3.9 Adopted Policy COM12 aims to promote the provision of additional allotment gardens throughout the County Borough, thereby setting the land use planning framework for any future allotment strategy. Specific allocations for new allotments can also be reconsidered in future local development plan reviews, to this end. However, the RLDP or SPG does not prevent proposals for allotments being submitted as planning applications in the short term and such proposals can be progressed through the development management process.
- 3.10 The challenges outlined above were presented to Cabinet Members on 25th November 2025. The implications of the original Cabinet resolution (to alter the allotment threshold in Table 2 of the SPG) were discussed and considered further. The most appropriate course of action was deemed to be to retain Table 2 in its original form. The final form SPG (**Appendix 1**) therefore does not propose to alter the threshold for an allotment contribution within Table 2 and is presented to Council for adoption on this basis. Community growing space will continue to be sought on strategic sites as per the RLDP's original strategy and new allotment sites can be brought forward through alternative and more appropriate routes as outlined above.
- 3.11 If adopted, the new 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: Provision of 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* – The SPG will help enable 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 will help ensure that everyone has the opportunity to exercise and participate in sports and in play activities.
- *A healthier Wales* – 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 well-being.
- *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 Council:

- a. Note the contents of the report and approve the officer's consultation responses to the representations received in response to the public consultation on the draft Outdoor Recreation Facilities SPG, together with resultant amendments set out in attached **Appendix 2**.
- b. Approve the final form Outdoor Recreation Facilities SPG (**Appendix 1**) and agree its adoption for immediate application as a *material consideration* in making development management decisions and in the determination of planning applications along with the adopted RLDP, subject to the provisions of recommendations 'c', 'd' and 'e'.
- c. 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 publication of the adopted Outdoor Recreation Facilities SPG;
- d. Authorise the Corporate Director – Communities and Group Manager – Planning and Development Services to update, as necessary, the web links to external best practice guidance documents listed under the 'Design Guidance by Outdoor Recreation Facility Typology' heading in Section 7.0 of the Outdoor Recreation Facilities SPG, to ensure they remain current and accurate; and
- e. Authorise the Corporate Director – Communities and Group Manager – Planning and Development Services to update the costs set out in Table 1 (page 11), Appendix A and Appendix B of the Outdoor Recreation Facilities SPG periodically to ensure such costs remain up-to-date and reflective of current costs.

Background documents

None.