

**Supplementary Planning Document; Greenspace**

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## **1 Introduction**

1.1 The protection of existing greenspaces, green networks and the creation of appropriate new greenspaces is essential to healthy and vibrant local communities. This SPD provides guidance to the implementation policies in the Mendip Local Plan Parts I and II relating to the provision and protection of open space and greenspace.

## **2 Purpose of this SPD**

2.1 This document specifically covers Local Plan policies relating to new and existing open spaces identified under Policy DP2, recreational spaces identified under Policy DP16, and other greenspaces subject to Policy DP1. The SPD provides a description of the valued characteristics of site designated by Policy DP2. The SPD will also complement existing local policies covering landscape features, ecological networks and heritage. The SPD also covers council requirements and approach in relation to new informal and formal space/facilities where national standards have been updated or revised.

2.2 Many agencies have a vital role to play in ensuring that the multifunctional role of greenspaces is fully realised. Other relevant strategies and guidance are also being prepared which impact on greenspace provision including nature recovery priorities, the County tree strategy, biodiversity net gain and sustainable drainage.

## **3 Greenspace Mapping and Audit.**

3.1 The Council is currently re-mapping greenspaces across Mendip, with a focus on the settlements. The audit updates previous open space studies undertaken in 2008 and 2012 and consolidates and aligns with the assessment work carried out whilst preparing the Local Plan Part 1 and Local Plan Part 2.

3.2 The Open Space Audit (2021) represents a new baseline to inform policy making.

3.3 The audit uses a new typology for open spaces set out in Table 1 below.

3.4 The Audit also notes open spaces which have been identified by policies DP2 or DP16.

Table 1 Greenspace mapping classification/ typology

<b>Category 1 Publicly accessible open spaces within the built environment</b>		
<b>Typology</b>	<b>What Does the Typology Include?</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>1.1 Spaces providing for informal leisure and recreation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parks and gardens - traditional public open spaces laid out formally for leisure and recreation.</li> <li>• Churchyards</li> <li>• Green amenity space</li> <li>• Recreational routes – riverside footpaths, designed walking routes within development</li> </ul>	<p>Spaces need to be open to the public and free of charge, with open access</p> <p>Amenity spaces within the urban fabric need to be large enough to offer potential for recreation uses e.g., informal ball games, picnic, gatherings. Includes village greens and greens within estates.</p>
<b>1.2 Spaces with facilities providing for leisure and structured recreation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playing pitches and fields with open access to the public</li> <li>• Dedicated playgrounds and play space, which is a site (or area) set aside mainly for children. These will usually contain an assortment of swings, slides and roundabouts.</li> <li>• Youth areas (e.g. defined areas for teenagers including skateboard parks, outdoor basketball hoops and other informal areas.</li> </ul>	Areas freely accessible to the public at no charge.
<b>Category 2 – Recreational and sporting (enabling a lifestyle choice)</b>		
<b>2.1 Spaces with opportunities for outdoor sport</b>	Outdoor sports provision and facilities which is controlled/paid for – includes school playing fields, sports centre playing pitches, golf courses, paid for tennis courts, sports club facilities	
<b>2.2 Spaces with opportunities for indoor sport</b>	Indoor sports facilities	
<b>2.3 Allotments and spaces with opportunities for greening/ growing</b>	Allotments	.
<b>Category – Green infrastructure</b>		
<b>3.1 Local Greenspaces</b>	Open and Greenspaces which contribute to local green infrastructure	Can be public or private spaces
<b>3.2 Spaces with opportunities for informal countryside recreation around the settlement</b>	Accessible spaces for informal countryside / sport.	Uses additional to those provided by Rights of Way Recreational opportunity most people have to travel to.

3.5 The Audit assigns a primary function to each space, but subsidiary functions are also noted in the audit, alongside the other attributes that go to make up a successful Green Infrastructure network, as set out by Natural England (see below).

3.6 Natural England's Green Infrastructure Principles suggests that greenspaces should be;

- Multifunctional
- Varied
- Connected
- Accessible
- Responsive to Local Character.

## **4 Protecting Greenspaces**

4.1 The NPPF expects planning policy to

"contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment" (para 174)

and

"take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure;" (para 175)

4.2 Local Plan policies DP2, DP16 and DP1 provide the policy basis for protecting greenspaces in Mendip and are reproduced in Annex 1.

