

# **Winchester District Local Plan**

## **OPEN SPACE STRATEGY**

**2008/2009**

**Winchester City Council**

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## Introduction

- 1.1 The City Council has approved this Open Space Strategy for use as a background paper to the adopted Winchester District Local Plan Review (WDLPR). The Strategy provides a comprehensive framework for the provision of outdoor, public recreational space in the Plan area. It is prepared and reviewed annually in consultation with all the parish councils, the Winchester Town Forum, the City Council's Environment Team and Sports and Recreation Manager, as they are the main providers of the facilities throughout the District.
- 1.2 The Strategy will be used by the City Council's Planning Officers as a basis for determining what recreational provision is required for new dwellings in the Plan area, or, alternatively, the amount of contribution that will be sought in lieu of that provision. Contributions will be paid into a special Open Space Fund, where they will be retained for use in the area where the developments have taken place, until appropriate schemes are implemented.

## Using this Strategy

### Purpose of this document

- 2.1 This Strategy provides additional guidance on the Winchester District Local Plan Review's policies for recreational space, particularly RT.4 and RT.5. Policy RT.5 provides for improvements in the provision of recreational space adjacent to the main settlements, where there is insufficient land available at the present time. Policy RT.4 sets out how new housing development will be expected to ensure that sufficient recreational space and facilities are available to meet the needs of the prospective residents of the development. Where there is a local deficiency in the provision of recreational space and facilities (when measured against the Local Plan's recreational space standard), new housing development will be expected to provide for improvements in those facilities, sufficient to ensure that those deficiencies are not exacerbated. A deficiency may be measured in terms of land area, standard and quality of provision, and general accessibility of the facilities from the main housing areas.
- 2.2 The Local Plan provides for most housing to be provided on small sites, where it will generally not be possible to provide all the types of recreational space required by the Local Plan's standard on the development site. Most of the land and facilities required will therefore need to be provided off the site, on land identified by this Strategy, where there are local deficiencies in those categories.
- 2.3 To provide the necessary background information, this Strategy examines the recreational space and facilities available within each Parish, and within Winchester. It identifies where deficiencies exist and puts forward appropriate proposals for improvements. These are the proposed improvements towards which financial contributions will be sought from housing developments, where provision needs to be made off-site.
- 2.4 To allow financial contributions to be made, the City Council operates a special Funding System, so that new housing development is able to meet the full requirement for the provision of recreational space. When a particular type of recreational space required by the Local Plan's standard cannot be provided on the site, and this Strategy demonstrates that there is a local deficiency in that category, the System allows a contribution to be made into a special Open Space Fund operated by the City Council. Funds held by the City Council will then be used to carry out improvements to local recreational facilities in accordance with this Strategy.
- 2.5 Within the parished areas of the District, Parish Councils are responsible for using funds reserved for their parish for carrying out improvements to recreational spaces, as they are the providers of facilities. Within the area covered by the six wards of Winchester, funds are collected for each ward, but, as the Strategy treats these wards as a single area, funds can be used anywhere in the town, taking account of the nature of deficiencies identified.
- 2.6 Projects designed to meet deficiencies in children's play or sports provision are set out as 'Improvements Proposed' within each schedule of this Strategy. The deficiencies within each parish and within Winchester, and the projects to be included in the following year's Strategy, are reviewed annually and

qualifying projects are agreed with the City Council's Open Space Project Officer, who liaises with all the Parish Councils, the Town Forum and other City Council departments on this issue.

- 2.7 The Open Space Project Officer will assess whether proposals which are presented for funding meet the necessary criteria and conform to the requirements of the Strategy. The Officer will, if necessary, also advise on how schemes can be provided and what other sources of funding may be available. Projects will, in particular, be examined in relation to the Council's responsibilities under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Disability and Discrimination Act and Best Value. In those instances where requirements and opportunities arise during the year which were not foreseen at the time the Strategy went to press but present an alternative way of addressing shortfalls which have been identified in the Strategy, the City Council may evaluate and assess them as if they had been submitted as part of the annual return. This flexibility is balanced by the project being included in the next annual review of the Strategy to ensure a clear audit trail from one year to another.

