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OPEN SPACE IN STORKPORT

STOCKPORT
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH
COUNCIL ADOPTS A NEW
APPROACH TO FORMAL
AND INFORMAL
RECREATION NEEDS.

Last year when staying in Bramhall, England, I happened upon a residential development named Queensgate which took my eye. It comprises eighteen "reasonably large" townhouses located just off a road, which leads to a local sports facility. I was immediately impressed by the development's quality, but what struck me most of all was the layout which included two areas of open space. In all open space on the site amounts to 2,340m² representing 13% of the site's total area (18,322m²).

One space is an amenity area (undeveloped apart from grass and a few trees), the other contains seating and some play equipment. I then pondered as to whom was responsible for setting this land aside as open space, the developer and/or the Council?

I contacted the Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council to ask about this development, and was immediately exposed to a new language comprising LAPS, LEAPS and NEAPS - more about this later. I learnt that the Council is seeking to achieve an overall open space standard of 2.4 hectares per 1000 population. The 2.4 hectares is divided between formal sports (1.7 hectares - playing pitches, courts, athletic tracks etc) and casual play areas of 0.7 hectares.

NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS

So how does this Council ensure that new development provides areas of open space for future inhabitants?

Council policy requires that all residential developments be assessed to establish their open space needs. Generally residential developments, which are likely to accommodate more than 100 people are expected to provide both formal and children's casual open space on site. Developments, which are likely to accommodate between 50 and 100 people, are required to provide children's play and casual recreation space on site. In the case of smaller developments occupied by less than 50 people contributions towards children's play and casual recreation provision will be required and put towards enhancing new or existing facilities. The Council has prepared a three tiered structure (refer Table 1).

Table 1 sets out the three categories of play provision:

1. Local Area for Play (LAP)
2. Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)
3. Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)

It is of interest to note that for large and medium scale residential development the amount of open space is to reflect the Borough's overall standard. For example, large scale development is required to provide a formal open space for recreation equivalent in size to 1.7ha per 1000 population and children's casual open space at a standard equivalent to 0.7ha per 1000 population.

As a general rule new development is required to achieve or come close to achieving the standard. Medium scaled development is required to provide one or more LAPs where all

Table 1

Facility	Time	Walking Distance	Straight Line Distance	Minimum Size		Nearest House Property Boundary	Characteristics	Population (Approx)
				Activity Zone	Total (inc Buffer)			
LAP	1 min	100m	60m	100m ²	400m ² (0.04 ha)	5 m from Activity Zone	Small, low-key games area (may include "demonstrative" play features)	50
LEAP	5 min	400m	240m	400m ²	3,600m ² (0.36 ha)	20 m from Activity Zone	About 5 types of equipment. Small Games area	510
NEAP	15 min	1,000m	600m	1,000m ²	8,500m ² (0.85 ha)	30 m from Activity Zone	About 8 types of equipment. Kickabout and cycle play opportunities	1210

houses are within the prescribed walking time, provided users should not have to cross busy main roads or other hazards. Play areas need to be of suitable shape and size to permit the activities outlined in Table 1.

CHILDREN'S CASUAL PLAY SPACE

Children's casual play space needs to be sufficient, suitable and accessible and where space is limited safer street play might be considered through traffic calming and environment enhancement schemes.

With regard to funds raised in lieu of the physical provision for children's play these can only be used within 100m (on a LAP), 400m (on a LEAP) or 1000m (on a NEAP) of the funding development. This ensures that there is a direct relationship between the new development and the future investment of the contributions. Naturally some financial contributions cannot bring about immediate improvements; in such instances the collected money will be accumulated and used to improve recreation facilities. The Council has undertaken to hold such funds for up to 8 years, any money that remains unspent after 8 years from the date of payment is refunded.

The Council has developed a strategy, which will create a network of NEAPs and LEAPs at existing sites within the Borough. Housing developments will not proceed at a regular pace throughout the Borough or District Plan period. It must therefore be borne in mind that in certain areas financial contributions may be very limited and will be used to improve rather than develop new facilities. Funds are only to be used to improve an existing facility but are not used to cover its maintenance or running costs.

CALCULATING CONTRIBUTIONS FOR SINGLE DWELLINGS

The financial contribution calculation for single dwellings takes into account the number

Dwelling size	Number of persons
1 Bedroom dwelling	2
2 Bedroom dwelling	3
3 Bedroom dwelling	4
4+ Bedroom dwelling	5

Table 2: Dwelling occupancy

and type of proposed dwellings along with the population capacity as outlined in Table 2.

The required financial contribution is based on an estimated standard cost for making the appropriate provision of formal and children's play and casual recreation space to the overall standard of 2.4 hectares per 1000 population. The figure also includes the anticipated costs of establishing the facility of a required size. The estimated costs include, design, levelling, drainage, equipment, special surfaces, landscaping etc. These costs can then be applied to the provision of facilities per 1000 population and can easily be assigned a per capita cost. For example the cost per person at January 2001 was:

Formal open space	175.32 pounds
Children's/casual play	147.89 pounds
Total cost per person	323.21 pounds

Maintenance

Council policy presently requires the commuted sum to cover maintenance for 25 years thereby providing adequate cover for at least one generation. This figure is then factored into the financial contribution. The developer or Council can carry out maintenance. If it is the latter then the developer will pay a commuted sum based on the total surface area per person multiplied by 10.48 pounds per square metre.

APPLICATION EXAMPLES FOR NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS

Example 1: Residential Development for 172

people

Council policy states that residential developments, which are likely to be occupied by 100 people or more, should include a well located local open space for formal recreation at a standard equivalent to 1.7ha per 1000 population. In addition such developments are also required to provide an area for children's play at a standard equivalent to 0.7ha per 1000 population.