### **4.3 Policy DP2, Open Areas of Local Significance**

4.4 Policy DP2 protects Open Areas of Local Significance. These areas make a contribution to the quality of the built environment and are identified on the proposals map. They may provide views out of an otherwise built-up street scene, allow views of significant local features, enhance the setting of the settlement, create a sense of space or otherwise contribute to the local distinctiveness of an area.

4.5 Annex 2 sets out the special characteristics of each Open Area of Local Significance identified on the proposals map. Development which would harm these characteristics will not be permitted. These areas have a unique character and it would not be appropriate to substitute identified areas with alternative greenspace in another location.

### **4.6 Policy DP1; Local Identity and Distinctiveness**

4.7 Policy DP1 recognises that distinctive street scenes, townscapes, views, scenery, boundary walls or hedges, trees, rights of way and other features collectively generate a distinct sense of place and local identity, and that such features may not always be designated or otherwise formally recognised.

4.8 Greenspaces are important to local identity and character. Policy DP1 indicates that any adverse effect on these spaces should balance the degree of impact against the wider benefits of any development proposal. Any balancing exercise should take into account the potential to retain the greenspace within any scheme and to avoid, mitigate and minimise any adverse impacts.

4.9 Larger greenspaces not designated by policy DP2 are included in the greenspace Audit. Their characteristics are set out in the audit, including their contribution to Green Infrastructure networks, should be used to inform the balancing exercise required by policy DP1.

4.10 DP1 may also apply to boundary walls or hedges, trees, rights of way and other features which collectively make up the “green grid” of features which connect larger greenspaces. These green networks are important providing corridors for wildlife to move between greenspaces, adding visual interest to the locality and in the case of rights of way, providing recreational routes. The audit catalogues the larger greenspaces, but these smaller features making up the “green grid” will be assessed in association with any development proposals on a site by site basis.

#### **4.11 Policy DP16; Open Space and Green Infrastructure**

4.12 Open spaces for sport and recreation and other spaces such as allotments and are identified on the local plan policies map. These areas are subject to adopted policy DP16. Additional sites were designated through Local Plan Part II. Development resulting in the loss of DP16 spaces will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated there is an excess of recreational or open space in the settlement and the loss of space would not result in a likely shortfall during the plan period. (DP16 1i). However, DP16 allows for the creation of suitable alternative recreational or open space which is of equal or greater benefit to the community compared to space which is lost to development.

4.13 The Council’s default position is that public open spaces should be safeguarded from development, (LPP! 6.148) and not all spaces may be identified on the proposals map, particularly where these have come into existence since the preparation of the plans.

4.14 The Council will have regard to both the overall quantity of greenspace in the settlement and walking distances to greenspace from residential areas.

### **5 Open Space Provision and New Development**

5.1 Policy DP16 refers to the former National Playing Fields Association standard as the basis for open space provision as part of a residential development. Fields in Trust is a national advisory body which aims to ensure that sufficient land is set aside in appropriate locations to enable the population to participate in sports, outdoor play, games and other physical recreation. The Trust sets out recommended guidelines for formal outdoor space and informal outdoor space in its document “Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play, Beyond the six Acre Standard” published Nov 2020.

5.2 The Council will expect residential development proposals to have regard to these recommendations in applying policy DP16 1 (i).

Table 2 Fields in Trust benchmark Guidelines

Open space typology	Quantity Guideline (hectare per 1000 population)	Walking Guideline (walking distance, Metres from dwelling)	Quality guidelines
Playing Pitches	1.20	1,200m	Quality appropriate to the intended level of performance, designed to appropriate technical standards.

			* Located where they are of most value to the community to be served. * Sufficiently diverse recreational use for the whole community. * Appropriately landscaped. * Maintained safely and to the highest possible condition with available finance. * Positively managed taking account of the need for repair and replacement over time as necessary. * Provision of appropriate ancillary facilities and equipment. * Provision of footpaths. * Designed so as to be free of the fear of harm or crime. * Local authorities can set their own quality benchmark standards for playing pitches, taking into account the level of play, topography, necessary safety margins and optimal orientation .
All outdoor sports	1.60	1,200m	
Equipped/designated play areas	0.25	LAPs-100m LEAPs-400m NEAPs-1000m	
Other outdoor provision (MUGAs and skateboard parks)	0.30	700m	

