

Open Space Requirements for Q1 - April 2014

1) Introduction

This briefing note advises of the possible requirements for open space, sports and play provision relating to an application for a sustainable mixed-use development to the south-west of Boston to deliver a new Community Stadium for Boston United Football Club in the region of 500 dwellings (circa 15.3ha) retail and commercial uses.

For the purposes of the note, the proposed development is anticipated to result in an increase in population of **1,135** people, which is based on an average household size in Boston of **2.27** - taken from the 2011 Census.

The note considers the requirement in terms of saved Local Plan policy, an Assessment of Sports Provision and Public Open Space commissioned by the South-East Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee in May 2012 and the Fields in Trust's Benchmark Standards included in their Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play of 2008.

A Green Infrastructure Plan, can be found in the Design and Access Statement, with this demonstrating the extent of the open space and play provision in broad terms, based on the current iteration of the masterplan.

| Type of Openspace/Recreation Area | Ha |
|--|---------------------------|
| Open Space | 2.5 |
| Ecological Corridor | 0.70 |
| SUDS/Drainage | 0.40 |
| Children's Play | 0.50 |
| Pitch Sport | 0.70 (3G synthetic pitch) |

Table 1 at the end of this note provided a detailed breakdown of the types of recreational and open space uses within the development and compares these with the standards that could apply.

2) Boston Borough Local Plan (1999)

Planning officers have indicated that saved Policy H4 of the Boston Borough Local Plan will need to be met in terms of its requirement for public open space in the development.

Saved Policy H4 requires an 'appropriate proportion' of the total site area associated with residential developments to be devoted to appropriately located public open amenity space and children's play areas. The justification to the policy suggests that a dedication of **7.5%** of the site is usually considered appropriate.

The current masterplan for the development proposes circa **15.30ha** gross for the residential element. **7.5%** of this equates to a requirement for **1.1ha** of public open amenity space within the residential element of the proposal.

The justification to the policy also states that the Council will expect the minimum NPFA standards to be met in terms of children's play. The NPFA standards have since been superseded by the Fields in Trust's Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play document (2008), as referred to below. However, the NPFA standards for children's play space were between **0.6 to 0.8ha** per 1,000 population, equating in this instance (based on an average household size in Boston of **2.27** - taken from the 2011 Census) to between **0.68 to 0.91ha**.

The policy also makes reference to the provision of a commuted sum, depending upon the likely level of maintenance, and the planning officers suggest that this either be agreed with the Council's Parks and Countryside department or a condition be included on the decision notice requiring a scheme for the maintenance to be agreed in the event of an approval.

3) South-East Lincs Joint Strategic Planning Committee
Sports Provision and Open Space Assessment (2012)

The 2012 Assessment provides a quantitative and qualitative assessment of the extent and quality of South-East Lincolnshire's sports facilities and open space. Those of relevance to the proposed development are outlined below.

a) Synthetic-Turf Pitches

In terms of synthetic-turf pitches, South-East Lincolnshire currently includes **4no** such facilities that have community access, with **3no** of these in the South Holland area and only **1no** in the Boston area. All of these have a sand-filled surface (non-3G), which makes them not favoured for football or hockey.

The total demand for synthetic-turf pitches in the South-East Lincs study area is **2,913** visits per week, equivalent to **4no** pitches. In the Boston sub-area, **100%** of the overall capacity of synthetic-turf pitches is used at peak times – therefore there is no available capacity for additional pitch usage. There is currently **15%** capacity in terms of the pitches in the South Holland sub-area and this results in some exportation of demand from the Boston to South Holland sub-area. Supply and demand are therefore quite well-balanced in the South-East Lincs study area as a whole but there is currently an unmet demand in the Boston sub-area that is equivalent to **0.34no** pitches. This demand can be translated to **1no** additional 3G synthetic-turf pitch in the Boston sub-area, with there likely to be a future need for **1no** further synthetic turf pitch by 2031.

In terms of an Action Plan, the Assessment suggests a football club be encouraged to develop a 3G pitch in the Boston area to address existing need and secure the provision of a further pitch funded by developer contributions to address future need by 2031.

b) Playing Pitches

Across the South-East Lincs study area, and accounting for a strategic **10%** additional reserve, there is a surplus of **38.3no** adult football pitches during the peak demand period

of Sunday mornings; a deficit of **17.3no** junior football pitches; a surplus of **6.4no** mini-soccer pitches; a surplus of **3.8no** cricket pitches; and a deficit of **6.2no** rugby pitches.