### **Planning Policy Update**

- 2.8 The Winchester District Local Plan Review, adopted in July 2006, provides for the period up to 2011.
- 2.9 The Local Plan Review's Policy RT.4 is similar to Policy RT.3 in the previous adopted Plan, and carries forward the principles of the Open Space Funding System. This Strategy continues to set out the nature of the deficiencies in each parish and Winchester and makes proposals for improvements where deficiencies exist.
- 2.10 Policy RT.5 encourages improvements in local recreation facilities, where they are needed to bring them up to the Local Plan standard. These improvements may concern the land area available, the quality and size of the facilities, or their accessibility to local people. In the main settlements, where significant areas of additional land are required to meet present and future needs, the Local Plan Review reserves specific areas of land to provide new facilities. Many of these areas were identified initially through previous reviews of this Strategy, but some additional areas have now been included, where they will be needed to meet the needs of new residents in the period to 2011. All these areas are now identified on the maps and in the schedules of this Strategy.
- 2.11 The system operates using planning obligations, and Circular 05/05 retains the same "tests of reasonableness" for seeking financial contributions as the earlier Circular 1/97. However, it has given greater support to a number of the open space system's features, including standardised legal agreements and formulae, and pooled contributions. Circular 05/05 provides short-term improvements to negotiated agreements, in advance of more major Government reforms to the funding of essential infrastructure. The proposed introduction of a Planning Gain Supplement has now been abandoned in favour of a proposed Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which is to be the subject of a Government consultation in the near future.

### **The Strategy's approach**

- 2.12 This Strategy measures deficiencies in areas of recreational space against the Local Plan standard, as revised by the 2001 National Playing Fields Association standard. This standard will remain in place until the City Council has carried out its own assessment of the various types of open space and facilities in the District, as required by PPG 17. This assessment has now been completed, and new standards are recommended for a wider number of types of open space and for built facilities. The new standards are being considered through the Council's Core Strategy preparation, but the current Local Plan standard, supported by this Strategy, will continue to operate until the provisions of the current Open Space Funding System are replaced. This will require the preparation of a Development Plan Document or a Supplementary Planning Document, which is also likely to address the wider infrastructure requirements of the District.
- 2.13 The adopted Local Plan's standard establishes the minimum amount of land (in hectares), required for recreational use, divided into the following three categories, for every 1,000 residents:

0.8	Children's Play
1.6	Sports Grounds
0.4	General/Informal Use

- 2.14 The application of the standard does not address deficiencies in areas for general or informal recreational use, since the Local Plan establishes that off-site provision will not be sought for this category. This is because the Plan area is generally well provided with such facilities. For comprehensiveness, however, the main facilities in this category are listed for each Parish and for Winchester, divided into those that are within the settlement and those in the adjacent countryside. In some settlements, there may be some benefit from the provision of additional smaller areas of general open space within the developed area, but opportunities to provide these would normally only occur on-site, in association with larger housing developments.
- 2.15 This Strategy therefore considers only children's play and sports provision. All the public play and sports facilities in the District have been assessed against the Local Plan's standard for that type of recreational space, and the guidance of the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA), on which the Local Plan's standard is based. A detailed assessment has been carried out to establish where deficiencies exist, as defined by the criteria set out in the text accompanying Policy RT.4 in the Local Plan, in order to justify contributions being sought, where appropriate.
- 2.16 The assessment has been carried out on a Parish basis, with Winchester assessed separately.
- 2.17 Where deficiencies are identified, proposals are made for specific improvements. These take account of the character of the settlements in each Parish. Some Parishes have several settlements to serve, others look to a nearby larger settlement. Although play provision is expected to be readily accessible on foot from each settlement or housing area, sports provision often serves a wider area, and this has been taken into account. Some of the smaller Parishes have therefore been combined with nearby larger Parishes for the assessment of sports grounds and for making proposals for improvements. A map showing the Parishes that have been combined for sports ground provision is included in this document on page 10.