Table 1, *Fields in Trust*, “Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play, Beyond the six Acre Standard” published Nov 2020. [www.fieldsintrust.org/Upload/file/Guidance/Guidance-for-Outdoor-Sport-and-Play-England.pdf](http://www.fieldsintrust.org/Upload/file/Guidance/Guidance-for-Outdoor-Sport-and-Play-England.pdf)

Table 3; Fields in Trust Recommended Benchmark Guidelines, informal outdoor space

Open Space Typology	Quantity Guideline (hectares per 1000 population)	Walking Guideline (walking distance, M from dwelling)	Quality Guidelines
Parks and gardens	0.80	710m	* Parks to be of Green Flag status. * Appropriately landscaped. * Positive management. * Provision of footpaths. * Fields in Trust protection. * Designed so as to be free of the fear of harm or crime
Amenity greenspace	0.60	480m	
Natural and semi natural	1.80	720m	

Table 3, *Fields in Trust, “Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play, Beyond the six Acre Standard” published Nov 2020. [www.fieldsintrust.org/Upload/file/Guidance/Guidance-for-Outdoor-Sport-and-Play-England.pdf](http://www.fieldsintrust.org/Upload/file/Guidance/Guidance-for-Outdoor-Sport-and-Play-England.pdf)*

## **6 Neighbourhood Plans**

6.1 NPPF makes provision for designation of Local Green Spaces (LGS). Para 101 reads as follows;

*“The designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them.”* (para 101 NPPF)

6.2 The NPPF makes provision for LGS to be designated through both Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans.

6.3 Mendip Local Plan (2021) does not designate Local Green Spaces (LGS).

6.4 Currently the only “made” Neighbourhood Plan that designates LGS covers Rode Parish. The designated LGS are noted in the Open Space Audit.

6.5 Communities preparing Neighbourhood Plans may wish to consider designating any open spaces within their area that meet the criteria set out in the NPPF. They may also wish to consider adopting a settlement wide approach to protecting networks of greenspace and identify opportunities to enhance green infrastructure networks through the creation of new greenspace.

## **7 Providing New Greenspace**

7.1 Policy DP16 requires that all residential development will make a contribution towards the provision of new open space to meet the needs of the growing population. Wherever appropriate, provision will be on-site.

### **7.2 On-site provision**

7.3 Natural England intend to publish standards for the provision of greenspace as part of their emerging Green Infrastructure Framework. Publication of standards is anticipated in Autumn 2022. The Council will review guidance on the quantity of greenspace to be provided in association with development proposals in the light of the Green Infrastructure Framework Standards in due course.

7.4 In the interim, the Council will have regard to existing recommended standards published by Fields in Trust and Natural England.

### **7.5 Formal space**

7.6 Fields in Trust recommend provision of the quantity of play space set out in Table 4 and the council will be guided by these recommendations for formal/equipped spaces when considering development proposals. The provision of allotments will be welcomed.

**Table 4; Fields in Trust recommended Quantity Benchmark Guidelines – Equipped/Designated Play Space**

Scale of Development	Local Area for Play (LAP)	Locally Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)	Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)	Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA)
5–10 dwellings	✓			
11–200 dwellings	✓	✓		Contribution
201–500 dwellings	✓	✓	Contribution	✓
501+ dwellings	✓	✓	✓	✓

*Table 2, Fields in Trust, “Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play, Beyond the six Acre Standard” published Nov 2020. [www.fieldsintrust.org/Upload/file/Guidance/Guidance-for-Outdoor-Sport-and-Play-England.pdf](http://www.fieldsintrust.org/Upload/file/Guidance/Guidance-for-Outdoor-Sport-and-Play-England.pdf)*

7.7 Table 4 sets out recommended benchmark guidelines for the provision of equipped/designated play space. These should normally be provided on site in accordance with the minimum sizes as follows;

- LAP 0.01ha
- LEAP 0.04ha
- NEAP 0.1ha
- MUGA 0.1ha

7.8 A financial contribution (through S106, CIL or other process in place at the time) towards improvement of an existing equipped/designated play space may be sought in lieu of on-site provision for larger scale play spaces, where existing play space lies within the walking distance guideline of a proposed development (see Table 2), or where it better serves the local community.