One football club responding to the Clubs Survey indicated they are 'pretty much at saturation point and badly in need of new changing rooms and more land for pitch development'. The Planning Officer, Paul Edwards wonders whether this response was from the Wyberton Sports & Social Club, on the basis it has only recently had new changing rooms and has historically been in demand of pitches.

Wyberton FC currently has **3no** adult teams, **3no** junior teams and **5no** mini-teams. Wyberton Ladies FC currently has 1no adult team and Wyberton Wildcats Girls FC currently has **3no** junior teams.

The Sports Provision and Open Space Assessment confirms in the quantitative analysis that Wyberton Playing Field currently has facilities for **2no** adult football pitches, **2no** junior football pitches and **1no** mini-soccer pitch, however, on the ground it is noted that there are only 2no adult football pitches. Its facilities were qualitatively rated in the Assessment as **81%** in terms of its pitches and changing rooms and **65%** in other aspects.

In terms of an **Action Plan** to address **existing need**, the Assessment suggests the following for SE Lincs:

- Adult football: **No current quantitative deficiency** in number of pitches. Support for pitch owners for a changing facility improvement programme at specified pitches.
- Junior Football: Provide **18no additional junior pitches** by converting underused adult pitches and negotiating secured community access on primary school sites.
- Mini-Soccer: **No current quantitative deficiency** in number of pitches. Support for pitch owners for a changing facility improvement programme at specified pitches.
- Cricket: **No action required**.
- Rugby: Provide up to **6no additional pitches** through support to Spalding Rugby Club and negotiating secured community access on school sites.

In terms of an **Action Plan** to address **future need** (2031), the Assessment suggests the following for SE Lincs:

- Adult football: **No action required**.
- Junior Football: Secure the provision of **8no additional junior pitches** funded by developer contributions.
- Mini-Soccer: **No action required**.

- Cricket: **No action required.**
- Rugby: Secure the provision of **4no additional rugby pitches** funded by developer contributions.

c) Amenity Greenspace

The amount of amenity greenspace in the South-East Lincs study area equates, at present, to **0.75ha** per 1,000 population (based on **426no** sites totalling **107.38ha**). The Assessment considers this an appropriate standard for the calculation of future provision. Using this ratio, and on the assumption that the development of **500no** homes in the development will generate an additional population of **1,135** people (based on an average household size in Boston of **2.27** - taken from the 2011 Census), there would be a requirement for **0.85ha** amenity greenspace within the proposed development.

The Assessment refers to there being no current quantitative deficiency in the amount of amenity greenspace in the South East Lincs study area as a whole, nor any substantive accessibility deficiency, though it does state that quality improvements are required at **126no** sites.

In Wyberton, there is currently **3.05ha** amenity greenspace, equal to **0.8ha** per 1,000 population, i.e. above the study-wide standard of **0.75ha** referred to above.

The Assessment found the majority of Wyberton's existing amenity greenspaces to be below average in terms of their roads, paths, cycleways and access; above average in terms of their grassed areas; of poor quality in terms of their litter bins and seating; and of above average/high quality in terms of general cleanliness.

In terms of an Action Plan to address existing need, the Assessment suggests only qualitative improvements at **126no** existing sites, as there is no quantitative deficiency in provision at present. In terms of addressing future need, the Assessment seeks the provision of an additional **22.5ha** of amenity greenspace by 2031 for the whole of SE Lincs in conjunction with residential and other development, to be funded by developer contributions.

d) Children's Play Facilities

The amount of children's play areas in the South-East Lincs study area equates, at present, to just over **0.10ha** per 1,000 population. The assessment considers this an appropriate standard for the calculation of future provision. Using this ratio and, again, based on the proposed development generating an additional **1,135** people (500 dwelling x 2.27 ave household size – 2011 census), there would be a requirement for **0.11ha** children's play areas within the development.