## What does this Strategy include?

- 2.18 This Strategy provides a comprehensive framework for the provision of recreational space in the District.
- 2.19 It includes a schedule for each Parish and for Winchester itself, and each schedule is divided into the following sections.

### (i) Description

- 2.20 This highlights the main settlements that exist in each Parish, and their policy status in the Local Plan Review. Reference is also made to any Conservation Areas, countryside within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and major roads within each Parish.

### (ii) Existing recreational areas

- 2.21 This lists all the areas currently in public recreational use in the area, divided into the three main categories of the Local Plan's recreational space standard - children's play, sports grounds and areas for general/informal use.

**Play** includes equipped play areas, hard surfaced areas for ball games and wheeled activities, and areas for children's casual play, which are available for public use. Those areas that include play equipment are marked with an asterisk.

**Sports** include "pitches, greens, courts, athletics tracks, and miscellaneous sites such as croquet lawns and training areas owned by local authorities". These facilities may be publicly or privately owned (private sports grounds are marked (P) after the name of the sports ground), or they may be educational facilities available for public use (similarly marked (E)). Sports areas included accord with the advice in the National Playing Fields Association's (NPFA's) 'Six Acre Standard' document. They therefore include public facilities at county, district or parish level; facilities within the educational sector which, as a matter of policy and practice, are available for public use; and facilities within the voluntary, private, industrial and commercial sectors, which serve the leisure needs of their members, or the public.

It is, however, recognised that some sports facilities serve more of a district-wide function, than a local Parish or Winchester town function. Sports facilities have therefore been divided into "Local Sports"

which include both public and private facilities that are used on a regular basis by local teams, and “District Sports” which are facilities that are or may be used by teams drawn from a wider area. Facilities in the “District Sports” category would normally include secondary schools making facilities available for public use, sports grounds owned by businesses where they are not regularly used by local teams, and other grounds used by teams mainly drawn from a wider area.

**General** refers to areas of land which can be used for informal recreation, such as walking, relaxing or picnicking. They include open areas within the settlements, and also areas in the countryside which are readily accessible to particular settlements. They may be specifically designed for the purpose, or countryside facilities to which there is limited or free public access.

- 2.22 Each area of recreational space listed is defined as having a play, sports or general function, and given a reference letter from which it can be identified on the accompanying Location Map. Where more than one type of recreational space is present within a multi-purpose recreation ground, the area will appear under two or more of the categories in the schedule. The amount of land devoted to each use has then been estimated as accurately as possible.
- 2.23 Areas (in hectares) are only assigned to facilities for general/informal use within the settlements where the land occupied by the facility is readily definable. For facilities within the adjacent countryside, no specific area in hectares is given. They are included to identify as fully as possible what recreation facilities are available to each Parish - they have not been formally assessed in the same way as play and sports facilities, since no financial contribution may be sought towards off-site improvements. Some of them are identified on the Location Plans.
- 2.24 The schedules do not include areas which function mainly as local amenity greenspace, since these areas are generally small-scale and fragmented, and do not primarily have a recreational purpose. This type of open space is always required to be on-site, as an integral part of all kinds of new development, not just housing. It does not form part of the recreational space standard in the District Local Plan; it is therefore reasonable to exclude it from this Strategy. This document is only concerned with open space facilities that have a recreational function.
- 2.25 Areas that are in the process of being implemented as recreational space are only included if there is already some form of public access. They are then included in the category that most closely reflects the current type of usage, although it should be recognised that this may change as recreational facilities are developed there.