Formal recreation space

The first requirement is to provide for this on site. However if no formal recreation space can be provided on site the open space needs still must be covered by a commuted sum calculated as follows: Population capacity = 172

Provision	172 x 175.32 pounds	= 30,155.04 pounds
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Maintenance	172 x 17*(m ²) x 10.48** pounds	= 30,643.52 pounds
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Total = 60,798.56 pounds

* Figure based on the provision of formal open space for recreation equivalent in size to 1.7ha per 1000 population (i.e 17m² per person)

** Figure based on data supplied by the Council's Community Services Division

Children's play space

In addition to the above the proposal is also required to satisfy children's on site play space needs. One LAP satisfies 57 persons, this figure is based on an appropriate size for a small children's play area being 400m). The 57 figure is obtained by dividing 400 by 7 (which reflects the amount per person being required i.e. 7m²)



This proposal would be required to provide 3 LAPS however after taking into account the distance related criteria (that all homes are within 100 metres walking distance of a LAP) this number could be reduced. In cases where the residual amount is not provided on site a monetary sum is required and covered by a commuted sum. For example, 2 LAPS on site (satisfies 114 persons play space needs), leaves 58 persons play space needs which would be required to be covered by a commuted sum calculated as follows:

Provision 58 x 147.89 pounds
= 8,577.62 pounds

Maintenance 58 x 7*(m²) x 10.48** pounds
= 4,254.88 pounds

Total = 12,832.50 pounds

* Figure based on the provision of children's casual open space at a standard equivalent to 0.7ha per 1000 population (i.e 7m² per person).

** Figure based on data supplied by the Council's Community Services Division

Maintenance of on site provision (i.e. LAPS etc)

Most developers ask the Council to be responsible for the on going maintenance of these areas. Two LAPS would be calculated on the following basis:

2 x 400m² (LAPS) x 10.48 pounds
= 8,384.00 pounds

Summary

Therefore the developer would be required to pay 60,798.56 pounds plus provide 2 LAPS at 400m² each plus 12,832.50 pounds plus a maintenance fee of 8,384.00 pounds, a total of 82,015.06 pounds.

Example 2: Residential Development for 3 people

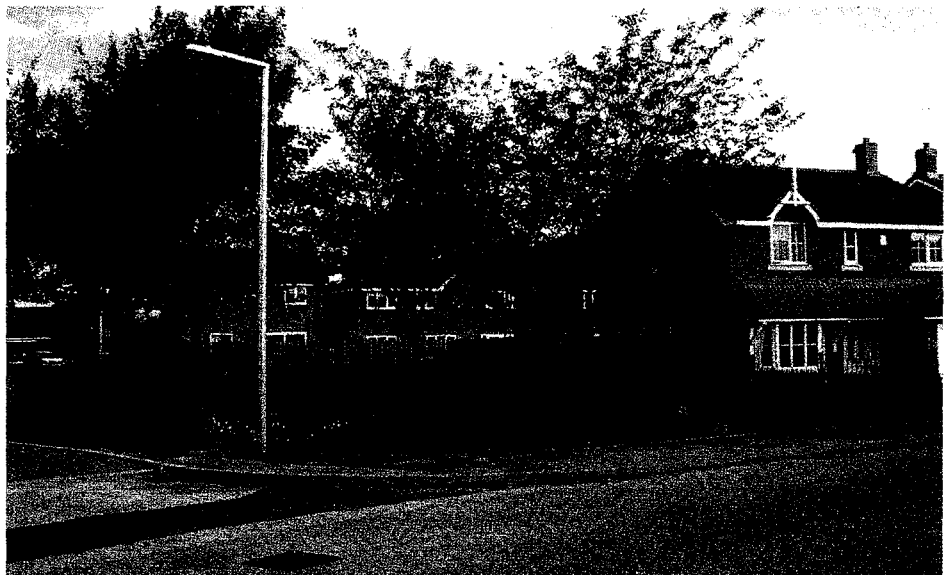
Such proposals are required to satisfy children's play space needs by means of a commuted sum subject to their being a facility, which can be improved or constructed within the appropriate distances (i.e 100m on a LAP, 400m on a LEAP or 1000m on a NEAP). The person processing such a request identifies all the existing facilities, which can be improved within the Borough. The calculation is then as follows:

Provision 3 x 147.89 pounds
= 443.67 pounds

Maintenance 3 x 7m²* x 10.48** pounds
= 220.08 pounds

Total = 663.75 pounds

* Figure based on the provision of children's casual open space at a standard equivalent to



0.7ha per 1000 population (i.e 7m² per person).

** Figure based on data supplied by the Council's Community Services Division

Summary

The developer would therefore be required to pay 663.75 pounds.

CONCLUSION


Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council has devised a 3 tiered approach that helps to ensure that new residential development contributes to the Borough's formal and informal recreation needs. From what I saw and my discussions with the Council the policy appears to be very successful in achieving its goals.

In New Zealand the Resource Management Act 1991 enables Territorial Local Authorities (TLAs) to charge financial contributions. The amount and means varies from one locality to the next. I believe it is important for TLAs to clearly establish

Opposite: Queensgate amenity area

Top: Queensgate local play area

Above: Example of a LAP located within a 131 residential unit development at Offerton, Stockport

the ratio of open space per head of its population and to develop a simple financial contribution formula to ensure that this goal is met. 

REFERENCE

Supplementary Planning Guidance - Recreational open space provision and commuted payments, Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

Andrew Trevelyan is an Auckland City Council employee and the contents of this article are not necessarily Auckland City Council policy.