In Wyberton, there is currently **1no** site for children's play (at The Causeway), totalling **0.08ha**, equal to **0.02ha** per 1,000 population, i.e. below the study-wide standard of **0.10ha** referred to above.

The Assessment found this play area to be above average in terms of its variety of equipment, quantity of equipment (qualifying as a LEAP), quality of equipment, fencing and gates, litter bins, seating, disabled access, general cleanliness, safety and security and parking and general access.

In terms of an Action Plan to address existing need, the Assessment suggests for the Study Area only qualitative improvements at **41no** existing sites, as there is no quantitative deficiency in provision at present. In terms of addressing future need, the Assessment seeks the provision of an additional **24no** equipped play areas by 2031, located in proximity to residential developments and to be funded by developer contributions.

4) Fields in Trust
Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play of (2008)

Fields in Trust (FIT) commissioned independent research to undertake a survey of local planning authorities and consult with key stakeholders around the UK. Based on that research, it was decided that FIT should recommend Benchmark Standards to local planning authorities. Superseding the earlier NPFA standards, these Benchmark Standards are recommended as a tool for assisting in the development of local standards moving forward and should therefore be given consideration in the formulation of emerging open space policy and the determination of planning applications.

The Benchmark Standards are as follows:

Whilst Boston Borough Council has a rural character in general for the purposes of this assessment we have assumed the benchmark should relate to the 'urban' category given the location of the application site.

Playing Pitches (ha per 1,000 population)

- Urban: **1.15**

All Outdoor Sport/All Outdoor Playing Space (ha per 1,000 population)

- Urban: **1.60**

Within the FIT report there is an inconsistency in terminology. The report directs you to Section 1.6 to clarify the definition of 'All Outdoor Sport' but within this section there is no reference to this terminology instead the definition relates to 'Outdoor Play Space'. The FIT'S definition of outdoor play space is **'space that is accessible and available to the general public and of a suitable size and nature for sport, active recreation and play'**.

The facilities falling within the definition of outdoor play space are:

- Facilities for pitch sports such as football, cricket or lacrosse, including training areas
- Facilities for outdoor sports, such as bowls, athletics and tennis, including training areas
- Designated areas for children's play containing a range of facilities and an environment designed to provide focused opportunities for outdoor play, including play areas and playgrounds of all kinds
- Amenity open space suitable for casual or informal play, particularly in housing areas
- Facilities for teenagers and young people.

It also acknowledges that artificial pitches are counted as covering twice the area of natural turf because there is capacity for more intensive use.

In light of this explanation we consider there has been an oversight and the term 'All Outdoor Sport' should actually read "All Outdoor Playing Space" and our assessment has been conducted on that basis.

All Playing Space/Children's Playing Space (ha per 1,000 population)

- Designated Equipped Playing Space: **0.25**
- Informal Playing Space: **0.55**
- Overall Children's Playing Space: **0.80**

In overall terms, the above standards have an emphasis upon formal open space, with a provision of 1.6ha for all outdoor sport and a further 0.25ha for designated equipped playing space, making a total of 1.85ha, leaving 0.55ha for informal children's playing space.

Application of these Benchmark Standards to the proposed development, on the assumption that the development of 500no homes will generate an additional population of 1,135 people (based on an average household size in Boston of 2.27 - taken from the 2011 Census), results in the following:

- Playing Pitches (Urban): **1.30ha**
- All Outdoor Sport (Urban): **1.82ha**
- Children's Playing Space (overall): **0.9ha**
 - of which **0.28ha** is designated equipped playing space.
 - and **0.62** designed as Informal Playing Space.

5) Context of Standards in Relation to the Proposed Development (see also attached Table 1)

The current iteration of the masterplan proposes the creation of circa **2.50ha** of public open space within the development, exclusive of approximately **0.5ha** of children's play areas (see below), **0.70ha** of ecological buffer zone and SUDS/drainage zone to be created on site. This equates to approximately **16.3%** of the **15.3ha** gross residential element of the proposed development, which exceeds the **7.5%** (**1.2ha**) required by saved Policy H4 of

the Local Plan. It is also **1.65ha** greater than the **0.85ha** required by the standard outlined in the 2012 Assessment. As referred to above, the 2012 Assessment concludes that the amount of amenity greenspace in Wyberton is already above the required standard. The provision of the proposed additional **2.50ha** as part of the proposed development will increase this amount further still, such that Wyberton will include a higher proportion of amenity greenspace in relation to its population post-development than is the case now. The proposed amenity greenspace will also have the potential to improve the quality of the settlement in relation to some of its existing amenity greenspace, which is considered of lower quality.