### **iii) Adequacy of land for play and sports**

- 2.26 This section sets out the current adequacy of land available for play and sports facilities, when judged against the Local Plan's standard, as set out in paragraph 2.09 above.
- 2.27 The column headed "Current Adequacy" identifies whether or not there is sufficient land available for that particular use. A (+) figure indicates that a sufficiency of land is available, although there may well be other problems concerned with the standard, quality or distribution of provision. A (-) figure indicates a shortfall of land in that category.
- 2.28 In the sports category, some facilities serve a District-wide function. Each parish (and Winchester town) is therefore allocated a proportion of the total land area of the entire District provision, related to its total population as a proportion of the total District population.
- 2.29 This figure is then deducted from the parish's Local Plan requirement for sports grounds. The remaining area is then the land area required locally to serve the needs of the Parish. Pitches may be publicly or privately owned, provided that local teams regularly use them.

### **(iv) Assessment of play areas**

- 2.30 In addition to the **land area** available for play, the standard of provision, the quality and distribution of the equipped play areas has also been assessed, since this is how the Local Plan requires any deficiencies to be identified. No detailed assessment of casual play space has been carried out at this stage.

- 2.31 In order to be consistent with the Local Plan advice, the more detailed assessment of play areas has also generally followed the guidance of the NPFA in their Six Acre Standard document. It recommends the use of three main types of play areas - Local Areas for Play (LAPS), Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPS), and Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPS).
- 2.32 This guidance makes the following recommendations for each type of play area:
- LAP: within one minute's walking time of home, catering for children up to 6 years old, and appropriate for low-key games or play with small equipment.
- LEAP: within 5 minutes' walking time of home, catering mainly for children up to 8 years old, and offering at least 5 items of play equipment.
- NEAP: within 15 minutes' walking time of home, catering for children over 8 years old including teenagers, and offering at least 8 types of play equipment.
- 2.33 The **standard** of provision for each play area has been assessed against these recommendations.
- 2.34 The current standard has then been assessed against the appropriate standard for each Parish, based on the size and form of the settlements. LAPs are generally very small play areas that are normally only appropriate for serving a particular housing development, as they provide for the play needs of very young children. The majority of play areas in the District should be of LEAP or NEAP standard, designed to serve either a whole community, or a major part of that community.
- 2.35 This Strategy proposes that Parishes with a population in excess of 500 should generally support a NEAP as the main central play area. In some instances, complementary LEAPs are proposed, where this is the best solution for the settlement form within a Parish, particularly where a number of separate settlements exist, or where a main road separates the main housing areas of a settlement.
- 2.36 Within the larger settlements or in housing areas of higher density development - a network of NEAPS and LEAPS is proposed - taking account of the major roads within each settlement, and the location of areas of higher density housing. Within housing areas with a high teenage population, facilities for teenagers are proposed, generally as part of a NEAP, but in some Parishes it may be more appropriate in association with sports ground provision.
- 2.37 Proposals are made to improve the standard of provision where existing facilities are deficient. This may be achieved by upgrading and extending a facility on existing land, or there may be a need for a new play area on a new area of land.
- 2.38 The **quality** of the equipped play areas has been assessed in broad terms, with proposals made where full or partial refurbishment is required.
- 2.39 The **distribution** of play facilities has also been assessed in broad terms, since it is important that children have ready access to a play area within reasonable walking time of their home, and without the need to cross a major barrier. Where separate settlements exist within a parish, or where main roads separate housing areas, the provision of separate play facilities is normally proposed.
- 2.40 The assessment summarises what deficiencies exist in the area (if any), in terms of the criteria set down in the text accompanying Policy RT.4 of the Local Plan. These may relate to the land area, standard of provision, quality of equipment, or the distribution of play areas. If deficiencies exist, proposals for appropriate improvements are made.

#### **(v) Assessment of sports grounds**

- 2.41 The sports grounds have been assessed firstly on the basis of the **land area** available within the area. The facilities counted within the provision accord with the NPFA's advice on areas for inclusion within the standard, and these have been subdivided into ***“Local facilities”*** and ***“District facilities”***, as set out in paragraph 2.21 above.