#### 7.9 Informal space

7.10 Natural England provide guidance on Accessible Natural Greenspace which will guide the Council’s requirements for informal greenspace. Natural England recommends that provision should be made of at least 2ha of accessible natural greenspace per 1000 population and, at the local level no person should live more than 300m from their nearest area of natural greenspace.

7.11 The Council will be guided by these recommendations for informal greenspace when considering development proposals.

#### 7.12 Off-site contributions

7.13 Where, exceptionally, it is not possible to provide formal or informal greenspace on site the contributions of £1364.20 per dwelling for off-site provision will be expected. The sum required will be reviewed in the context of LGR, to be agreed across the new authority.

Partial contributions may be acceptable if it is only possible to provide some of the required greenspace on site.

7.14 Off site provision may be justified;

- On smaller sites where it is not feasible to make on-site provision of meaningful size and useable configuration
- Where urban design or settlement layout make off site provision more appropriate
- Where off site provision will better serve the needs of future occupiers of the scheme and the local community

## **8 Design Principles for New Greenspace**

8.1 Where new greenspace is to be included in a development proposal, either provided on site or off site, it should be designed so as to maximise its multifunctional role and contribution to Green Infrastructure networks in the locality. Greenspaces designed for specific function, such as children's play or sports should maximise opportunities to contribute to Green Infrastructure in a variety of ways.

8.2 Natural England sets out advise on design in its "Green Infrastructure Principles" and developers should have regard to this.

8.3 Understanding the landscape, setting and character of a place is a key part of good design.

8.4 Developers should gather baseline information on;

- The setting of the area, including how it sits within the landscape, views in and out, and any existing green corridors, topography, geology, soils, ecology, river and waterways and existing open spaces.
- The character of the area itself - how its natural, cultural/historic and perceptual characteristics combine to make the place distinctive
- Community needs and values, so that the design reflects these and what the community considers to be beautiful, inspiring and/or symbolic in that area

8.5 Baseline information should be used to inform the design of new greenspaces.

8.6 Greenspaces should be considered at the earliest stages of the design process.

8.7 In preparing designs for greenspace developers should consider opportunities for;

- The enhancement, retention, expansion and buffering of existing landscape features such as trees, hedges, meadows, woodlands and water features.
- Enhancement of local biodiversity and contribution to a network of wildlife corridors
- The retention and opening up of key views.
- The conservation and enhancement of heritage features including the restoration of any historic landscape features
- Opportunities to make new physical and visual links between areas, especially on settlement edges.
- Enhancing the setting of a settlement
- The creation of new green space that fits well into its surroundings and will serve current and future needs
- Reduction of crime and the fear of crime and antisocial behaviour using the principles and guidance provided by Secure By Design.
- The provision of a more resilient drainage network using SUDs

- Opportunities to increase carbon sequestration should be taken
- Opportunities to enhance the role of greenspace for education and interpretation should be taken
- Opportunities to improve access for everyone should be taken
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8.8 Developers should have regard to local Design Codes where they are available.

## **9 Management Requirements for New Greenspace**

9.1 Where on-site greenspace is provided for by a S106 agreement care should be taken to ensure that long term management arrangements are in place. These arrangements should have regard to the principles of good management of Green Infrastructure set out by Natural England. Governance arrangements should include relevant stakeholders and representatives of local communities and users and ensure that the GI is responsive to local needs. The participation of Parish, Town and city Councils in management arrangements should be considered.

9.2 Management of greenspace should recognise multiple functions of a site and have regard to any specialist resources required, for example supporting biodiversity, heritage assets and historic landscapes or managing water courses or SUDs schemes.