The current iteration of the masterplan proposes the creation of **2no** LEAPs - **1no** located either side of the spine road for safety reasons. The equipped elements of these each extend to **400sqm (0.04ha)**, though, with the appropriate buffering in place, would equate to **0.25ha** per LEAP. These LEAP areas are in addition to the **2.50ha** of amenity greenspace referred to above. This is **0.39ha** greater than the **0.11ha** required by the standard outlined in the 2012 Assessment and **0.22ha** greater than the **0.28ha** recommended for designated equipped play space in the FIT report. The provision of the proposed additional **0.50ha** of children's play space as part of the proposed development will adequately serve the increased population, in addition to helping address the current shortfall of play space in Wyberton as identified in the Open Space Assessment (2012).

The proposals include the development of a synthetic-turf pitch to 3G standards within the curtilage of the proposed football stadium. This would extend to approximately **0.70ha (64x100m)** and address the current quantitative need in the Boston sub-area for a 3G synthetic-turf pitch, as established in the 2012 Assessment, though, being a 3G pitch, would actually exceed the requirement in qualitative terms.

6) Overall Summary

In summary, and in terms of the provision of public open/amenity greenspace, the proposed development exceeds the current and emerging standards. In terms of the provision of children's play areas/space, the proposed LEAPs will also satisfy the current and emerging standards and the proposed amenity open space would be suitable for informal play space. In terms of playing pitches, the proposed development will deliver a 3G synthetic-turf pitch and therefore address in full in quantitative terms, and exceed in qualitative terms, the current requirement for a 3G synthetic-turf pitch in the Boston sub-area, as outlined in the 2012 Assessment, whilst being only marginally below the FIT benchmark standard. In terms of total outdoor playing space, the key types of recreation and play space proposed in the development, when added together, exceed the FIT benchmark standard.

In addition the proposal seeks to realign Towns Drain between the southern boundary of the site and Wyberton Play Field Association with the objective of improving the existing layout and efficiency of the football pitches. The current proposal submitted with the application would retain the 2 adult pitches but allow an additional 9 v 9 junior pitch as well as a two mini soccer pitches (see drawing HG0249/015/Rev B).

Table 1: Overview of the Proposal and Satisfying Open Space and Recreation Standards Assuming Approximately 500 New Dwellings

| Types of Recreation and Play | | Proposal Size (Ha) | Saved Policy H4 of Local Plan | FIT bench mark standards | Open Space Assessment 2012 | Comment |
|------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| 1) Amenity Open Space | | 2.5 | 1.1 (7% of 15.3Ha) | N/A | 0.85 | Proposed open space significantly over current and emerging standards. |
| 2) Children's Play | a) Equipped Play | 0.50 ¹ | * | 0.28 | 0.11 | The area defined for the proposed LEAPs would exceed the current and emerging standards. |
| | b) Informal Play Space | 2.50 | * | 0.62 | N/A | The amenity open space would be suitable for informal play space. |
| 3) Playing Pitches | | 1.4 ² | * | 1.30 | 1.4 ² | The provision of the 3G pitch exceeds the FIT benchmark standard and this provision will meet the quantitative assessment and future need for Boston up to 2031. Also, the applicant is improving the layout and efficiency of Wyberton Play Fields Association as part of re-alignment of the Towns Drain. |
| 4) Outdoor Playing Space | | 4.40 ³ | * | 1.82 | N/A | The key types of recreation and play space within the proposal are added together and the total significantly exceeds the FIT benchmark standard. |

¹ - Two LEAPs at 0.25Ha each (includes 30m standoff distance from dwellings)

² - Synthetic Pitch 0.70Ha counted double by FIT Standard as capacity more intensive use compared to natural turf.

³ - Total Outdoor Playing Space = 1) + 2a) + 3)

* - Policy H4 refers to expected minimum of NPFA standard but these have been superseded by the FIT standards.