- 2.42 A detailed assessment has been carried out for those facilities defined as **“Local sports facilities.”** This examined the standard and the quality of provision, and the distribution of facilities, to ascertain whether or not any deficiencies existed in these other respects.
- 2.43 The **standard** of provision has been assessed, for each of the main sports, against the requirements of the leagues in which the local teams play, having regard to pitch size, the availability of a pavilion/changing accommodation and car parking provision.
- 2.44 The **quality** of provision has also been assessed, and recommendations made for refurbishment where this is clearly necessary.
- 2.45 The **distribution** of sports grounds has been assessed based on NPFA advice that facilities should be locally available wherever possible. Given that the District is a rural area, a realistic approach needs to be taken towards that provision. The Strategy aims to improve sports ground provision in the Winchester area, by the provision of three additional sports ground complexes adjoining the urban edge. Priority should be given in the first instance to the establishment of a complex on the southern side of the city. In the southern part of the District, a new outdoor multi-use sports facility has been provided adjacent to Swanmore College of Technology, available to the wider community as well as for school use. Adjacent parishes were grouped to enable them to assist with this provision, to supplement provision in the locality. Elsewhere, the proposals aim to provide each Parish with its own sports ground facilities wherever possible, although there are a number of Parishes with very small populations which would generally expect to use the sports grounds in a nearby larger settlement. A number of Parishes have therefore been combined for the purposes of proposing improvements to sports grounds in this Strategy (also shown on the map on page 10). Some of the Parishes adjacent to Winchester would also be expected to contribute to improvements there.
- 2.46 The assessment of sports grounds therefore identifies what deficiencies exist (if any), in terms of the criteria set down in Policy RT.4 of the Local Plan. These may relate to land area, standard or quality of provision, or the distribution of facilities. Where deficiencies are identified, proposals for appropriate improvements are made.