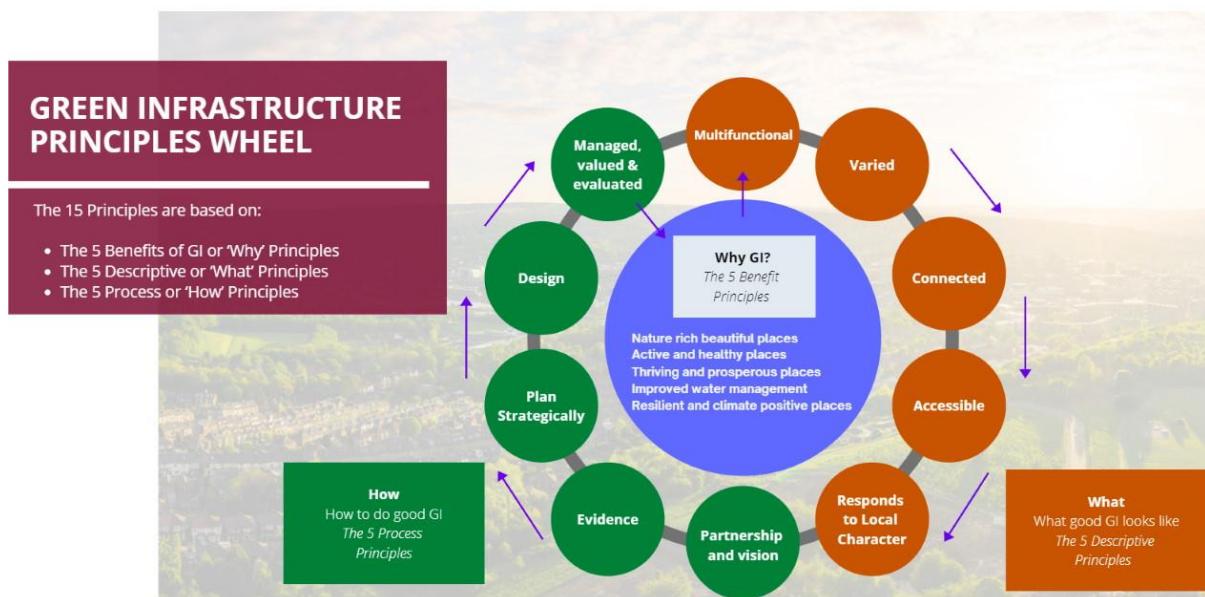
## **10 Relationship to Natural England Green Infrastructure Principles**

10.1 Green Infrastructure (GI) is a network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity. (National Planning Policy Framework, 2021)

10.2 GI generates multiple benefits for people and nature and creates greener, healthier places to live and supports a more productive economy. A GI network can include many natural features, including street trees, parks, private gardens, allotments, sustainable drainage systems, wildlife areas, woodlands, wetlands and natural flood zones. Linear GI includes roadside verges, rights of way, access routes and rivers.

10.3 Natural England is preparing a Green Infrastructure Framework. The GI Framework is being prepared to help Local Authorities and developers to meet the requirements of the NPPF to consider Green Infrastructure in local plans and in new development. In early 2022 Natural England published Green Infrastructure Principles and a mapped database of England, setting out the "Why, what and how" of GI. GI standards were published in January 2023. Design guidance and case studies are anticipated later in 2023.

10.4 The Natural England approach to GI is shown in the diagram below, published as part of the framework.



10.5 The Greenspace Audit will be guided by the principles of good GI set out by Natural England. It will identify those greenspaces which make additional contributions to local GI networks because they are multifunctional, varied, connected, accessible or contribute to local character and history

## **11 Other Strategies in preparation**

11.1 A number of other strategies are currently in preparation which will influence the council's approach to green Infrastructure. These include;

- SUDs SPD (Somerset wide)
- Local Nature recovery strategy (Somerset wide)
- Somerset Tree strategy 2023 (Somerset wide)
- Emerging work on Biodiversity Net Gain
- Design Codes (MDC)

11.2 It is intended that the Greenspace SPD will work in tandem with other strategies to both protect and realise the potential for new multifunctional Green Infrastructure.

## **12 Conclusion**

12.1 Greenspaces are a vital part of the built environment and are essential to creating places where;

- Biodiversity is supported
- People are able to live healthy and active lives
- Communities are thriving and prosperous
- Water courses and drainage can be managed
- Climate change can be mitigated and local adaptations made

12.2 Greenspaces underpin Green Infrastructure networks and are vital to the success of strategies to improve other aspects of GI, including biodiversity recovery, water management, promoting active lives and tackling climate change.

12.3 This SPD provides guidance on the interpretation of policies in Local Plans Part 1 and 2 and aims to ensure that existing greenspaces are protected and new provision is

made to meet the needs of a growing population. Where new greenspace is provided it is important that opportunities to support local Green Infrastructure networks are taken.

**Annex 1; Policies DP2, DP1 and DP16**

**Annex 2; Characteristics of DP2 sites**

**Links; Open Space Audit [www.mendip.gov.uk/evidencebase](http://www.mendip.gov.uk/evidencebase)**