#### **(vi) Contribution scales**

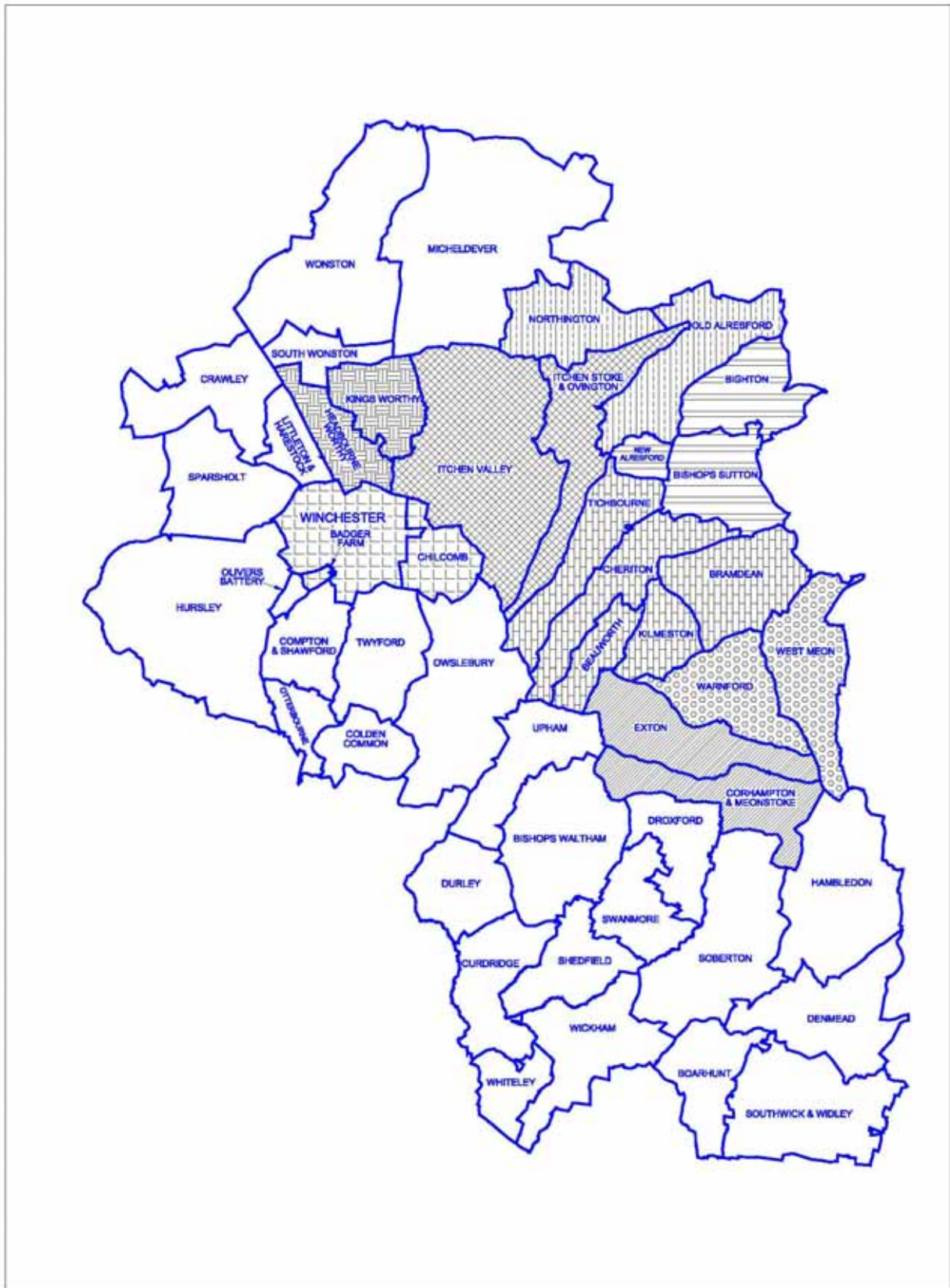
- 2.47 This section specifies which contribution scale (if any) is considered to be appropriate for new housing development in the area. The scales proposed are indicated separately for play and sports facilities, since different considerations apply, and the scale may in fact differ for each type of provision. The scales indicate an appropriate contribution level of A, B or 0.
- 2.48 Scale A is the higher scale, proposed for Parishes that have a shortfall of land in that type of provision.
- 2.49 Scale B is the lower scale, proposed where sufficient land exists for that type of recreation space, and there is scope for improvements to be undertaken on that land.
- 2.50 Scale 0 indicates that no contribution will be sought, as no deficiency is considered to exist at the present time, although this situation may change when the Strategy is reviewed.
- 2.51 The contribution scales proposed for the current year are published separately to this Strategy, setting out the amount of contribution that will be sought for each size of dwelling. They are based on the cost of implementing the required improvements, related to the size and nature of each housing development. They are reviewed annually in March, to ensure that they remain up-to-date and reflect the circumstances existing at the time.
- 2.52 If a developer is able to provide part of the play or sports ground requirement on-site, the amount of contribution sought for any off-site element (if required) will be calculated on a proportional basis.

## **The Role of the Parish Councils**

- 3.1 The Parish Councils, the Town Forum and the City Council's Environment and Sport and Recreation Teams have assisted with the provision of information for the detailed assessment included in this Strategy.
- 3.2 Together with the City Council, the Parish Councils are the main providers of facilities and therefore their commitment to the improvement of their recreation facilities is essential. The aim is to achieve the full provision of facilities to a good standard, quality and distribution throughout the District.
- 3.3 The City Council operates the Open Space Funding System to achieve this aim, and this Strategy forms an important part of that System.

## **Advice to Applicants**

- 4.1 Potential applicants for new residential development in the District should refer to the relevant schedule in this Strategy, to establish their responsibilities with regard to the provision of recreational space. This sets out a proposed contribution scale that will be sought in the relevant Parish or in Winchester, and how the contributions will be used to fund improvements to children's play areas or sports grounds in the area.
- 4.2 Applicants are advised to consult also the other two documents which support the Open Space Funding System. They are:
  - (i) The Technical Paper, which sets out the technical basis for the System. It explains in more detail how the open space requirement will be determined for each housing development, and how the Funding System is administered to achieve the appropriate improvements in the provision of recreational space.
  - (ii) The Guide to the Open Space Funding System, which explains in simple terms how the System operates, with sections directed particularly towards applicants for planning permission, who may need to use the System, and towards Parish Councils, as the providers of many of the facilities. It also includes a useful summary of how the System operates.



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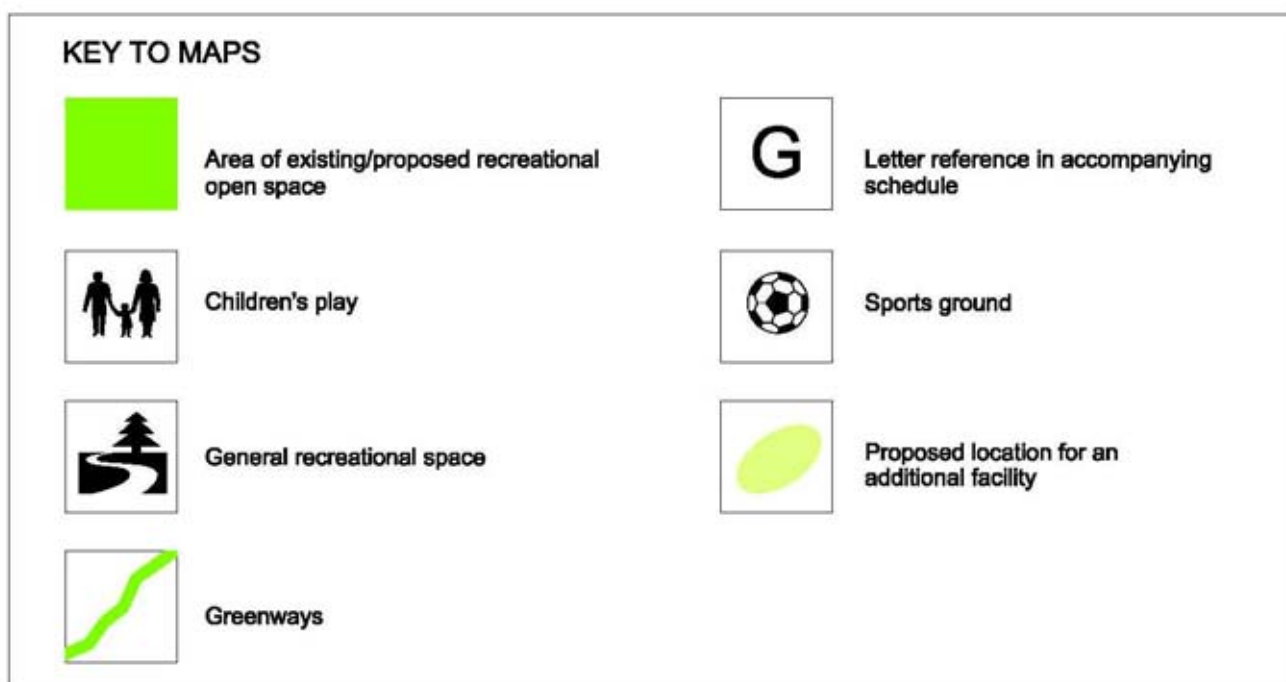
# SCHEDULES

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## NOTES

- ◆ Each schedule is accompanied by a map showing the location of each area of recreational open space, and the type of provision that exists there. These are cross-referenced in the relevant schedule.
  - ◆ Where there are no local facilities, the map includes the words “NO PROVISION”.
  - ◆ In some instances, an Inset Map is included, generally where proposals affect an area other than an existing recreational open space.
  - ◆ The maps are based on Ordnance Survey Maps, but they vary in scale according to the size of the settlements within each parish. The Winchester City schedule includes two maps, representing the northern and southern parts of the City.
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## KEY TO MAPS



## KEY TO SCHEDULES

\* Play area containing an equipped play area

(E) Sports grounds within educational establishments

(P) Privately owned sports grounds for use by club members or employees